

## **COUNCIL OF MANAGERS OF NATIONAL ANTARCTIC PROGRAMS (COMNAP) Annual General Meeting (AGM) XXXI**

*Communiqué (released 6 August 2019)*

The COMNAP held its thirty-first AGM in the Grand Hotel, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, from 29–31 July 2019, hosted by Bulgaria's National Antarctic Program—the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria. The AGM was attended by representatives from all thirty COMNAP Member organisations (see [COMNAP Members](#) for full list). 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) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) attended various portions of the meeting. It was the largest COMNAP AGM and associated meetings held, with 240 participants.

Members engaged in lively discussions and exchanged pre-season information for Antarctic research season 2019–2020. The COMNAP Safety Expert Group held a workgroup discussion on the topic of Antarctic aviation and presented the key outcomes of the COMNAP Antarctic Search and Rescue (SAR) Workshop IV held in New Zealand in May 2019. There was also information shared on upcoming plans for modernization of several Antarctic facilities with the AGM agreeing to share more information on modernization. The Air Operations Expert Group presented the outcomes of the ATCM XLII focussed discussion on aviation and noted the request to COMNAP to provide advice back to ATCM XLIII to assist ATCM decision-making. COMNAP accepted the offer by the Australian Antarctic Division to host the COMNAP-convened Antarctic Aviation Workshop in Hobart on 30–31 July 2020. A Steering Committee will be created to guide planning and programming for that workshop and an open invitation to all those involved in Antarctic aviation will be distributed.

Invited Guest Speaker David Blake gave a keynote presentation as part of the Advancing Critical Technologies Expert Group session on recent innovation in battery technologies, while other experts presented tools available to vessel operations, and to science activity, in regards to understanding sea ice extent. Information was presented on fuel saving at Antarctic stations, on technologies being used to run science equipment autonomously over winter and on methodologies to quantify CO<sub>2</sub> outputs from national Antarctic program activities. Continuing implementation of energy efficiency practices and technologies at research stations was a key message to all COMNAP members.

The Joint Expert Group on Human Biology and Medicine met to review last season's medivacs, medical events, cases of interest, and seasonal challenges, and to share lessons learned from those to ensure efficient and effective response to medical events. The morning of the last day of the AGM was devoted to the Education, Outreach & Training Expert Group who held a half-day Workshop on "Communicating the importance of our Antarctic activity". The open workshop was well attended and included presentations from nine national Antarctic programs, highlighting the work those programs undertake with schools, teachers and the public.

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. Javed Beg (NCPOR/India) completed his three-year term as Vice Chair. John Guldahl (NPI/Norway) was elected to a one-year additional term as Vice Chair (to AGM 2020), Ho Il Yoon (KOPRI/ Republic of Korea) and Sergio Gago Guida (PROANTAR/Brazil) were each elected to a three-year Vice Chair term (to AGM 2022). They all join COMNAP Vice Chairs Agnieszka Kruszezka (IBB PAS/Poland) and Uwe Nixdorf (AWI/Germany) who continue in their terms. Michelle Rogan-Finnemore (Executive Secretary) continues in her appointed role and completes the seven-member COMNAP Executive Committee.

The next AGM will be held in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, from 3–6 August 2020, jointly with the SCAR Open Science Conference and associated meetings and will be hosted by the Australian Antarctic Division.



## 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 with 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 safety in air operations, on reducing the risk of non-native species introduction into Antarctica, on understanding sources of plastics and on improving energy efficiency at Antarctic facilities and on vessels.

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

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