

**Submission by the Embassy of the Russian Federation
to the inquiry of Joint Standing Committee
on the National Capital and External Territories
into the adequacy of Australia's infrastructure assets
and capability in Antarctica**

The Russian Federation and Australia along with 10 other States are the initial Parties to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and in this capacity they bear special responsibility for the full and efficient compliance with its goals and principles. They also share the similar interests in progressive development and strengthening of the Antarctic Treaty System. Our States are traditionally leading vigorous and multi-faceted activities in the Southern polar region and invariably stand for peace and stability in Antarctica, maintaining favourable conditions for international scientific cooperation and strict observance of environmental requirements.

General parameters of the Russian Antarctic Program

The State operator of the Russian Federation in Antarctica is the Russian Antarctic Expedition (RAE). At present RAE operates five year-round Antarctic stations ("Mirny", "Vostok", "Progress", "Novolazarevskaya" and "Bellingshausen"), six seasonal field bases ("Molodezhnaya", "Druzhnaya 4", "Soyuz", "Russkaya", "Leningradskaya"). In 2020, the seasonal field base "Russkaya" is to be transformed into another year-round operating station.

The RAE activities are supported by two scientific expedition vessels of the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring (Roshydromet) of the Russian Federation "Akademik Fedorov" and "Akademik Treshnikov", the research vessel of the Russian Geological Service (Rosgeologia) "Akademik Alexander Karpinsky", long-range transport aircraft Il-76TD90-VD, performing intercontinental flights from Capetown (South Africa) to the ice airfields of the Dronning Maud Land, two planes on the ski chassis for inland flights and two/four ship borne helicopters KA-32.

The Russian Federation constantly and in full consistency with its international obligations refines its planning and regulation system of national activities in the Antarctic.

Currently the main regulatory instruments in this area are the “Strategy for the development of the activities of the Russian Federation in Antarctica till 2020 and afterwards” adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation in October 2010 and the Federal Law “On Regulation of Activities of the Russian Citizens and Russian Legal Entities in the Antarctic” of 2012.

In 1992-2017 the Russian legal system was complemented with three Federal Laws, two Maritime Doctrines, three Decrees of the President of the Russian Federation, 29 Acts of the Government of the Russian Federation regulating various aspects of national activities in Antarctica. During this period Russia also concluded 12 international agreements on cooperation in the Southern polar region.

In accordance with the requirements of the national legislation, the parameters and principal activities of RAE are subject to review by the Government of the Russian Federation, which is to be exercised every five years.

National interests

Main areas of national activities in Antarctica, performed on behalf and at the request of the State, as well as set of priorities of the Russian Federation policy in the region are enclosed in the aforementioned Strategy.

a) ensuring national security interests:

- contribution to the preservation and progressive development of the Antarctic Treaty System with the aim to keep Antarctica as a region of peace, stability and cooperation, and preventing possible emergence of international tensions in the region;

b) promoting scientific activities:

- carrying out complex scientific research, which is of great importance for the development of global science, is one of the main areas of the Russian activities in Antarctica. In recent years Russian scientists have achieved significant results: ecologically clean penetration into the subglacial Lake Vostok; discovery of four paleoclimatic cycles of 100,000 years each according to ice core data from Vostok station; detection of thermophilic bacteria DNA on the lower horizons of the ice core; development of a digital PC-index on the basis of geomagnetic observations of the last 25 years that reflects the instantaneous state of the magnetosphere;

- scientific geological and geophysical research on the continent and in the surrounding waters. Following the Antarctic Treaty System requirements no geological surveyance works are performed by Russia in Antarctica. The aims of the aforementioned research are to study fundamental natural patterns of geological structures, history of formation of the Earth crust in the region. The traditional methods of geological research may be complemented by methods of deep stratigraphic drilling in ice shelves or shore ice of the Antarctic seas as it was done in international project ANTDRILL in the Ross Sea;

