



Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty
Secrétariat du Traité sur L'Antarctique
Secretaría del Tratado Antártico
Секретариат Договора об Антарктике

The Antarctic Treaty System





There are few places in the world where there has never been war, where the environment is fully protected, and where scientific research has priority. But there is a whole continent like this — it is the land the Antarctic Treaty Parties call ‘... a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science’.

At the southern end of our world, those who share the challenges of distance and cold to visit the ice-bound continent have developed a tradition of warm cooperation. Such cooperation is cemented by the Antarctic Treaty. This booklet will tell you a little about the Antarctic Treaty, a unique agreement — for a unique place.

The Antarctic Treaty

The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 by the twelve countries whose scientists had been active in and around Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58. The experience of the IGY had shown that it was possible to establish bases on Antarctica and engage in scientific cooperation without getting into conflict about the claims of sovereignty put forward by some countries over the continent. The Treaty entered into force on 23 June 1961; since that time, 34 other countries have acceded, making 46 countries in all. Membership continues to grow.

Important provisions of the Treaty:

Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only. There shall be prohibited ... any measure of a military nature (Article I).

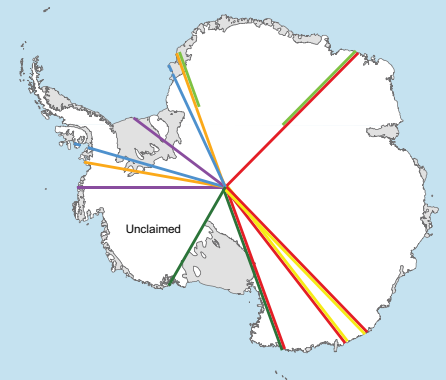
Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation ... shall continue (Article II).

Article IV deals with the (sometimes overlapping) claims. Seven countries claim parts of Antarctica; the location of these claims is indicated on the map. Other countries do not recognize any claim to Antarctica. Some countries, such as the US and Russia, maintain a ‘basis for claim’. The positions of all three categories of countries are protected. The *status quo* of 1959 is maintained:

No acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any rights of sovereignty in Antarctica. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim, to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica shall be asserted while the present Treaty is in force.

To guarantee the peaceful status of Antarctica, *All areas of Antarctica, including all stations, installations and equipment within those areas shall be open at all times to inspection* (Article VII).

The claims issue is not definitively settled in the Treaty; the claims are merely set aside. Nevertheless, this pragmatic solution has been an outstanding success. Throughout the conflicts and tensions of the last fifty years, the Antarctic Treaty system has kept Antarctica a zone of peace, scientific cooperation and unspoiled natural beauty.



Territorial Claim boundaries

- Argentine claim
- Australian claim
- British claim
- Chilean claim
- French claim
- New Zealand claim
- Norwegian claim
(Northern and southern limits of claim undefined)

Original Parties

Argentina
Australia
Belgium
Chile
France
Japan
New Zealand
Norway
Russia
South Africa
United Kingdom
United States.

Other Consultative Parties *

Poland (1977)
Germany (1981)
Brazil (1983)
India (1983)
China (1985)
Uruguay (1985)
Italy (1987)
Spain (1988)
Sweden (1988)
Finland (1989)
Korea (1989)
Peru (1989)
Ecuador (1990)
Netherlands (1990)
Bulgaria (1998)
Ukraine (2004)

*(Year country was recognized
as Consultative Party)

The Protocol on Environmental Protection

From the beginning of the Antarctic Treaty, protection of the unspoiled Antarctic environment has been an important concern of the Treaty Parties. The Environment Protocol was adopted in 1991 to harmonize and extend a wide range of provisions relating to protection of the Antarctic environment, which the Parties had adopted in separate measures.

