



XXXIX ANTARCTIC TREATY
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25 YEARS PROTOCOL ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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Report from Asian Forum of Polar Sciences to the ATCM XXXIX

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Introduction

This report is prepared to update the new developments of the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFoPS) since the ATCM XXXVIII. The AFoPS, now an 11 year old Asian organization dedicated to polar research and cooperation, is gearing up for the next decade to further develop and strengthen cooperation in polar sciences among its five Members (China, India, Japan, Malaysia, and the Republic of Korea) and a growing number of observers (for example, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka).

Recent Developments

Since the last ATCM, AFoPS has met two times respectively in October 2015 (annual general meeting) and in March 2016 (special meeting). Members' deliberations and decisions during the meetings yielded the following recent developments:

Endeavors for Stable Secretariat functioning

Consideration and discussion began on possible measures for the sake of continuity and strengthened capacity for long term planning. Protocol to manage the membership and observer accreditation has been improved. AFoPS secretariat conducted a case study on the management and secretariat operation of other polar organizations, such as ATS, SCAR, COMNAP, IASC, and FARO. It noted the usual practices of the secretariat operating on a long term commitment among most international polar organizations. Possible alternatives including a long term secretariat and required resources are being discussed.

Roadmap for the Next Decade

A Task Force (TF) has been initiated to generate a framework that will assist with AFoPS deliberation and decision-making in preparation for the next decade, since November 2015. The TF, which consists of coordinators from the five member institutions, conducted a two phase structured online survey to solicit the AFoPS community's views on the priority of AFoPS activities and to generate a prioritized plan with requirements. The survey result indicated research collaboration is what requires more immediate attention as well as the ultimate form of achievement AFoPS can prove its value with. A draft roadmap for the next decade of AFoPS development has been deduced from the survey responses regarding the priority action items. This time-phased plan suggests focusing on research collaboration and human exchange in the first stage of four years, executing logistics/operation cooperation in the next three years, and substantial development of strategic planning in the last three years.

AFoPS cooperative projects

Progress reports were made on the five AFoPS cooperative projects, AFoPS-endorsed programs that jointly planned and executed by utilizing the members' existing research capabilities. The table below describes research/expedition focuses of the five projects. Opportunities to propose more AFoPS cooperative projects involving multiple members should be encouraged and left open. Web posting for AFoPS projects will be updated and improved and the secretariat will produce an introductory material that can be used to promote AFoPS cooperative projects and to invite more partners to the current programs.

Project Title	Focus	Point of Contact
AFoPS Arctic Ocean Observing System	International research cruise to better understand the rapid sea ice loss in the Arctic Ocean	Dr. Sung-Ho Kang shkang@kopri.re.kr
Climate Change: ecological winners and losers	Ecological responses of Antarctic penguins to environmental changes	Dr. Nobuo Kokubun kokubun@nipr.ac.jp
AFoPS Geology Expedition in	Geological survey in the high-	Dr. Yoichi Motoyoshi

Antarctica (AGEA)	grade metamorphic terranes in East Antarctica	motoyosi@nipr.ac.jp
Teleconnectivity between polar and tropical climate variabilities	Relationship between Antarctic sea-ice extent and Asian monsoon variability	Prof. Azizan Abu Samah azizans@um.edu.my
Early Paleozoic in northern Victoria Land	Sedimentological and paleontological field works on the Lower Paleozoic Bowers Supergroup	Dr. Jong-Ik Lee jilee@kopri.re.kr

Second AFoPS Joint Journal Publication

The second AFoPS joint journal has been published as a special issue of *Polar Science* (Issue 4, Volume 9). An editorial board, which consisted of five guest editors from each member (Drs. Koichiro Doi, Hong Tat Ewe, Kottekkatu Padinchatu Krishnan, Jae Il Lee, and Ruiyuan Liu) with a managing guest editor (Dr. Kentaro Watanabe), was organized and served for the second AFoPS publication. Articles published can be reached through ScienceDirect at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/polar/journal/18739652>.

Concluding Remarks

Asian polar research community pledges to take part in the global efforts of addressing key scientific questions that can be answered in the Polar Region. AFoPS already has a vehicle that can help take us into the future, which are our well-placed infrastructures and our human resources that we have nurtured over the years. There is also a sufficient, high quality fuel supply already, and that is our enthusiasm. AFoPS member states remain fully committed to playing a due part in the efforts of the global community to contribute to polar sciences.