

(Attached Document)

Overview and key outcomes of the 48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM48)

1. Overview of the Meeting

The 48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM48) was held in Hiroshima City from May 11 to 21, 2026. More than 400 participants took part in the event, including representatives from 29 Consultative and 15 Non-Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, which was chaired by Mr. UYAMA Hideki, Ambassador in charge of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. This marked the first time Japan has hosted the meeting in 32 years, since 1994.

The Meeting addressed key issues including responding to the increase in tourism and protecting wildlife such as emperor penguins.

At the opening ceremony on May 12, Dr. KUNIMITSU Ayano, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, TSUJI Kiyoto, State Minister of the Environment of Japan, and Mr. MATSUI Kazumi, Mayor of Hiroshima City, delivered remarks.

State Minister TSUJI emphasized the importance of multilateral mechanisms, including the Antarctic Treaty System, continuing to function effectively even under the current global circumstances in his remarks. He also noted that Annex VI to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty as well as its domestic implementing legislation are currently under deliberation in the Japanese Diet and called upon Parties to expedite its entry into force.

The Government of Japan released the “ATCM48 Host Country Communiqué” upon closure of the meeting (full text in English attached to this announcement).

During the meeting, exhibitions and outreach activities were conducted at the venue to mark the 70th anniversary of the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition and to promote awareness of the importance of Antarctic environmental protection.

1. Key outcomes of ATCM48

1) Antarctic Environmental Protection

Two new Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) were designated, and management plans for existing protected areas were revised, contributing to strengthened conservation of Antarctica’s fragile ecosystems.

With respect to emperor penguins, Parties shared the recognition, based on scientific evidence, that the species faces a serious risk of extinction due to climate change, particularly the decline of sea ice. There was a shared understanding of the need to prioritize their protection, and Parties agreed to continue discussions on appropriate conservation and management measures beyond this Meeting.

2) Enhancing Transparency

The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of transparency regarding national activities in Antarctica. A Resolution was adopted encouraging Parties to enhance information-sharing and improve the exchange of data and practices, contributing

to greater mutual trust and effective governance of Antarctic activities.

3) Antarctic Tourism Framework

In light of the rapid increase and diversification of Antarctic tourism, Parties discussed possible measures and approaches to regulation, management, and monitoring of tourism and other non-governmental activities.

Recognizing the need for comprehensive and consistent framework, Parties agreed to continue work during the intersessional period to develop effective measures that ensure environmental protection while allowing for appropriate activities.

4) Education and Outreach

Parties exchanged information on their respective education and outreach initiatives. They agreed to establish a permanent online platform to facilitate continuous information exchange in preparation for the 5th International Polar Year (2032-2033), thereby strengthening international collaboration and public awareness of Antarctic issues.

5) Consultative Party Status

Discussions were held regarding applications for Consultative Party status from Canada, Belarus, and Türkiye. It was confirmed that further consideration will continue, based on scientific criteria, including the extent of substantial scientific research activities in Antarctica.

2. Significance of the Meeting

ATCM48 reaffirmed the continued relevance of the Antarctic Treaty System as a cornerstone of international cooperation, ensuring the peaceful use of Antarctica, the promotion of scientific research, and the protection of its environment.

The Meeting also highlighted emerging challenges, such as decreasing population of emperor penguins, and the expansion of tourism, and reaffirmed the commitment of Parties to address these issues through science-based discussions and multilateral cooperation.

The Antarctic Treaty, founded on the principles of peaceful use and international cooperation, has a deep affinity with Hiroshima, a city that has continuously conveyed messages of peace. The Meeting demonstrated to the world, from Hiroshima, a firm commitment to advancing the peaceful use of Antarctica, as well as international cooperation in scientific research and environmental protection in the region.

3. Related Meetings

In conjunction with ATCM48, the following meetings were held.

1) Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty

2) Joint Workshop (*) of the CEP and the Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (SC-CAMLR) on Climate Change and Monitoring

*The joint workshop was held for the first time in ten years, and first time ever in Japan. The workshop facilitated active discussions on climate change impacts in Antarctica and the importance of long-term environmental monitoring in Antarctica.

The outcomes, including 12 recommendations, were submitted to and acknowledged by the CEP.

■ Attached File: Host Country Communiqué (May 21, 2026)

48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, May 11 to 21, 2026, Hiroshima, Japan

Reference 1: Antarctic Treaty

1. Adopted in 1959 by 12 countries, including Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union (at that time), and entered into force in 1961.
2. As of April 2026, there are 58 contracting parties.
3. It applies to areas south of 60 degrees south latitude and contains the following main provisions:
 - Peaceful use of the Antarctic region (prohibition of the construction of military bases, the conduct of military exercises, etc.) (Article 1)
 - Freedom of scientific research and promotion of international cooperation (Articles 2 and 3)
 - Freeze on territorial claims in the Antarctic region (Article 4)
 - Prohibition of nuclear explosions and disposal of radioactive waste (Article 5)

Reference 2: Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM)

Countries that actively conduct scientific research activities in Antarctica are granted as Consultative Parties (29 countries). The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is a forum where Consultative Parties discuss the peaceful use of the Antarctic region, the promotion of scientific research, and the protection and conservation of living resources. The ATCM is held approximately once a year on a rotating basis among the Consultative Parties. At the ATCM, meetings of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) are also held in accordance with the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Reference 3: Website for the 48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM48) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website)

https://www.mofa.go.jp/ic/ge/pagewe_000001_00354.html

Reference 4: Accompanying the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition

Based on the Law relating to Protection of the Environment in Antarctica, the Ministry of the Environment of Japan promotes the protection of the Antarctic environment. Since 1997, Ministry officials have accompanied the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition a total of 15 times to date, with the aim of monitoring the implementation and compliance with the Law and collecting information on environmental impacts in the Antarctic region.

To widely share the value of the Antarctic natural environment and the importance of its protection, the Ministry of Environment of Japan publishes series of blog posts documenting on-site activities. These updates, accompanied by photographs, are available on the Ministry's website, under the title "*Accompanying Diary of the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition.*"

* *Website on Antarctic Environmental Protection (Ministry of the Environment of Japan website: Japanese Only)*

<https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nankyoku/index.html>

(Series of blog posts on accompanying the 67th Expedition)

https://www.env.go.jp/nature/nankyoku/message/67_top.html

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