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Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2009-10

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Under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty

Introduction

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is pleased to present a report of its activities to ATCM XXXIII, under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty.

IAATO continues to focus activities in support of its mission statement to ensure:

- Effective day-to-day management of member activities in Antarctica;
- Educational outreach, including scientific collaboration; and
- Development and promotion of Antarctic tourism industry best practices.

A detailed description of IAATO, its mission statement, primary activities and recent developments can be found on the IAATO website: www.iaato.org.

IAATO Membership and Activities during 2009-10

IAATO member offices are located worldwide, representing companies from 57% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, and carrying nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica.

For visitation during the 2009-10 Antarctic tourism season, the overall number of visitors dropped 6.8% to 35,262 from the previous season (37,858 visitors in 2008-09). These numbers reflect only those traveling with IAATO member companies. Details on tourism statistics can be found in ATCM XXXIII IP *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2009-10 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2010-11 and Beyond*. The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at www.iaato.org.

IAATO Annual Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2009-10

IAATO Secretariat staff and member representatives participated in internal and external meetings, liaising with National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific and environmental organizations during 2009-10.

- The IAATO 20th Annual Meeting (June 8-11, 2009, Providence, Rhode Island, USA) hosted 105 participants. Two full days were open to Treaty Party representatives. Several notable outcomes of the meeting included:
 - Adoption of additional industry best practice measures, including measures related to field staff training and accreditation, prevention of introduction of non-native species, and a strategic review of forthcoming priority areas;
 - *Actions to Enhance Marine Safety and Guidelines for Small Boat Operation in the Vicinity of Ice*, recommended by the IAATO Marine Committee, were approved by Members (see ATCM XXXIII IP061 *IAATO Further Recommendations to Tourism Vessel Operators to Enhance Marine Safety, and Guidelines for Small Boat Operations in the Vicinity of Ice*); and
 - Establishment of a climate change working group to: quantify members' carbon footprint, assess and ultimately augment current mitigation practices; and develop educational material for passengers on the implications of climate change in Antarctica;

In addition, IAATO members and representatives from several Treaty Parties participated in an informal round table discussion on Antarctic tourism-related issues (see ATCM XXXIII IP084 *Establishing an Annual Round Table Discussion on Antarctic Tourism: Summary Report on June 2009 IAATO Meeting*).

- Two IAATO representatives attended COMNAP XXI. IAATO welcomed occasions where its input was requested: refining methods of reporting major incidents to COMNAP; containment of potential H1N1 virus; clarification and likely outcome of pending IMO ban on use and carriage of HFO in Antarctic waters; and improved scientific and logistical collaboration. IAATO supports further cooperation and collaboration between its operators and National Antarctic Programs.
- Two IAATO representatives attended the 9th International Hydrographic Organization / Hydrographic Committee on Antarctica (IHO/HCA) Meeting. IAATO strongly supports the constructive work of the IHO/HCA and is pleased to continue to offer IAATO vessels as ships of opportunity for hydrographic data collection. During 2009-10, hydrographers visited several IAATO vessels in key ports to discuss directly with ships' officers the most effective means to collect data. The HCA will also make a presentation at the 2010 IAATO Annual Meeting to appraise members on the work of the HCA and discuss further assistance that can be provided by IAATO operators.
- Five IAATO representatives participated in the 2nd Annual *Workshop Towards Improved Search and Rescue (SAR) Coordination and Response in the Antarctic*. The workshop resulted in a number of key points and recommendations, some focusing on tourism-related activities. Attendees worked through four hypothetical SAR exercises, resulting in some realistic appraisals of SAR assets available to Maritime Rescue Coordination Centers (MRCCs) including the extent to which IAATO members can provide SAR assets. The IAATO vessel-tracking system was noted as an important tool in helping to "take the search out of search & rescue," and figured into some of the key points and recommendations. IAATO strongly supports the recommendation that National Antarctic Programs express to their countries the need for contingency planning to be outlined in all authorization applications or advance notifications.
- IAATO was pleased to participate in the 2009 ATME on Ship-borne Tourism, presenting three Information Papers: IP007 *IAATO Summary of Antarctic Ship-Based Tourism: Final Statistics for the 2008-09 Season and Revised Estimates for the 2009-10 Season and Projected Trends through the 2012-13 Season*; IP008 *IAATO Actions and Recommendations to Tourism Vessel Operators to Enhance Marine Safety*; and – jointly with the US – IP009 *Spatial Patterns of Tour Ship Traffic in the Antarctic Peninsula Region*. IAATO looks forward to continued discussions on tourism-related topics.
- IAATO sent a representative to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Design and Equipment (D&E) Subcommittee's 53rd meeting (February 2010), as an advisor for Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Cognizant of the focus on the development of a mandatory Polar Code and the importance placed by the Secretary General and the Chair of the Subcommittee to produce prudent measures toward the protection of life and the polar environments, IAATO was pleased to make a presentation of a risk-based approach intended to inform the discussion and contribute to the development of the Code. A general description of the material provided in IAATO's presentation can be found in ATCM XXXIII IP060 *Developing a Risk Assessment Framework for IAATO Passenger Vessels*. Through CLIA, IAATO looks forward to actively participating in the discussions to develop the Code.
- IAATO sent a representative to the 2010 ATME on Climate Change, presenting IP003 *IAATO's Climate Change Working Group*. IAATO welcomes these discussions, noting their importance for the effective management of the Antarctic environment.
- The IAATO 21st Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 21-24, 2010 in Turin, Italy. Interested Treaty Parties that would like to attend or participate should contact IAATO at iaato@iaato.org.