The Protocol:

- designates Antarctica as a 'natural reserve, devoted to peace and science'
- establishes environmental principles to govern the conduct of all activities
- prohibits mining
- subjects all activities to prior assessment of their environmental impacts
- provides for the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) to advise the ATCM
- requires the development of contingency plans to respond to environmental emergencies

The Environment Protocol has six annexes. The first four entered into force with the Protocol in 1998:

- Annex I *Environmental Impact Assessment*
- Annex II *Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora*
- Annex III *Waste Disposal and Waste Management*, and
- Annex IV *Prevention of Marine Pollution*

- Annex V *Area Protection and Management* entered into force in 2002.
- Annex VI *Liability Arising From Environmental Emergencies* was adopted by the 28th ATCM in Stockholm in 2005 and is being ratified by the Consultative Parties.

The CEP was established in 1998 and meets every year in conjunction with the ATCM to provide expert advice on all matters concerned with the Environment Protocol and its Annexes.





Related Agreements

Besides the Environment Protocol, there are two other agreements in the Antarctic Treaty system:

- *The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals* (CCAS, London 1972) entered into force in 1978
- *The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources* (CCAMLR, Canberra 1980) entered into force in 1982.

Whales, however, which are prevalent in the Antarctic waters, are not dealt with in any of these agreements, but in the International Whaling Convention, which preceded the Antarctic Treaty.

Protected Areas

According to the Environment Protocol, the entire continent of Antarctica is a natural reserve. In addition, some areas of special scientific or environmental value are protected more strictly. Under the provisions of Annex V to the Environment Protocol, more than 60 areas in various places on Antarctica have the status of Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASP). In general, entry into these areas is only allowed with a permit for authorized scientific activities. In addition, there are six Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMA), where activities are coordinated by the Parties to avoid conflicts and minimize environmental impacts.

To guard against possible damage caused by visitors, the ATCM in recent years has adopted Site Guidelines that provide practical guidelines for visits to the most popular tourist sites.



The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

In accordance with Article IX of the Treaty, the original twelve Parties to the Treaty and those Parties that demonstrate their interest in Antarctica by conducting “*substantial research activity*” there – together called the Consultative Parties - meet once a year “*for the purpose of exchanging information, consulting together on matters of common interest pertaining to Antarctica, and formulating and considering and recommending to their Governments measures in furtherance of the principles and objectives of the Treaty*”.

This meeting is called the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), and the measures taken by the ATCM together constitute the administrative and environmental regime for Antarctica. The inhospitable environment of Antarctica presents formidable challenges for any kind of human activities, and at the same time technical progress brings Antarctica ever closer to the rest of the world. The regulations and guidelines administered by the Parties cover such subjects as

- scientific cooperation
- protection of the Antarctic environment
- conservation of plants and animals
- preservation of historic sites
- designation and management of protected areas
- management of tourism
- information exchange
- collection of meteorological data
- hydrographic charting
- logistic cooperation
- communications and safety.

Next to environmental protection, which has been the main area of policy making and regulation, tourism has been an important subject on the agenda of the ATCM in recent years, due to the rapid increase in the number of tourists going to Antarctica.

The 31st ATCM will take place from 2 to 13 June 2008 in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Maps courtesy of the Australian Antarctic Data Centre.



