
Treaties

Antarctic Treaty

Antarctica is an island continent some 15.5m. sq. km in area which lies almost entirely within the Antarctic Circle. Its surface is composed of an ice sheet over rock, and it is uninhabited except for research and other workers in the course of duty. It is in general ownerless: for countries with territorial claims, *see* ARGENTINA; AUSTRALIA: Australian Antarctic Territory; CHILE; FRANCE: Southern and Antarctic Territories; NEW ZEALAND: Ross Dependency; NORWAY: Queen Maud Land; UNITED KINGDOM: British Antarctic Territory.

12 countries which had maintained research stations in Antarctica during International Geophysical Year, 1957–58 (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the USSR, the UK and the USA) signed the Antarctic Treaty (Washington Treaty) on 1 Dec. 1959. Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, North Korea, South Korea, Malaysia, Monaco, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela subsequently acceded to the Treaty. The Treaty reserves the Antarctic area south of 60° S. lat. for peaceful purposes, provides for international co-operation in scientific investigation and research, and preserves, for the duration of the Treaty, the *status quo* with regard to territorial sovereignty, rights and claims. The Treaty entered into force on 23 June 1961. The 54 nations party to the Treaty (29 consultative or voting members and 25 non-consultative parties) meet biennially.

An agreement reached in Madrid in April 1991 and signed by all 39 parties in Oct. imposes a ban on mineral exploitation in Antarctica for 50 years, at the end of which any one of the 29 voting parties may request a review conference. After this the ban may be lifted by agreement of three quarters of the nations then voting, which must include the present 29.

Headquarters: Maipú 757 Piso 4, C1006ACI, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Website: <http://www.ats.aq>

Email: ats@ats.aq

Executive Secretary: Albert Lluberá (Uruguay).

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons opened for signatories on 1 July 1968. It came into force on 5 March 1970. A review meeting takes place every five years. The initial treaty was limited to a 25-year term but it was extended indefinitely in 1995.

The treaty aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. The International Atomic Energy Agency (*see* page 22) is responsible for setting safeguards to ensure compliance.

Of the treaty's 191 members only five have nuclear weapon capabilities: China, France, Russia, UK and USA. Three states known or believed to have developed nuclear weapons have not ratified the treaty: India, Israel and Pakistan. North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003, the only state to have done so.

See also Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) on page 23.

Website: <https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt/>

Further Reading

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Elliott, L. M., *International Environmental Politics: Protecting the Antarctic*. 1994

Triggs, Gillian D. (ed.) *The Antarctic Treaty Regime: Law, Environment and Resources*. 2009