
S20: Achieving environmental outcomes through the tools of the Antarctic Treaty Systems

Linking Antarctic science with environmental protection policies: Do scientists and policy-makers speak the same language?

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For over half a century, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) has supported the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) in providing evidence-based science to inform managers of environmental issues in the Antarctic. This expert advice has formed the basis for many policies directed towards the protection of the Antarctic environment. A mini-symposium was held in Malaysia, at the 2016 SCAR OSC, aimed to highlight the policy relevance of research carried out by the international Antarctic research community in influencing decisions taken by the policy-makers of the Antarctic Treaty Parties. In this presentation, we will present the highlights from this mini-symposium, with a focus on assessing to what extent the research carried out by Antarctic scientists has made a substantial contribution to the development of regulatory mechanisms through the ATS. Moreover, we will illustrate how such contributions can facilitate discussions on how SCAR researchers can further engage with ATS issues and assist in identifying the most pressing scientific and environmental challenges the ATS should address. While it is no surprise that the ATS and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, in particular, are central to Antarctic environmental protection, the policy relevance and value of robust, evidence-based science can be underestimated by policy makers. A need exists for improved two-way communication between Antarctic scientists and policy makers to foster evidence-based decision-making. In many cases, scientists need to work internationally and collaboratively to provide of substantial scientific insights that are of relevance to policy makers, and more needs to be done to ensure that these insights are communicated in an appropriate and efficient manner to policy-makers. The coordination between scientists, science managers, policy makers and funding bodies may need to be enhanced to ensure resources are available to fund policy-relevant science.

Reference

- Hughes, K. A., Liggett, D., Roldan, G., Wilmotte, A, and Xavier, J. C. Narrowing the science/policy gap for environmental management. Antarctic Science: DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0954102016000407>