

# **Legal analysis of affiliation of I.R. Iran to SOOS and SCAR and Its Implications on the presence in the Antarctic and its accession to Antarctic Treaty System**

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## **Abstract**

In February 2014, Iran submitted its application for associate Membership of Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). Iranian representative entity in doing so was the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science (INIOAS) which is affiliated to the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and coordinates all activities related to Antarctic research in Iran. The said application was primarily endorsed by University of Tehran as the Iranian member of the International Council for Science (ICSU) in order to be submitted to the SCAR Secretariat. INIOAS was founded in 1992 subsequent to an agreement between the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the purpose to perform fundamental studies and research in the area of oceanography, to develop national marine policy and long-term planning for the protection of marine ecosystems, and to make all decision-making in the aforesaid areas accorded with research and balanced enhancement and scientific progress of issues related to the seas and oceans.

In 2014, INIOAS established National Centre for Antarctic Research (NCAR) to expand scientific activities to Antarctica and Southern Ocean. Antarctic has been the focus of global attraction because of its global significance for influencing global weather, its unique position

at the South Pole, its potential for huge non-living and living resources and its pristine environment to be used as natural laboratory for scientific research. Antarctic is now emerging as an important key in the understanding of global and environmental concerns. Its unique features have provided scientists with special opportunities over the last 50 years to investigate the origin of the continents, the pollution of the globe, and changes in world climate. Meteorology of Antarctic has provided the factors that are essential in forecasting the weather patterns of the southern hemisphere and the circulation pattern of the world ocean system. The ice cores retrieved from the continent act as a repository of information on the paleoclimate and environmental history of the earth. It is clear that Antarctic science will increasingly contribute to our understanding of mentioned issues and other global problems. It is therefore not surprising that, in accordance with the Iranian government focus on environmental issues, there is a new scientific goal on polar research.

INIOAS at national level is deemed as the coordinator among marine research institutions in Iran and accordingly has recently proposed a long-term plan to establish a year-round research station to research on Antarctica and Southern Ocean and to organize the relevant scientific attempts in a systematic approach in agreement with the SCAR concerns for the development of international collaboration in Antarctic science. The program received acceptance of INIOAS's Board of Trustees and transferred to the authorities to ratify an act as well as providing the budget. As the first step of the long-term plan, National Centre for Antarctic Research (NCAR) has been established within INIOAS to co-ordinate all Antarctic related activities. NCAR is trying to select motivated young scientists in different scientific disciplines to develop an active new generation of polar scientists, engineers and leaders and to capture the interest of the public and decision-makers. For this reason, a workshop is being

organized and sponsored by INIOAS for late spring 2014, “Iranian Antarctic Science Program Roadmap” which will gather national scientists, academics, decision-makers and students as well as invited international experts to draft a program giving the guidelines for I.R. of Iran’s Antarctic research, which points out the different aspects of being a part of Antarctic Science Community.

A number of national universities and organizations are involved in Antarctic activities and are active participants of I.R. of Iran Antarctic program. The program could be started by getting involved in international collaborations, possibly on project fellowships for young scientist participation in the international Antarctic scientific body SCAR. The main objectives of Iranian Antarctic program are: To undertake multidisciplinary research and survey in Antarctic region particularly in the field of oceanography and environmental research; to participate in the international scientific programs in the Antarctic region and, to provide relevant technical information to the Iranian government on Antarctic affairs at National and International level.

During discussions on Applications of Czech Republic and Iran (the two new associate members of SCAR) for Associate Membership of SCAR at the XXXIII SCAR Delegates’ Meeting, some Members asked for clarification on the Rules of Procedure regarding the transition of members from Associate Member Status to Full Member status. The Executive Director clarified that it is expected that Associate Members will eventually become Full Members, but there is no requirement that they do so. He further noted that applications for Full membership needed to have a detailed science outline, while applications for Associate membership simply needed to express an interest in undertaking Antarctic scientific research. However, SCAR Secretariat reminded Associate Members that the SCAR Rules of Procedure state that Associate Members are encouraged to apply for Full Membership at some point.

## **Keywords**

International Law, The Antarctic, Law of the Sea, Antarctic Treaty, Marine Scientific Research, Antarctic Treaty System