- assessment of the role and place of Antarctica in global climate change. In Antarctica, where neither industrial, agricultural or intensive transport activities are performed nor large-scale human presence is observed, the factors of anthropogenic impact on the climate are minimal. In this respect regular monitoring of the environment in the region makes it possible, without considerable distortions, to obtain data on changes in climate characteristics in exclusively natural factors. For the Russian Federation, that has a significant part of its territory in the permafrost zone, the evaluation of influence of natural factors on climate variability is extremely important, since the processes of climate warming can have a significant negative effect on the economy of the Russian regions located in the permafrost zone;

- support of space activities of the Russian Federation. Antarctica is quite useful for the development of a global monitoring network to control orbital parameters of the Russian satellite navigation system GLONASS and increase its efficiency in the Southern hemisphere. To this end three stations collecting measurement and correction data from the GLONASS satellite constellation have been placed at some Russian Antarctic stations. It is planned to increase their number to six.

c) research and rational use of marine living resources:

- assessment of marine biological resources in the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources area on the basis of the prognostic research to forecast their stocks for sustainable and economically efficient fisheries. Development of the fishing activities in the Antarctic waters is closely linked with restoring and expanding biological, oceanological and technological research in the region.

Regarding the establishment of Marine protected areas (MPA) in Antarctica the Russian Federation believes that conservation of marine living resources presupposes their rational use and that the proposed conservations measures should ensure proper balance between environmental considerations and legitimate rights of states in the sphere of fisheries. This was the basis for the constructive dialogue with other Members of CCAMLR that has led to the final adoption of the CCAMLR decision on Ross Sea MPA in October 2016.

d) environmental protection:

The Russian legislation ensures full and effective compliance with the requirements of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Madrid Protocol) by the Russian legal entities and individuals carrying out their activities in Antarctica. The Russian Federation is one of the few countries that has fully implemented Annex VI to the Madrid Protocol on “Liability Arising from Environmental Emergencies” and effectively applies it in practice (despite the fact that this Annex has not entered into force yet).

According to the Federal Law “On regulation of activities of the Russian citizens and the Russian legal entities in Antarctica” of 2012 and the Act of the Government of the Russian Federation “On Permits for Activities in Antarctica” of 2013, any activities which would be exercised in Antarctica under Russian jurisdiction shall be carried out exclusively within the framework of special permits issued by Roshydromet in consultation with a number of other Russian agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

International cooperation. Interaction with Australia.

The cornerstone of the Russian activities in the Antarctic is the cooperation with other States in the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty.

The Russian Federation and Australia have been actively cooperating in Antarctica in various fields. To foster this cooperation the Governments of our States signed in January 2012 the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in Antarctica. The Parties also elaborated the Plan of Joint Actions in Antarctica which was signed in June 2012 between the Australian Antarctic Division and the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute of Roshydromet.

The most significant and efficient of the existing Russian-Australian projects is the joint management of the Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA) No. 6 “Larsemann Hills”, started in 2008.

The other example of cooperation between the two States is the international project “Southern Ocean Observing System” (SOOS), which is driven by the Australian Antarctic Division starting from season of 2013-2014. Two of the Russian research vessels “Akademik Fedorov” and “Akademik Treshnikov” are involved in the project.

There is another program done together with Australian Antarctic Division - study of characteristics of natural electric field of the atmosphere's surface layer, that commenced in the late 90-s on the Russian Antarctic station “Vostok”. These

observations are done with the use of the equipment provided by the Australian side, which receives all copies of observation results.

Within the framework of the COMNAP the Russian and the Australian Antarctic expeditions exchange annually with information about their sea and air operation. This facilitated a lot to the search and rescue operation conducted by the Australian vessel “Aurora Australis” to assist the Russian vessel “Akademik Shokalsky” that stuck in ice in December 2013 – January 2014 with a nongovernmental Australian expedition on board.

Taking into account the accumulated positive experience of bilateral interaction in Antarctica, as well as on different Antarctic fora, the Russian-Australian cooperation has a significant potential for the future on the basis of pragmatic and mutually beneficial approaches.