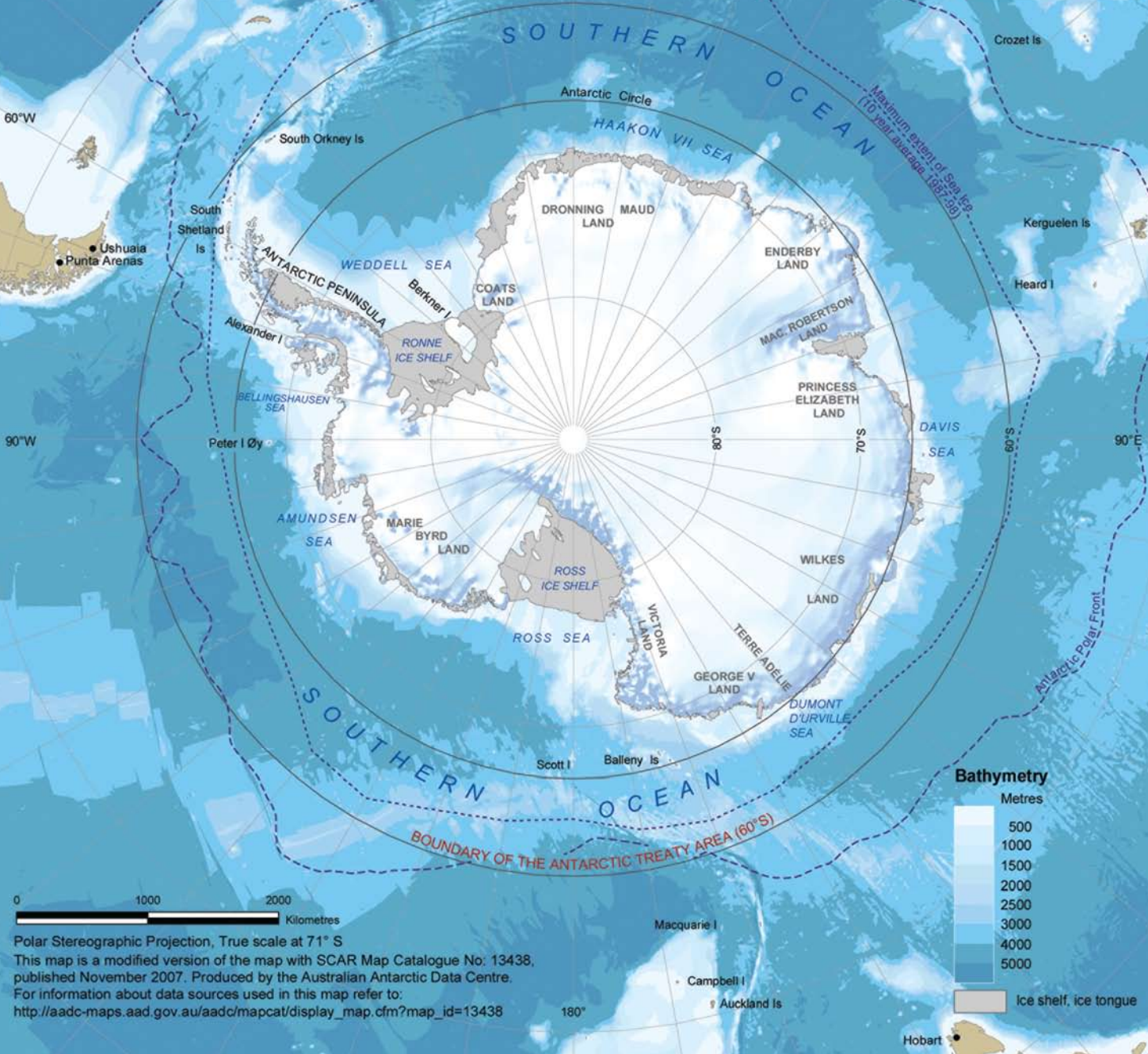
The Antarctic Treaty Secretariat

The Antarctic Treaty operated without any permanent institution until 1 September 2004, when the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat was established in Buenos Aires. Under direction of the ATCM, the Secretariat works to:

- Prepare and support the ATCM and other meetings
- Collect, maintain and publish the records of the ATCM
- Facilitate the exchange of information between the Parties required under the Treaty and the Protocol
- Provide information about the Antarctic Treaty system to the public.

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ANTARCTICA AND THE SOUTHERN OCEAN



Polar Stereographic Projection, True scale at 71° S
 This map is a modified version of the map with SCAR Map Catalogue No: 13438,
 published November 2007. Produced by the Australian Antarctic Data Centre.
 For information about data sources used in this map refer to:
http://aadc-maps.aad.gov.au/aadc/mapcat/display_map.cfm?map_id=13438