



ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING

May 11 - 21, 2026 **Hiroshima, Japan**

48th ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING

11 to 21 May, 2026, Hiroshima – Japan

HOST COUNTRY COMMUNIQUÉ

21 May 2026

Japan hosted the 48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM48) and the 28th Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP28) in Hiroshima from 11th to 21st May 2026.

ATCM48 was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, at the International Conference Center Hiroshima.

More than 400 participants took part in the event, including representatives from 29 Consultative and 15 Non-Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, along with observers and invited experts.

ATCM48 was chaired by Mr Uyama Hideki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in charge of the ATCM. As Japan is committed to environmental sustainability, the meeting was held in a paperless format, by minimising printed materials.

ATCM 48 was officially opened by Dr. Kunimitsu Ayano, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tsuji Kiyoto, State Minister of the Environment, and Mr. Matsui Kazumi, Mayor of Hiroshima. Noting that the Antarctic Treaty is one of the most successful models of collaboration and trust among nations, their remarks highlighted the necessity for demonstrating the ATCM's determination to advance international cooperation even amidst deepening divisions and tension in the

international community. They also highlighted Japan's progress in implementing Annex VI to the Environmental Protocol and called on Parties that had not yet concluded Annex VI to do so, in support of its early entry into force and effective implementation.

Hosting ATCM48 in Hiroshima, an International Peace Culture City, is of particular significance, given that the Antarctic Treaty is an extraordinary agreement with the vision that, even in uncertain times, nations can choose collaboration over competition by setting aside an entire continent for peace and science. Consultative Parties reaffirmed the principles of the Antarctic Treaty — peaceful use and international scientific cooperation — as a beacon of what is possible when countries come together in pursuit of shared knowledge and common purpose.

As part of the opening Plenary session, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Lecture was delivered by Professor Jill Mikucki. It shed light on Antarctic groundwater, particularly its role in supplying bioavailable nutrients to the Southern Ocean as well as its impact on ocean–atmosphere interactions and the challenges it poses to benthic ecosystems.

The CEP made substantive progress in its work on the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment, including improving the Environmental Impact Assessment process, strengthening biosecurity and wildlife disease guidance and advancing discussions on species protection and environmental monitoring, including tourism. Recognising the rapid pace of change in Antarctica, the CEP continued to implement the Climate Change Response Work Programme and provided technical advice to inform the ATCM discussions. The work of the CEP reaffirmed the importance of sustained and effective effort to implement the provisions of the Protocol on Environmental Protection which will mark its 35th Anniversary in 2026.

The ATCM discussed the impacts of climate change on Antarctica and concurred on continuing international scientific cooperation to address this issue. Recognising the risks to the survival of the emperor penguin due to declining sea ice, the overwhelming majority of Parties strongly supported the designation of the emperor penguin as an Antarctic Specially Protected Species. In doing so,

they recalled that the CEP adopted Guidelines for Designations of Specially Protected Species, under which risk of extinction is to be assessed by the SCAR using criteria established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). They noted SCAR's assessment, conducted in accordance with these Guidelines, that the emperor penguin is appropriately classified as Endangered under the IUCN Red List criteria.

ATCM reaffirmed the importance of protecting the emperor penguin as a priority and agreed to a) further implement the tools available under the Antarctic Treaty system to manage activities in the Antarctic Treaty area; b) communicate internationally the need to address pressures from outside the Antarctic region; c) encourage continued monitoring, research and reporting of results on the status of the emperor penguin. In addition, the CEP will continue to consider appropriate management measures and provide further advice to the ATCM.

Two new Antarctic Specially Protected Areas were established, and the management plans for thirteen Antarctic Specially Protected Areas were revised.

Antarctica remains remarkably untouched by human interference and is home to a natural environment of exceptional value. Safeguarding this pristine environment from the adverse effects of the growing tourists in recent years has emerged as a matter of paramount importance and shared responsibility among the international community.

In order to address the growth and diversification of tourism in Antarctica, the ATCM discussed possible measures for regulation and management, along with monitoring methodologies, and decided to continue working through the Intersessional Contact Group on the development of a comprehensive and consistent framework for tourism and other activities.

Transparency in Antarctic activities is the foundation of trust among Parties, which has enabled peaceful use and international cooperation in Antarctica. Based on the report by the Intersessional Contact Group on Information Exchange, the ATCM discussed means to comprehensively improve the Electronic Information

Exchange System (EIES) and adopted a Resolution which recommends that the governments of the Consultative Parties redouble efforts to use the EIES to consolidate national information exchanges as required under the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol. In addition, the Parties welcomed the report on the inspection of sites conducted by the United States in January 2026 including stations of Australia, China, India, and the Russian Federation.

The ATCM examined the requests from Canada, Belarus and Türkiye for Consultative Party status, considering each candidate on its own merit. Although there was no consensus on the requests, constructive discussions were held and these parties are encouraged to continue to pursue Consultative Party status.

Prior to the ATCM, a Joint CEP/Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources Workshop on Climate Change and Monitoring was held to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the two committees to monitor and manage the effects of climate change in the Antarctic. A workshop on education and outreach also took place to share best practices and to exchange views on the role of education and outreach with a view to the International Polar Year 2032-33.

Exhibitions featuring the history of Japan's scientific research and Japan's activities for environmental protection in Antarctica were held by the National Institute of Polar Research and the Ministry of the Environment of Japan at the venue of the ATCM, commemorating the 70th anniversary of Japan's first Antarctic research expeditions.

The next ATCM (ATCM 49) will be held in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, from 17 May to 27 May 2027.