The Antarctic: Past, Present and Future

Julia Jabour-Green & Marcus Haward
Editors
The Antarctic:
Past, Present and Future

Proceedings of a conference celebrating the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty on 23 June 1961 held at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia on 22 June 2001.

Edited by
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The Law, Policy and International Relations sub-program of the Antarctic CRC conducts research on the management of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean within the fields of international law, public policy and international relations. It also provides support to other sub-programs within the Antarctic CRC.

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The papers included in this volume were subject to review by three referees and minor editorial changes were made to reflect decisions taken at ATCM XXIV in July 2001.
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Introduction

The cover photograph (source unknown) illustrates the formality of the first Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting held in Canberra, Australia, from 10-14 July 1961. Nearly 40 years later, the fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty was celebrated in Hobart, Australia with an international conference held on 22 June 2001. This anniversary provided an opportunity to assess the achievements of the Treaty including the associated instruments and regimes that make up what has been termed the ‘Antarctic Treaty System’ (ATS). The Antarctic Treaty, developed during the Cold War, has responded to emerging issues and concerns yet faces ongoing challenges in the new millennium. Anniversaries of any kind are an opportunity for reflection, looking back to the past while appreciating the present. It is, however, often easier to look back with a sense of achievement rather than to consider and confront the uncertainties of the future.

In recognition of the significance of the fortieth anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Oceans Studies and Cooperative Research Centre for the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Environment (Antarctic CRC) at the University of Tasmania organised a one day conference with the theme “The Antarctic: Past, Present and Future”. This theme was chosen to represent three significant periods of Antarctic history: the negotiation of the Treaty, culminating in its signing in 1959; contemporary, strategic science; and a 21st century perspective of the challenges the ATS may face in the next four decades.

The conference attracted considerable interest and support from both speakers and participants. The papers presented in this volume serve as a record of the conference but also provide an assessment of Antarctica's past, present and future. A common theme from presentations was the robustness of the ATS over the past 40 years. Despite this robustness, several challenges to the ATS were highlighted. These challenges include the increasing intersection between the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Antarctic Treaty, particularly in relation to the management of high seas areas within the Antarctic Treaty area, and the delimitation of the continental shelf and other maritime zones. Attention was also drawn to challenges arising from the interrelationships between Antarctic institutions. It was acknowledged that the ATS should not be complacent and Treaty parties were urged to maintain dialogue and the spirit of cooperation that they have shown over the past forty years.
Ongoing challenges were expected from current Antarctic and Southern Ocean activities. Problems in managing the fisheries resources within the Southern Ocean were highlighted. Establishing an effective management regime for increasing numbers of tourists and non-government activities in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic was identified as a priority for action, including stronger regulatory frameworks within the ATS. The significance of scientific endeavour as an impetus for international collaboration, one of the foundations of the ATS, was a prominent theme among the presentations. The conference also emphasised the role of the Antarctic in the global climate and the importance of ongoing research into climate change. Emerging areas of science, such as bioprospecting and biotechnology, were recognised as providing new opportunities.

The conference attracted a range of participants. Representatives from Antarctic Treaty Parties, along with Australian academics, government personnel and the general public with an interest in Antarctic matters were invited to the conference. The conference was attended by ambassadors or representatives from the Embassies of Austria, Belgium, People’s Republic of China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and Russia. Formal apologies were received from a number of other diplomatic missions in Canberra.

The success of the conference was due in great part to the support from a number of organisations and individuals. We would like to acknowledge the support from the Australian Antarctic Division, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Tasmanian Government’s Office of Antarctic Affairs, the Tasmanian Polar Network and the Co-Op Bookshop. We wish particularly to note the interest and support given to the conference by the Governor of Tasmania, His Excellency Sir Guy Green. Sir Guy welcomed delegates and officially opened the conference. Sir Guy and Lady Green later hosted an evening reception at Government House, prior to the conference dinner.

We wish to thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, Professor Don McNicol for his support for the Conference. Professor McNicol introduced the Governor Sir Guy Green and hosted the Conference dinner. The Premier of Tasmania, Mr Jim Bacon MHA, addressed the Conference dinner. Mr Bacon’s speech, focusing on the theme of the conference, noted Tasmania’s longstanding connections to the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, current commitments and future developments.

Dr Julia Jabour-Green and Dr Marcus Haward
Editors
Hobart, Tasmania.
November 2001