



## **Host Country Communiqué: Italy – 47<sup>th</sup> Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and 27<sup>th</sup> Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP)**

From 23 June to 3 July 2025, Italy hosted the 47<sup>th</sup> Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Milan.

The meetings were organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and held at the Fiera Milano Congressi Convention Centre in Milan.

Representatives from the 58 Consultative and Non-Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, along with Observers and invited Experts, took part in the event, with a total of 450 Delegates registered.

The Meeting was held according to the strictest sustainability criteria: an energy-efficient venue, renewable energy sources, certified paper, low emission transport for materials, low impact catering and waste sorting.

The ATCM was chaired by retired Ambassador Francesco Azzarello, an eminent member of the Italian Foreign Service, formerly Ambassador of Italy to the Netherlands and to Brazil. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani sent a greeting message to the Assembly, which was read by Ambassador Azzarello.

As part of the Plenary, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Lecture was delivered by its newly elected President, Professor Gary Wilson, and focused on the varied threats facing the Antarctic ecosystems and the responses adopted by the SCAR to face them.

An exhibition dedicated to research activities of the Italian National Antarctic Research Program (PNRA) was held during the Milan meeting. It was held under the auspices of the Italian National Antarctic Scientific Commission (CSNA) and curated by the Italian National Antarctic Museum (MNA), in collaboration with the National Research Council of Italy (CNR). Contributions were also provided by the other implementing agencies of the National Research Antarctic Program (ENEA, OGS).

Key discussions at ATCM 47 covered a wide range of issues central to the effective functioning of the Antarctic Treaty System. These included the implementation of the Environmental Protocol, the exchange of scientific and operational information, education and outreach, safety and inspections, and the development of the Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan, the master plan of future challenges facing the ATCM.

The impact on Antarctic fauna of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) was among the topics examined by the ATCM. The Meeting expressed the urgent need for coordinated surveillance, biosecurity protocols and inter-agency cooperation, as available data reveal the spreading of the virus in different regions of Antarctica and its particularly aggressive character.

The ATCM examined the issue of contamination in Antarctica with particular emphasis on microplastics, as international research point to plastic pollution in the Continent as a matter that

requires special attention. The importance of international cooperation was highlighted, with a view to encouraging the exchange of best practices and the search for innovative strategies to monitor chemical pollution in Antarctic ecosystems.

The impact of climate changes in Antarctica remains a focus of ATCM's debates. The SCAR presented an update of its report on the subject "Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment", first introduced at the 44 ATCM in Berlin in 2022. The update indicates - inter alia - the dangers implied in the melting of the Antarctic Ice Sheet, which would have significant impacts on global sea levels".

As the 5th International Polar Year of 2032-2033 approaches, the ATCM examined means of increasing international cooperation in the field of Antarctic Research. The InSync initiative (International Science and Infrastructure for Synchronous Observation) tends to coordinate and promote efforts by the Parties to elaborate and carry out joint projects by strengthening the already existing partnerships and creating new opportunities for collaboration. The ATCM acknowledged the growing interest of Parties to join the initiative.

The ATCM continued to work on developing a comprehensive and adaptive regulatory framework for tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica. The increasing figures of tourism in Antarctica (about 118.000 visitors during the Antarctic summer 2024 – 2025) highlight the need to monitor the impact of tourism in Antarctica, while promoting safe and sustainable practices.

Education and outreach remain fundamental pillars of the Antarctic Treaty System, fostering awareness on the importance of Antarctica's preservation and scientific value. Parties reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing educational initiatives that communicate the Treaty's principles, scientific achievements, and efforts to protect the Antarctic environment to diverse audiences, including youth, policymakers, and the general public.

The Meeting elected the new Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty Francisco Javier Berguño Hurtado who succeeds the incumbent, Dr Albert Lluberas from Uruguay. The ATCM thanked Mr Lluberas who completed his second term as Head of the AT Secretariat.

The ATCM did not find consensus for the new applications of Canada and Belarus to achieve Consultative Party Status.

The next session of the ATCM will be held in Hiroshima – Japan from 11 to 21 of May 2026.