



PEACEMAKER

The Antarctic Treaty System

The Antarctic Treaty and related agreements, collectively known as the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), regulate international relations with respect to Antarctica, Earth's only continent without a native human population. For the purposes of the treaty system, Antarctica is defined as all of the land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude. The treaty entered into force in 1961 and currently has 54 parties. The treaty sets aside Antarctica as a scientific preserve, establishes freedom of scientific investigation, and bans military activity on the continent. The treaty was the first arms control agreement established during the Cold War. Since September 2004, the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat headquarters has been located in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The primary purpose of the Antarctic Treaty is to ensure “in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.” To this end it prohibits military activity, except in support of science; prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear waste; promotes scientific research and the exchange of data; and holds all territorial claims in abeyance.

“If Antarctica were music it would be Mozart. Art, and it would be Michelangelo. Literature, and it would be Shakespeare. And yet it is something even greater; the only place on earth that is still as it should be.

May we never tame it.” Andrew Denton

