

# What is CCAMLR?

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Following on from the ATS, CCAMLR was established in 1982, an acronym which stands for The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. It meets annually to discuss issues such as fishing quotas otherwise known as 'Total Allowed Catches' (TACs), the designation of marine protected areas (MPAs) and the opening of fisheries in Antarctica.

## The history of the Antarctic Treaty

The Antarctic Treaty was an agreement in 1959 between 12 countries who had scientists or explorers active in the region at the time (represented by the inner circle of 12 flags). The treaty is a solution to the practical difficulties of an isolated, largely uninhabited continent. The treaty recognises Antarctica as 'a global commons'.

A global commons refers to areas that lie beyond the political reach of any one nation state or a resource domain. Sometimes described as 'supra-national spaces' these areas are unclaimed and unexplored fully. Antarctica is one of four global commons (the others being: outer space, the high seas and the atmosphere).

This treaty has now grown to include a total of 54 participatory nations with 14 Articles which are observed as de facto laws for the continent. These laws are international and are guided by the 'principle of the common heritage of mankind'. This principle asserts that Antarctica belongs to all of humanity and that the resources there are available for everyone's benefit, including both for those alive now *and* for future generations. It applies to the entire region south of 60° South Latitude.

The central key Articles are Art. I, Art. II and Art. III which state Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only, scientific investigation shall be allowed, and scientific observations will be exchanged and made freely available. The continent has become a model example of international collaboration as scientists from a multitude of different countries share research without the complications of privatisation or nationalism.

The first substantial multi-nation research programme occurred during the International Geophysical Year of 1957-1958.

You can find out more information on the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), which has been described as 'surprising short but remarkably effective', by visiting [www.discoveringantarctica.org.uk/treaty](http://www.discoveringantarctica.org.uk/treaty)



The 54 participatory nations of the Antarctic Treaty (as of 2021) © Jamie Oliver, BGS

## What is the ACTM?

The ACTM (Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting) first convened in 1961. Since then the attending countries have met more regularly, and now annually.

The ATS operates under the umbrella of the annual ACTM. Over time several different components have been added to the Antarctic Treaty to meet the growing needs of all the activities surrounding Antarctica. During the 1982 convention CCAMLR was established with the aim of conserving Antarctic marine life.

Since 1959, 42 countries have acceded to the Treaty with 17 being recognised as 'conducting substantial research activity' granting them decision-making powers. Alongside the original 12 countries this means there are 29 Consultative Parties who convene annually at the ACTM to create measures, make decisions and draft resolutions.

## The Secretariat for CCAMLR

CCAMLR's Secretariat is based in Hobart, Australia. The Secretariat's role consists of communicating between Members, disseminating publications, monitoring conservation compliance, and the management of scientific data and the Catch Documentation Scheme (for fishing). 28 staff work under the Secretariat with written material in English being translated into French, Russian and Spanish (the four official languages of the ATS).

## The future

The treaty has acted to successfully prevent unchecked resource exploitation in Antarctica. However, in 2018 at the 41st treaty meeting in Buenos Aires, the Financial Times reported that the thorniest issues such as what happens when countries violate the treaty rules 'are almost never addressed.' ([www.bit.ly/Antarcticcompetition](http://www.bit.ly/Antarcticcompetition)). There are growing concerns from diplomats and scientists that the existing treaty system will not be able to respond to the new twenty-first century pressures: the discovery of Lake Vostok (the world's largest store of freshwater), the potential exploits of oil and natural gas, Antarctic tourism and the increase in trawler fishing in the Southern Ocean all of which are expected to place great strain on the ATS.



Flags of some of the members of CCAMLR © Bob Zuur

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