

## Editorial

### Changing SCAR

Change is in the air - not just a mild breeze, more of an impending storm. At XXV SCAR in Concepcion, much of the talk at Working Groups and at the Delegates meeting was of change. But why, how and when?

SCAR was a leader in international science in its early days, showing that despite a bewildering diversity of political systems, funding patterns and cultural differences scientists could work together very effectively in the Antarctic. Quite separately, but no less importantly, SCAR also showed how the interface between science and politics could be positively developed through interaction initially with Treaty Parties and, since XIV ATCM, directly at Antarctic Treaty Consultative meetings.

But times change and what was good enough in the past may not be effective for the future. The Delegates at Concepcion recognized challenges on both the scientific and political fronts. Organization of international science has changed but SCAR still has a structure devised for the expectations of 40 years ago. Is SCAR forming the international links with the big programmes such as IGBP at the right time and in the most effective way? The interface with Antarctic logistics is no longer within a SCAR committee but has moved out to COMNAP and SCALOP, which operate independently of SCAR. Are the links between these and SCAR close enough to ensure effective planning and co-ordination? CCAMLR has formed its own scientific committee making it largely independent of any outside advice so that SCAR input is apparently no longer necessary for management of the marine environment. And most recently the Committee for Environmental Protection has been formed - how should SCAR now see its future role as a provider of independent scientific advice in the political forum of the Treaty?

Even within SCAR all is not well at present. There are continuing difficulties in ensuring all countries are always properly represented on Working Groups, that National Committees have effective means of communication with their scientists and that delegates to all SCAR committees are properly briefed on the whole of the area that they represent. SCAR activities are an overhead on people's full time jobs so it is not surprising in this new world of endless "accountability" that such altruistic effort is under threat!

The Antarctic world has fundamentally changed. How can SCAR be made more effective, more responsive, more relevant in meeting these new challenges? How can it ensure effective links to international programmes yet ensure that individual initiatives can still be recognized? How can it make certain that political and legal initiatives fully take into account not only scientific knowledge but also scientific needs? How can it make sure that the development of other fora for Antarctic science do not undermine its co-ordinating role? How can SCAR improve communication and consensus between such a wide range of disciplines and cultures to ensure that the contribution of the Antarctic to solving global problems is properly realized?

SCAR Delegates agreed to establish a review committee with an independent chairman to seek suggestions from national committees and from individual scientists on how to solve these very difficult problems. If you have an opinion or a proposal make sure you pass it on! Grasping this nettle is likely to be painful, but so will be the prospect of SCAR being seen as out of touch and marginal to international science in the future. Antarctic science is too important for us to fail in revitalizing SCAR for the next millennium.

DAVID W.H. WALTON

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