

COUNCIL OF MANAGERS OF NATIONAL ANTARCTIC PROGRAMS (COMNAP) Annual General Meeting (AGM) XXX

Communique (released 15 June 2018)

The COMNAP AGM XXX was held in the Congress Centre, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, from 11–13 June 2018 and was hosted by Germany's National Antarctic Program, the Alfred Wegener Institute Helmholtz Center for Polar and Marine Research. The COMNAP AGM was attended by representatives from 29 (of 30) COMNAP Member organisations. Apologies were accepted from the Ecuador National Antarctic Program. Observers from the national Antarctic programs of Canada, Malaysia, Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey also attended. Other Expert Observers from the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), the Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS) project and the Year of Polar Prediction (YOPP) project were also in attendance for various portions of the meeting. It was one of the largest COMNAP gatherings held, with a total of over 200 participants in the AGM, with the exhibitors, and with participants in the range of side meetings.

Members engaged in lively discussions and exchanged pre-season information for Antarctic research season 2018–2019. The COMNAP Safety Expert Group held a workgroup discussion on the topic of harassment in the Antarctic, there was a telemedicine update including a live-link to the winter-over doctor currently deployed to Germany's Neumayer Station, and a session which focused on facilitation of science particularly in the context of marine platforms. Many National Antarctic Programs shared information on their research vessel capabilities including many new builds in the process or just completed. The new COMNAP Asset Tracking System (CATS) continues to evolve and to expand to include aircraft as well as vessel movements. The tool was recognised by the AGM as an important science support system which is designed to optimise asset movements in order to support international science coordination and in cases where an emergency situation may arise. COMNAP continues significant work on environmental topics. This year the focus was on understanding plastic sources and how to reduce impacts from plastic in the Antarctic terrestrial and marine environments. National Antarctic Programs recognise that further research is needed and should be encouraged in and around Antarctica to further our understanding of the impacts of plastic pollution. The Environment Expert Group also looked at cumulative impacts, reducing risk of introduction of non-native species and further reduction of fossil fuel use in Antarctic operations. Promotion of energy efficiency practices and technologies at research stations was a key message to all COMNAP members.

COMNAP continues to focus on a range of issues related to safety of human life. Announcing its intention to convene Search And Rescue (SAR) Workshop IV in New Zealand in May 2019 and also continuing to gather data related to air activity in the Antarctic, including the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) used in support of science, operations and logistics to inform discussions planned for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) XLII in 2019.

Dr Kelly K Falkner, Director of the Office of Polar Programs of the US National Science Foundation, continues in her three-year term as COMNAP Chair. Rob Wooding (AAD/Australia) completed his four-year term as Vice Chair and Peter Beggs (Antarctica New Zealand) was elected to the Vice Chair position for a three year term (to AGM 2021). Peter joins, COMNAP Vice Chairs: Javed Beg (NCAOR/India), John Guldahl (NPI/Norway), Agnieszka Kruszewska (IBB PAS/Poland) and Uwe Nixdorf (AWI/Germany) who all continue in their terms. Michelle Rogan-Finnemore (Executive Secretary) continues in her appointed role and completes the seven-member COMNAP Executive Committee.

COMNAP celebrated its 30th anniversary with a range of events and announced that Professor Kazuyuki Shiraishi, Immediate Past COMNAP Chair, was honoured with confirmation that a geographic place name in the Antarctic had been confirmed in recognition of his three decades of work in the Antarctic. The place is Shiraishi Peak, a partially ice free peak at 1640m, on a prominent ridge in the Meteorite Hills, south Victoria Land, Antarctica.

The next AGM will be held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, from 29 July–1 August 2019 and will be hosted by the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute.



Background

Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP)

COMNAP is the international association that brings together the world's National Antarctic Programs. National Antarctic Programs are those organisations that have responsibility for delivering and supporting scientific research in the Antarctic Treaty Area on behalf of their respective governments and in the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty.

COMNAP's Members are the National Antarctic Programs of the Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. All operate from countries which have signed the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty. There are, in addition, six Observer National Antarctic Programs.

Each is represented in COMNAP by the Manager/Director of the National Antarctic Program. National Antarctic Programs collectively have the greatest first-hand experience of living and working in the Antarctic. Many of the National Antarctic Programs have operated in the Antarctic since 1957/58 which is known as the International Geophysical Year (IGY).

COMNAP's purpose is to "develop and promote best practice in managing the support of scientific research in Antarctica". It does this by:

- Serving as a forum to develop practices that improve effectiveness of activities in an environmentally responsible manner;
- Facilitating and promoting international partnerships;
- Providing opportunities and systems for information exchange; and
- Providing the Antarctic Treaty System with objective and practical, technical and non-political advice drawn from the National Antarctic Programs' pool of expertise.

COMNAP is one of only three organisations to have Observer status at the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs). In that role, COMNAP has made numerous technical and practical recommendations on a variety of matters, many of which have been incorporated into Antarctic Treaty legal policy. In particular, COMNAP has advised safety in operations, including improving search and rescue (SAR) coordination and response, on reducing the risk of non-native species introduction into Antarctica and on improving energy efficiency at Antarctic facilities and on vessels.

The global Secretariat/Headquarters of COMNAP is located in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Point of Contact

Michelle Rogan-Finnemore

Executive Secretary

Michelle.finnemore@comnap.aq