



HCA10-06.2A

The Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs **(COMNAP)** **Report to HCA-10**

This paper provides a brief overview of COMNAP activities related to the work of the HCA.

About the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs

The Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) was established in 1988 by the then 27 Managers of the National Antarctic Programs. Today, there are 28 National Antarctic Programs from Antarctic Treaty (1959) Consultative States, all are Members of COMNAP today.

The purpose of COMNAP is:

To develop and promote best practice in managing the support of scientific research in Antarctica.

COMNAP achieves this purpose by:

- *Serving as a forum to develop practices that improve effectiveness of activities in an environmentally responsible manner;*
- *Facilitating and promoting international partnerships;*
- *Providing opportunities and systems for information exchange; and*
- *Providing the Antarctic Treaty System with objective and practical, technical and non-political advice drawn from the National Antarctic Programs' pool of expertise.*

Managing the Support of Scientific Research in Antarctica

Antarctic scientific research is broadening. It is often carried out by multi-national and multi-disciplinary teams which often carry out research in remote areas of the Antarctic, including its surrounding ocean, using a wide range of operations and logistics support. Thus, COMNAP supports its purpose by calling on National Antarctic Program experts from a broad range of areas of expertise who work via Expert Groups. One such area of expertise is shipping.

The COMNAP Shipping Expert Group was led in 2009-2010 jointly by Juan Jo Danobeitia (Spain) and David Blake (UK), with oversight from COMNAP EXCOM officer, Jose Retamales (Chair).

Liaison between HCA and COMNAP is facilitated through the EXCOM officer with oversight on Shipping (Jose Retamales) with support from the COMNAP Secretariat.

2009-2010 COMNAP Activities of particular interest to HCA

Second Workshop “Towards improved Search and Rescue (SAR) coordination and response in the Antarctic”

As a follow on from the first Antarctic SAR workshop (August 2008, Valparaiso, Chile), COMNAP organized, through Dirrecion National del Antartico, a second Antarctic SAR workshop at the Palacio San Martin, Buenos Aires, Argentina, which was held on 2-4 November 2009.

Specific objectives of the second workshop included:

- Conduct a review of progress, in particular on actions arising from the 1st workshop held in Valparaiso, Chile, August 2008;
- Conduct preliminary discussions on prevention through training and prevention through improved hydrography;
- Discuss options for a common policy on issues related to vessels calling for assistance whilst not in an immediate distress situation;
- Discuss the importance of taking the “Search” out of “Search and Rescue” ;
- Outline the difficulties of dealing with a mass rescue operation;
- Review current aeronautical traffic and arrangements , including weather forecasting services;
- Understand the challenges of land SAR, which unlike maritime and aeronautical SAR is not covered by any existing international arrangements, and discuss options to improve Land SAR coordination and response capabilities.

Delegates to the workshop included representatives from all five of the Rescue Co-ordination Centres (the RCCs of Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand and South Africa), from IAATO, COMNAP, IMO, Germany, US and UK.

The Final Report from this workshop is publically available, was presented at the Antarctic Treaty Meeting of Experts on Shipbourne Tourism (December 2009, Wellington, New Zealand) and was tabled as an Information Paper at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 2010) XXXIII as IP76.

COMNAP Ship Position Reporting System (SPRS)

The COMNAP Ship Position Reporting System has been operational since 2001. The system was overhauled in 2008. It is an optional, voluntary system for exchange of information about National Program ship operations and capabilities. Its primary purpose is to facilitate collaboration between National Antarctic Programs.

The SPRS cannot, and does not, constitute an operational alert and rescue system on which vessels

should count on in case of emergency. However it can make a very useful contribution to safety with all SPRS information made available to the Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) which cover the Antarctic region, as an additional source of information complementing all other national and international systems in place.

Latest positions and other practical information of all participating vessels are broadcast to each of these vessels and their National Antarctic Program every time they send a position report, and is broadcast every 24h to relevant Antarctic Search and Rescue authorities. All information is also available at any time to National Antarctic Programs and Search and Rescue authorities through the password protected section of the COMNAP web site.

The SPRS continues to function very well and was used as a tool during a SAR Communications Exercise carried out by the Rescue Communication Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) on January 12, 2010. During that exercise, the RCCNZ Duty Watch used all the position reporting available to them to build a picture of what vessels where in the area of the exercise. It was noted that having access to the information in the COMNAP SPRS was invaluable. There was, however, discussion on the participation rate, noting that all National Antarctic Programs should be encouraged to participate.

2010-2011 COMNAP

COMNAPs XXII Annual General Meeting was only recently held (9 August – 12 August). The COMNAP Executive Committee officers are: Dr. Jose Retamales (Chair), Vice Chairs - Dr. Mariano Memolli, Dr. Kazuyuki Shiraishi, Dr. Yuansheng Li, Ms. Maaïke Vancauwenberghe and Ms. Virginia Mudie. The Executive Secretary is Michelle Rogan-Finnemore, who can be contacted via email at sec@comnap.aq.

The COMNAP Secretariat is now hosted by the University of Canterbury, which is located at Ilam Road, Christchurch, New Zealand. See www.comnap.aq for further information and contact details.