

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

Communiqué (released 8 August 2017)

The COMNAP AGM XXIX was held in the International Hotel Brno, Czech Republic, from 31 July–2 August 2017 and was hosted by the Czech Republic National Antarctic Program, whose lead agency is the Masaryk University. 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 and Portugal 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 Forum of Arctic Research Operators (FARO), the International Network for Terrestrial Research and Monitoring in the Arctic (INTERACT), the EU-PolarNet and the European Polar Board were also in attendance for various portions of the meeting. It was one of the largest COMNAP gatherings held, with 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 2017–2018. It was reported that significant progress was made on the development of the COMNAP database and the first COMNAP *Antarctic Station Catalogue* was published. The COMNAP Safety Expert Group held a dedicated air activity discussion which included a focus on safety of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and exchange of information on our state of knowledge of wildlife response to RPA activity. The Shipping Expert Group discussed the practical implementation of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Polar Code and agreed further development on the COMNAP Asset Tracking System (CATS) to expand to include aircraft as well as vessel movements. The system 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, and at the joint meeting of the COMNAP and SCAR Executive Committees, held on the margins of the AGM, there was an agreement to update the *Non-native Species Voluntary Checklists for Supply Chain Managers* (2012). The Joint Expert Group on Human Biology and Medicine met for a session and led a discussion on crisis management.

The AGM recessed on Day 3 in order to convene a half-day, open, workshop on “Seasonal Stations & Remote Field Camps” which focused on the sharing of best practice on energy & technology requirements/solutions, training of personnel and environmental management. There were ten oral presentations and six posters presented. This workshop was held as a direct result of the outcomes of the COMNAP *Antarctic Roadmap Challenges* Project.

Professor Kazuyuki Shiraishi of Japan's National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) completed his 3-year term as COMNAP Chair and announced his retirement as Director-General of the NIPR. Dr Kelly Falkner, Director of the Office of Polar Programs of the US National Science Foundation, was elected as COMNAP Chair for a 3-year term. Her term takes effect immediately until the end of COMNAP AGM 2020. COMNAP Vice Chairs: Yves Frenot (IPEV/France), José Retamales (INACH/Chile) and Rob Wooding (AAD/Australia) all completed their 3-year terms as Vice Chairs and Rob was subsequently elected for an additional 1-year term. Also elected into 3-year Vice Chair roles were Agnieszka Kruszewska (IBB PAS/Poland) and Uwe Nixdorf (AWI/Germany). They join continuing Vice Chair Javed Beg (NCAOR/India), and John Guldahl (NPI/Norway) to complete the six-strong elected members of the COMNAP Executive Committee. Michelle Rogan-Finnemore (Executive Secretary) continues in her appointed role and completes the seven-member COMNAP Executive Committee.

The inaugural COMNAP Chairman's Medal was presented to co-recipients Patrice Godon (formerly with IPEV/France) and Henry Valentine (formerly with SANAP/South Africa) and the COMNAP Antarctic Fellowship 2017 was awarded to Gabriela Roldan to undertake a project at INACH/Chile.

COMNAP will celebrate its 30th anniversary at COMNAP AGM XXX (2018), which will be held in Garmisch, Germany, from June 11–13, 2018. The 30th AGM will be hosted by the Alfred Wegener Institute of the Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research, Germany.



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 30 Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. All operate from countries with have signed the Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty.

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, at Gateway Antarctica, the University of Canterbury.

Point of Contact

Michelle Rogan-Finnemore

Executive Secretary

Michelle.finnemore@comnap.aq