



The Antarctic Treaty Regime: Legal and Policy Challenges

Academic Workshop, Brussels, Saturday 25 May 2013

with the kind support of the Belgian Science Policy Office

Invitation for Proposals for Panel Interventions

The Antarctica Treaty affirms that the continent can only be used for peaceful purposes. The Treaty stipulates that there is freedom of scientific research; to that end, scientific observations and results from Antarctica are exchanged and made available freely. The Treaty freezes national claims to sovereignty, which had been made by seven countries. Today, 50 states are party to the Antarctic Treaty. 28 of these states conduct substantial research in the Antarctic region and are 'consultative parties' under the Treaty. In 1991, a Protocol on Environmental Protection was added to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), designating Antarctica as 'a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science,' and introducing a 50-year moratorium on Antarctic mineral resource activities. Yet, although the ATS is regarded as one of the most comprehensive and stringent environmental protection regimes, it faces important new threats. Concerns about the environmental impact of the rise of tourism and about growing research aimed at commercially beneficial resources indicate that there are still important gaps and loopholes in the ATS. Moreover, a number of fundamental principles underpinning the ATS are recently under question. The issue of territorial claims came to the fore when several states introduced submissions on the basis of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), seeking an extension of their continental shelf in the waters surrounding the Antarctic continent. Next to the intersections with UNCLOS, ATS increasingly needs to work together with other legal regimes on environmental protection, such as those on whaling, bioprospecting and climate change. The prospect of rising temperatures and, consequently, ice melting might create new exploitation opportunities after 2048. Last but not least, new challenges to the ATS raise institutional and governance issues, such as control of activities and enforcement of protective measures.

The organization of this **academic workshop**, scheduled at the time the XXXVI Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting takes place from 20 May 2013 until 29 May 2013 in Brussels, offers an excellent opportunity to tackle some of the most pressing challenges that the ATS faces. In this workshop, which mainly adopts a legal and policy approach, panels of highly qualified legal experts and scientists will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the ATS in addressing future challenges and will evaluate whether the ATS will prove strong enough to cope with those challenges.

The output of the workshop will be a workshop report, possibly culminating in a publication.

We welcome abstracts of maximum one page for brief panel interventions by 15 April 2013 at info@vvn.be and director@ggs.kuleuven.be (please use both e-mail addresses).

Organizers: United Nations Association Flanders Belgium (VVN), Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, KU Leuven.

Organizing Committee: Prof. Dr. Erik Franckx (VUB), Prof. Dr. Frank Maes (U.Gent), Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters (KU Leuven/VVN)