

## ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING XXXVI, Brussels, 2013

### Statement of the Czech Republic

Vladimír Galuška, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

May 22, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Government of the Czech Republic, I have the honor to present the application of the Czech Republic for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party Status, submitted to the Depository Government on April 18, 2013.

The Czech Republic has been a Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1962 and is fully committed to its principles and purposes. The Czech Republic has demonstrated its interest in Antarctica by conducting substantial scientific research activity there since 1994 and, since 2006, has operated a scientific base located on James Ross Island called "Johann Gregor Mendel Station".

The Czech polar base is situated on the northern tip of James Ross Island. It has hosted regular austral-summer Czech Antarctic expeditions with international scientists' participation. The station possesses two laboratories equipped for standard biological, geological, meteorological and paleontological research projects and has capacity for a crew up to 25 people. Experts from other countries interested in research at James Ross Island are welcome to join the Czech polar base and participate in its scientific activities.

The Czech scientific research in the Antarctic is devoted mainly to the fields of Geosciences, Climatology, Systematic Biology and Experimental Biology. It has been carried out at different locations in Antarctica: King George Island, Galindez Island, James Ross Island, and Antarctic peninsula in particular.

The geoscientific research resulted, *inter alia*, in the production of a new detailed topographic map and a geological map of the northern part of James Ross Island and corresponding interpretation of the geological setting and evolution, as well as new palaeontological findings of the first fossil sponge in Antarctica of a mid-Cretaceous age. Currently, a skeleton of a marine reptile of plesiosaurus family from the Upper Cretaceous is being reconstructed.

Long-term monitoring of climate variability in the region of Antarctic Peninsula and James Ross Island represents an important part of climatological research. A network of automatic weather stations has been established here and completed by special equipment for radiation (including UV radiation), energy balance and soil climate measurements. These projects are completed by studies of natural and manipulated bioclimate in different parts of coastal vegetation oasis. Particular

attention is paid to analysis of the relationship between stratospheric ozone, atmospheric condition and UV radiation.

Research in the field of Systematic Biology is directed mainly to evaluation of biodiversity of autotrophic microorganisms abundant at James Ross Island. Enormous piece of work has been done on field collection of samples from different Antarctic habitats, and determination of the species using anatomical, morphological and molecular biology approaches. There are several particular subprojects running recently. Among them, studies on origin of Antarctic microflora and its specificity, biodiversity of autotrophic organisms from Antarctic lakes, microbial colonization of deglaciated soils and rocks, biological composition of soil crusts, and autecology of different species and their adaptation processes to moist and cold environment.

The Experimental Biology research projects focus primarily on physiological processes in Antarctic mosses, lichens, and algae at James Ross Island, in particular on the effect of the long-term elevated air temperature studied by open top chamber approach. Other studies focus on structure and function of vegetation, *in-situ* monitoring of physiological activity of microbiological mats, and long-term monitoring of photosynthetic processes in Antarctic moss using chlorophyll fluorescence approach.

The Czech polar scientific research thus covers a wide array of topical Antarctic issues and contributes to the common effort to raise scientific knowledge about the natural riches of this unique reserve. We are fully committed to international cooperation in scientific investigation in Antarctica and plan to further expand and improve our research activities.

Fulfilling another condition for Consultative Status, the Czech Republic is a Party to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty and approved all its Annexes that have become effective. Furthermore, in compliance with paragraph 2 of ATCM Decision 4 of 2005, the Czech Republic has made a declaration of intent to approve the Recommendations and Measures adopted at ATCM in pursuance of the Treaty and subsequently approved by all the Contracting Parties whose Representatives were entitled to participate in those meetings. Moreover, the Czech Republic will consider approval of the other Recommendations and Measures.

The Czech Republic has supported its Antarctic research by national legislative and institutional frameworks. In 2003, the Czech Republic adopted the Act on Antarctica that implements its international obligations related to Antarctica into the Czech legal order. Subsequently in 2006, the Czech Republic established the Commission for Antarctica composed of all relevant Ministries and other professional institutions which coordinates its activities in Antarctica.

The Czech Republic has thus met the requirements of Article IX.2 of the Antarctic Treaty, as well as the requirements of Article 22.4 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection and complied with the ATCM Decision 4 of 2005. As such, the Czech Republic considers itself qualified to appoint Representatives to participate in Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings as Consultative Party.

We are of the view that the scientific results of the Czech polar community as well as policies adopted at the national level justify the application of the Czech Republic for Consultative Party Status. We believe that through its Consultative Status, the Czech Republic will be able – together with other Consultative Parties – to advance the objectives of the Antarctic Treaty.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.