



ANTARCTIC AND SOUTHERN OCEAN COALITION

International Secretariat: Private Bag 6, Broadway Post Office,
Sydney 2007, Australia.

May 9, 1989

APPLICATION FOR OBSERVER STATUS TO THE ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING FROM THE ANTARCTIC AND SOUTHERN OCEAN COALITION

TO ALL ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE PARTIES:

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) has had an active interest in Antarctic issues, particularly concerning the impacts of human activities on the Antarctic region, since 1977. The Coalition was founded in that year, at the beginning of the negotiations for the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, to provide information to the public about Antarctic resources, environmental and policy issues, and to enable citizen organizations to express their views about the future of the Antarctic.

As a representative organisation of concerned environmental groups, ASOC was granted limited observer status to the Commission meetings of the VIIth Meeting of the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in 1988. One of its most active members, Greenpeace, has maintained its own permanent year-round base in Antarctica since February 1987.

On the basis of this proven interest and involvement in Antarctic matters, ASOC formally requests the Antarctic Treaty States to admit it as an "expert organisation" to relevant discussions at the forthcoming Consultative Meeting in Paris, and to establish a regularised process for its invitation to future Consultative Meetings of the Antarctic Treaty.

BACKGROUND ON ASOC:

ASOC is a non-profit coalition comprised of approximately 200 non-governmental environmental and conservation organisations from 35 countries. Four of its member organisations act as 'secretariats' (The Antarctica Project in Washington DC, ASOC-NZ in Wellington, New Zealand, ASOC-Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Greenpeace Australia in Sydney). A broader-based Steering Committee, comprised principally of our most active members,

advises on policy. ASOC also utilises the legal, scientific and environmental protection expertise of its membership to prepare submissions and scientific commentary on specific issues.

The aims and objectives of ASOC, which are based on the principle that Antarctica's near-pristine nature and its current wilderness, aesthetic and scientific values should be permanently protected for the use and benefit of all humankind, are as follows:

- * to work for the implementation of a conservation strategy for Antarctica, including creation of an international Antarctic Environmental Protection Agency or some similar body,
- * to endorse the "ecosystem as a whole" (as in CCAMLR) approach to conservation in Antarctica,
- * to support protection of the Antarctic as a science preserve and wildlife sanctuary, wilderness area and place of special aesthetic, spiritual and scenic values,
- * to oppose oil and minerals development in the region,
- * to maintain and build on the unique arms-free situation in Antarctica towards arms control on a larger scale, and
- * to support new forms of specially protected areas, including whale habitat sanctuaries and "wilderness" reserves.

ASOC WAS FOUNDED FOR THESE PURPOSES:

- * the distribution of information about Antarctic environmental and conservation issues, government policies and scientific issues to interested Non-Governmental Organisations ("NGOs"),
- * monitoring of meetings of the Antarctic Treaty, Convention on the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, Polar Research Board and other bodies that are involved with Antarctic environmental and conservation issues, and to report on those meetings to the world community,
- * preparation of proposals for improving pertinent international conventions and their implementation and to suggest new conservation concepts, including habitat sanctuaries, environmental impact assessment procedures and environmental protection institutions,
- * promotion of a dialogue among governments, scientists and official observer organisations on (1) the possibility of managing Antarctic fisheries as a large-scale scientific experiment, (2) the desirability of preserving the Antarctic

region as a science preserve and wildlife sanctuary and (3) the use of Antarctica's unique demilitarised status and inspections provision as a model for arms control efforts in other parts of the world,

- * publishing of the international newspaper "ECO" whenever governments meet to discuss or negotiate Antarctic issues, and to distribute ECO to interested diplomats, scientists, academics and conservation leaders,
- * encouragement of more governments to take an active interest in Antarctica's future,
- * support of scientific research in the Antarctic, on a co-operative, international basis,
- * encouragement of governments to extend the demilitarized status of the continent to all waters inside the Antarctic Treaty area (south of 60 degrees South Latitude),
- * encouragement of international inspections to ensure compliance with agreed rules and measures, including establishment of an Infractions Committee for The Antarctic Treaty System.

ASOC'S VALUE TO THE ANTARCTIC TREATY SYSTEM:

ASOC understands that the XIII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Brussels, Belgium, in 1985 came to a general agreement that the Treaty System might be advanced or assisted by the inclusion as observers or experts of appropriate international organisations with a solid background of Antarctic interest and expertise. Subsequently, at the XIV Consultative Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a number of organisations were invited to participate as experts in discussions of relevant agenda items. ASOC understands that delegations were in general agreement that these expert organisations were able to successfully assist their discussions.

ASOC submits that the discussions of the Antarctic Treaty nations relating to the general area of "human impact on the Antarctic environment" would benefit from the inclusion of non-governmental organisations such as ASOC with a proven interest in the Antarctic environment.

ASOC is an international non-governmental organisation with considerable expertise on the part of its members regarding environmental concerns in the Antarctic. Non-governmental organisations such as ASOC can play a valuable role in highlighting areas of the Treaty system which may be improved, and in providing suggestions for resolution of potential problems.

Since its inception, ASOC has presented many submissions to

Antarctic Treaty system meetings on various environmental issues being discussed at the time, including Waste Disposal, Environmental Impact Assessment, Safeguards for Scientific Drilling, Protected Areas, Tourism, and the need for a Conservation Strategy covering all Antarctic Treaty activities, in an attempt to assist the meetings' progress toward Recommendations.

ASOC has utilised the comprehensive review of station waste disposal practices undertaken by Greenpeace in its 1987/88 and 1988/89 expeditions in the preparation of its submission on waste disposal practices for the SCAR meeting in 1988. The experiences of Greenpeace at World Park base with respect to environmental assessment and effective management practices has added considerably to our understanding of what is possible in the Antarctic.

Following several years of monitoring the Convention from the "outside", ASOC was recently granted limited access as an observer to the 1988 Commission meetings of the CCAMLR, and an ad hoc arrangement for future inclusion was also agreed upon.

ASOC submits that its past activities, as summarised in this application, clearly indicate the strength of its concern and interest in the Antarctic environment and highlight its capacity to assist the Antarctic Treaty Parties in their deliberations.

ASOC further believes that the inclusion of international non-governmental environmental organisations such as ASOC in Antarctic Treaty discussions can only enhance the credibility and openness of the Antarctic Treaty system in the eyes of the world. ASOC therefore respectfully requests Antarctic Treaty nations to issue an invitation for it to be represented at the forthcoming ATCM as an expert organisation. We look forward to working out suitable details of such representation at the Preparatory Meeting.

We ask that the Consultative Parties review and approve this application at the Preparatory Session, and advise us as to the details of our participation at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in October.

Yours sincerely

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