

Guest Editorial

The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research – 60 Years of Growing Significance

The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) will turn 60 in the 2017/2018 Antarctic summer. As interest grows in the polar regions, and the impacts of environmental change mount in them, the outcomes of science from these regions will take on renewed importance in global affairs. As the leading coordinator of science and science-based environmental evidence from Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, SCAR's role will be critical to global affairs over the next decade.

SCAR is subsidiary body of ICSU, and it is an Observer to the Antarctic Treaty. In these dual roles, SCAR will continue to advance, facilitate and promote scientific research in, from and about the Antarctic and Southern Ocean. SCAR's science facilitation activities are set out in its new Strategic Plan. They include the development of new Scientific Research Programmes, which will address important global challenges such as those discussed by the SCAR Antarctic and Southern Ocean Science Horizon Scan, but also in recent international discussions, such as the New York Sea Level Changes and Coastal Impacts meeting. They also include a focus on regional capacity development drawing on regional resources and expanding relationships such as those with the World Meteorological Organisation.

SCAR will also grow its provision of evidence-based advice both to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and to other international agreements and organizations. SCAR has a long history of valued evidence-provision to the ATS. At the most recent Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Beijing, China, the importance of SCAR's role was re-emphasized by Parties. SCAR was invited to contribute earlier in the agenda of forthcoming meetings to help develop a scientific backdrop for the meeting. Antarctica continues to be seen as a continent devoted to peace and science.

SCAR does not only serve the ATS, however. In reinforcing its engagement activities, SCAR has a unique role to play in building bridges between the ATS and other bodies. While Article III.2 of the Antarctic Treaty encourages cooperative working relations between the Antarctic Treaty and other international organizations, the practicalities and politics thereof have not always been straightforward. In its independent role within ICSU, SCAR can provide a means to navigate these complexities. Thus, SCAR will continue to contribute to and work with such organizations, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

In a global setting, SCAR recognises the importance of developing evidence that will facilitate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Research undertaken by SCAR Members is clearly important in the context of *Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*; *Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources*; and *Goal 15 Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss*. Conveying the evidence-based, policy relevant outcomes of that research lies firmly within SCAR's overall strategy. Facilitating the transfer of such evidence between components of the ATS and other international organisations will be a priority since policy change has to be effected urgently to minimise climate change, biodiversity loss and their consequences.

Much of what SCAR will achieve over the next five years will depend on collaborations among its Members and the individual researchers, operators and administrators that constitute this membership. Collaborations with external bodies, including those of the ATS, will be just as important. Such collaborations, founded on engaged discussion, scientific evidence, and innovative thinking, will be essential to ensure that sound policy decisions are taken about the region as its role grows on the global stage.

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