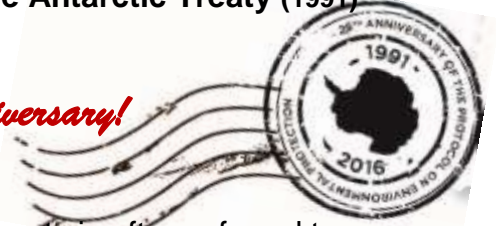




To COMNAP Member National Antarctic Program's Stations
On the 25th Anniversary of the
Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991)
4 October 2016

Greetings as we celebrate this 25th Anniversary!



What is the Environmental Protocol?

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty is often referred to as the “Environmental Protocol” or the “Madrid Protocol”. It is a legal document that is agreed to by 38 countries which says that they designate Antarctica as a “natural reserve, devoted to peace and science”...it also commits those countries to “the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems”.

Read the full text of the [Environmental Protocol](#).

Why is the Environmental Protocol important?

Making “peace and science” the primary activity for one-tenth of the whole surface of the planet is pretty unique, but to also make that whole area a “natural reserve” means that you have to carry out those peaceful activities in a way which gives significant and adequate protection to the environment. Protecting the Antarctic environment is important not just for those people who live and work, and visit the Antarctic area, but to the whole world. To ensure a high-level of protection there and to reduce direct human impacts in Antarctica, the Environmental Protocol prohibits “any activity relating to mineral resources, other than scientific research...”, so the Antarctic will not be exploited for mineral resources that might be found there, including any hydrocarbons such as oil, gas and coal. This prohibition on mineral activities was established to protect the many values of the Antarctic Treaty area, including its scientific value. Therefore, science and science support, as carried out by National Antarctic Program personnel, are critical activities which create and maintain a scientific legacy for future generations of researchers and for the world.

Read of some of the other reasons the [Environmental Protocol is important](#).

Is the Environmental Protocol still relevant after 25 years?

At a time when commercial activities are driving the world's economy, the Environmental Protocol is probably more relevant now than it ever was. Keeping the Antarctic free from exploitation of its mineral resources and ensuring that there is a high standard of environmental practices in place for whatever we do there has protected the Antarctic Treaty area for the past 25 years and will continue to do so for as long as Antarctic Treaty countries have the will to do so. On the anniversary of the Environmental Protocol those countries have reaffirmed their commitment to the goals of the Environmental Protocol because they believe it is still relevant after 25 years.

Read the [Santiago Declaration \(2016\)](#) which reaffirms countries commitment to the Environmental Protocol.

Read the [Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting 2016 Resolution 6](#) which reaffirms the Consultative Parties commitment to the importance of the mineral prohibition.

What is the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) relationship to the Environmental Protocol?

COMNAP is an international association of governmental organisations that provide science support for Antarctic activities. The 30 COMNAP Member National Antarctic Programs have a very strong commitment to the Environmental Protocol and those who work in the Antarctic in support of science are firm believers and implementers in the Environmental Protocol's recommendations, goals and ideas. COMNAP Membership is open only to those organisations whose Governments have signed up to the Environmental Protocol. COMNAP places strong emphasis on understanding environmental protection of the Antarctic through our Environmental Expert Group. The majority of the COMNAP Member National Antarctic Programs have environmental managers and a strong commitment to protect the Antarctic environment.

Download an operator's perspective of the Environmental Protocol and discover how the [Environmental Protocol is implemented](#) in this PowerPoint presentation (English language version) which was delivered by Dr. Yves Frenot, former CEP Chairman and COMNAP Vice Chairman, at the 25th Anniversary of the Environmental Protocol Symposium, Santiago, Chile, May 30, 2016.

The presentation text is also available in other languages:

[Environmental Protocol implementation \(French language text\).docx](#)

[Environmental Protocol implementation \(Spanish language text\).docx](#)

Find out more about [COMNAP](#).

Want to learn more about the Environmental Protocol? [#AntarcticaProtected](#)

COMNAP has produced these Environmental Protocol training modules. Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Environmental Protocol by watching one of these modules, by asking questions about the information the modules contain, and by sharing this information with colleagues. At the end of watching these, try to visualise an Antarctica that is not protected by the Environmental Protocol. Is an Antarctica that is exploited for its commercial potential the Antarctica of the future we want to be a part of? Look out your window...see a pristine Antarctica we can all enjoy? Or see the commercial advertising signs of the companies that would set up shop without the Environmental Protocol...which Antarctica do you want to be a part of?

Watch one of the following Environmental Protocol training modules.

[Environmental Protocol \(English\)](#)

[Environmental Protocol \(French\)](#)

[Environmental Protocol \(Russian\)](#)

[Environmental Protocol \(Spanish\)](#)

*Warm regards to all those in Antarctica
on the 25th anniversary of the Environmental Protocol.*