



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH (SCAR)

Media Briefing Note

SCAR, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, is the principal organisation dealing with the international coordination of scientific research in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. Formed in 1958 to continue activities begun during the International Geophysical Year of 1957-58, it is an interdisciplinary committee of the International Council for Science (ICSU). Its area of interest includes Antarctica, its offshore islands, and the surrounding Southern Ocean including the Antarctic Circumpolar Current.

SCAR's mission is *“to be the leading independent organisation for facilitating and coordinating Antarctic research, and for identifying issues emerging from greater scientific understanding of the region that should be brought to the attention of policy makers”*. To achieve its mission, SCAR aims to achieve five main objectives:

1. to initiate, develop, and co-ordinate high quality international scientific research in the Antarctic region, and on the role of the Antarctic region in the Earth system;
2. to provide objective and independent scientific advice to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings and other organizations on issues of science and conservation affecting the management of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.
3. to facilitate free and unrestricted access to Antarctic scientific data and information;
4. to develop scientific capacity in all SCAR Members, especially with respect to younger scientists, and to promote the incorporation of Antarctic science in education at all levels;
5. to communicate scientific information about the Antarctic region to the public.

To ensure that it can deliver effectively on these objectives, SCAR has undergone a major reorganisation that was completed in 2004 with (i) the transformation of its Secretariat into an Executive Office headed by an Executive Director, (ii) the creation of a streamlined structure led by Standing Scientific Groups on Geosciences, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences, (iii) a more focused scientific research programme, (iv) a new Constitution and Rules of Procedure, and (v) a new financial strategy.

SCAR is focusing its efforts on five Scientific Research Programmes addressing major topical issues of the day. These programmes are:

- Subglacial Lake Exploration (SALE)
- Antarctica and the Global Climate System (AGCS)
- Antarctic Climate Evolution (ACE)
- Evolution and Biodiversity in the Antarctic (EBA)
- Inter-hemispheric Conjugacy Effects in Solar-Terrestrial and Aeronomy Research (ICESTAR).

The bulk of the activities contributing to these programmes will be funded nationally. SCAR's international coordination is intended to add value to those national efforts.

SCAR also supports a variety of other scientific activities in which value is added to national efforts through international cooperation. These activities are coordinated by Action Groups operating for short periods, and Expert Groups where more time is needed to achieve success.

SCAR's activities will make significant contributions to achieving the goals of the International Polar Year (IPY) (2007-2009). SCAR is working with partner organisations towards that end, and is a member of the Steering Committee for the IPY.

SCAR's Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System works closely with the Standing Scientific Groups and the Executive Committee to bring key scientific issues to the attention of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting.

SCAR has developed a strategy setting out how it proposes to meet the requirement to develop scientific capacity in all SCAR Members, especially with respect to younger scientists, and to promote the incorporation of Antarctic science in education at all levels. One key element of this strategy is the SCAR Fellowship programme building on the scheme that was supported in 2003-4 by the Prince of Asturias Prize.

SCAR has a Communications Strategy for communicating scientific information about the Antarctic region to the public. Steps have already been taken in this direction with renewal of the SCAR web site, and production of a SCAR poster and Power-Point presentation that are available on the web site.

SCAR's performance will be reviewed in depth at intervals of 8 years, and subsidiary groups at intervals of 5 years. The progress of all groups and the Secretariat against stated action plans will be monitored annually.

SCAR's intentions are set out in the SCAR Strategic Plan for three biennial planning cycles covering the period 2004-2010. The Plan shows where SCAR fits in the world of science, enables SCAR to take a long-term view of its evolving role in relation to changing developments, and provides a blueprint for SCAR activities at the national level. It will be revisited at each biennial meeting of the SCAR Delegates, and revised as appropriate. The work programme and budget that the Delegates approve at each biennial meeting comprise the short-term components of an overall Implementation Plan.

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