Environmental Impact Assessment, Monitoring, Advance Notification and other Treaty Agreements

Most IAATO member operators are required to submit Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Advance Notification and/or operational documents that substitute for EIAs to their national authorities pending each country's legal process. Not all governments require EIAs or yearly updates. A comparison of operators' EIAs, which they are required to submit to their respective national authorities, reflects some notable variations in requirements. IAATO endeavors to bridge these variations by building best-practice operating standards and guidelines, in particular to ensure that mitigation measures and procedures are in place to avoid environmental impacts.

In addition, Recommendation XVIII-1 (1994) *Guidance for Those Organizing and Conducting Tourism and Non-governmental Activities in the Antarctic* is provided to all members in order to inform them of key obligations and procedures to be followed. IAATO urges Parties to consider formally adopting Recommendation XVIII-1 for Visitors and Tour Organizers. IAATO remains concerned about visitors traveling as part of non-IAATO recreational operations that may not be aware of the Environmental Protocol and its obligations.

IAATO is pleased to be working collaboratively with Oceanites, Antarctic Site Inventory and University of Maryland on data collection and analysis regarding IAATO member activities for monitoring purposes. In addition, IAATO is pleased to have commenced collaboration with the University of Stellenbosch regarding pathways and vectors for non-native species, and looks forward to further collaborative efforts with other scientific bodies in the forthcoming year.

Update on Tourism Incidents 2008-09, and Tourism Incidents 2009-10

IAATO awaits final flag-state reports from Panama and Bahamas, respectively, for two marine incidents that occurred during the 2008-09 season: the December 4, 2008 grounding of *MV Ushuaia*, and February 17, 2009 grounding of *MV Ocean Nova*.

Three notable incidents occurred during the 2009-10 season: two medical evacuations from the South Pole, and a damaged propeller and shaft incurred when an expedition vessel, *Clelia II*, struck a rock during a routine landing operation at Petermann Island, Penola Strait, Antarctic Peninsula. Circular No. 1 / 2010, distributed by the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat on January 7, 2010, described all three incidents.

Scientific and Conservation Support

During the 2009-10 season, IAATO members cost-effectively transported scores of scientific, support and heritage trust staff, as well as equipment used by these personnel, to and from stations, field sites and gateway ports. In addition, IAATO members and their passengers continued the tradition of financial contributions to many scientific and conservation organizations active in Antarctica. A breakdown of monies raised and transport provided during 2009-10 will soon be available on the IAATO website under *Papers and Publications*.

With Thanks – Cooperation with National Programs, Antarctic Treaty Parties and all Stakeholders

IAATO appreciates the opportunity to work cooperatively with Antarctic Treaty Parties, COMNAP, SCAR, CCAMLR, IHO/HCA, ASOC and others towards the long-term protection of Antarctica.