

**Written evidence submitted by the New Zealand High Commission**

Dear James

I have the honour to submit to this Sub-Committee on behalf of New Zealand.

New Zealand has a long, enduring and close relationship with Antarctica.

Our proximity to Antarctica means that we have a strong commitment to preserving it as a natural reserve, free from militarisation and mineral exploitation, and as a place of peace, cooperation and scientific research.

Together with the United Kingdom, New Zealand is an original signatory of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. From the establishment of that visionary Treaty, through to its Environmental Protocol, and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Antarctic Treaty system provides a firm foundation for Antarctic governance and sets aside Antarctica for peace, cooperation and science.

In recent years all Parties have reaffirmed their strong and unwavering commitment to the Antarctic Treaty system, and to the indefinite mining prohibition, and agreed to action to respond to climate change and increased tourism. Cooperation amongst Antarctic Treaty Parties is essential to uphold and implement these commitments.

Working together with partners such as the United Kingdom to research Antarctica's role in climate change is critical, and we value the collaboration we have together in conducting scientific research. We need to better understand the impact of rising temperatures on global sea levels, currents and ecosystems. We need to protect Antarctica's unique biodiversity, conserve its marine resources, and preserve its intrinsic and wilderness values.

New Zealand looks forward to building on its long-standing cooperation with the United Kingdom both to protect the Antarctic Treaty system and further develop our scientific research in the region.

Yours sincerely

H.E. Hon Phil Goff  
High Commissioner of New Zealand to the United Kingdom

## **New Zealand's commitment to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean**

New Zealand is committed to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and values peace, security, and effective governance in Antarctica.

The public statement of [New Zealand's Commitment to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean 2019](#) reflects New Zealand's values and principles and tells the story of why and how New Zealand is involved in Antarctica, in particular recognising that :

- New Zealand's natural environment is connected to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean
- Antarctica is an essential part of understanding global environmental systems, and is uniquely valuable for scientific research
- Antarctica is part of New Zealand's heritage, and New Zealand is the gateway to the Ross Sea Region
- New Zealand values a peaceful, secure and safe region. We support the Antarctic Treaty principles and strive to maintain peace and cooperation.

## **Antarctic Treaty system**

The Antarctic Treaty System provides a firm foundation for Antarctic governance, setting aside Antarctica for peace, cooperation and science. Over the past two years all Parties have declared their strong and unwavering commitment to the Antarctic Treaty, its Environmental Protocol and related instruments.

In recent years, Parties have agreed to dispell the inaccurate narrative that the Environmental Protocol expires in 2048 or at any other time; they have reaffirmed their commitment to the indefinite mining prohibition; highlighted the urgent need for climate action; and established a process for further regulation of Antarctic tourism.

Antarctica is not immune from global geopolitical trends where rules are contested, interests are becoming more divergent, and cooperation more challenging. In that context, cooperation amongst Antarctic Treaty Parties, including between the United Kingdom and New Zealand, is more important than ever, to uphold and strengthen the Antarctic Treaty system.

## **Antarctic science and addressing climate change**

[New Zealand's Antarctic and Southern Ocean science programme](#) has a central theme focused on understanding global climate change.

There is a pressing need to understand how processes in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean influence our planet's climate system and the implications of global climate change for future generations of New Zealanders and for our planet.

New Zealand's Antarctic research is directed into four strategic themes:

- Quantifying the Antarctic contribution to sea level rise,
- Cryosphere-ocean-atmosphere connections and implications of change,
- Ecosystem dynamics and responses to change, and
- Protecting Antarctic and Southern Ocean environments.

One example of a significant ongoing international research collaboration is the "SWAIS 2C" (Sensitivity of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet to 2 degrees Celsius) project. SWAIS2C aims to answer the key question; 'Does the Paris climate target (to limit global warming to 2C), save the Ross Ice Shelf and limit Antarctic Ice Sheet melt'? This is an international effort supported by ~USD\$5.2 million in funds from New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Italy, Japan and Australia, and involves a number of New Zealand and United Kingdom scientists.

The Antarctic Science Platform (hosted by Antarctica New Zealand) is a \$49 million research programme (2018-2025) which seeks to understand Antarctica's impact on the global system and how that might change in a warming world.

### **Antarctica New Zealand and Scott Base**

Antarctica New Zealand is the government agency responsible for carrying out New Zealand's activities in Antarctica, providing logistics support to Antarctic science and supporting environmental protection.

Antarctica New Zealand manages Scott Base, New Zealand's research station in the Ross Sea region. Planning is currently under way for the redevelopment of Scott Base.

New Zealand's deep commitment to Antarctica includes ensuring that Scott Base is an effective and sustainable facility for the safe conduct of globally significant scientific research, and to understand and protect the environment. Science is the foundational underpinning of the Antarctic Treaty System.

### **Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area**

New Zealand was a key player in the establishment of the Ross Sea region MPA, which was established to protect ecosystems, habitats, to support monitoring, and to support resilience in the face of climate change.

The MPA was the result of unanimous support for a joint New Zealand/United States proposal within the 25-member Commission for the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). It was agreed in October 2016 after New Zealand and the United States first put forward their joint proposal in 2012. The Agreement entered into force on 1 December 2017.

There are currently four other Antarctic Marine Protected Area proposals under consideration, and New Zealand is a co-proponent of two of those (East Antarctica, and Antarctic Peninsula). The designation of these MPAs, as well as others yet to be proposed, is critical to the Treaty System's agreed goal of establishing a network of marine protected areas. Research, monitoring, and diplomacy are all needed to achieve this important and pressing goal.

### **Partnership with the United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom and New Zealand are like-minded Antarctic partners; and we have a range of active science collaborations. Last year New Zealand and the United Kingdom co-convened a well-received climate change workshop for CCAMLR – this was an excellent example of what we can achieve together.

We have good diplomatic and scientific cooperation together, given the importance and closeness of our relationship. The joint New Zealand-United Kingdom statement on cooperation priorities (2016-2020) has been a useful frame outlining our cooperation, and we have both committed to revisiting these priority areas, and making further arrangements for our ongoing cooperation.

*April 2024*