

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman**

---

**For Immediate Release  
2009/287**

**April 6, 2009**

**REMARKS**

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton  
At The Joint Session of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting  
And the Arctic Council, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty**

**April 6, 2009**

**Loy Henderson Conference Room  
Washington, D.C.**

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Thank you very much, Reno, and let me welcome all of you here for this very important event. It's a real pleasure for me to have the honor of serving as Secretary of State as we celebrate really four interlocking events that bring us all to this place today. I want to certainly welcome all of the ministers who are here and also Prince Albert – we greatly appreciate his work – the many representatives of organizations that have been deeply concerned about the Antarctic and the Arctic.

But let me relate the four important events that I think we are marking today: first, the conclusion of the International Polar Year, a coordinated effort in planetary research among scientists from more than 60 nations; second, the start of the Annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, which the United States is proud to host for the first time in 30 years; third, the first ever Joint Session of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and the Arctic Council; and finally, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the treaty itself, which stands as an example of how agreements created for one age can serve the world in another, and how when nations work together at their best the benefits are felt not only by their own people but by all people and by succeeding generations.

In 1959, representatives from 12 countries came together in Washington to sign the Antarctic Treaty, which is sometimes referred to as the first arms control agreement of the Cold War. Today, 47 nations have signed it. And as a result, Antarctica is one of the few places on earth where there has never been war. Other than occasional arguments among scientists and those stationed there over weighty matters having to do with sports, entertainment, and science, there has been very little conflict.

It is a land where science is the universal language and the highest priority and where people from different regions, races, and religions live and work together in one of the planet's most remote, beautiful, and dangerous places.

The genius of the Antarctic Treaty lies in its relevance today. It was written to meet the challenges of an earlier time, but it and its related instruments remain a key tool in our efforts to address an urgent threat of this time, climate change, which has already destabilized communities on every continent, endangered plant and animal species, and jeopardized critical food and water sources.

Climate change is shaping the future of our planets and – our planet in ways we are still striving to understand. But the research made possible within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty has shown us that catastrophic consequences await if we don't take action soon. The framers of the treaty may not have foreseen exactly the shape of climate change, but their agreement allowed scientists to model its effects, including glaciologists studying the dynamics of ice, biologists exploring the effects of harsh temperatures on living organisms, geophysicists like those who discovered the hole in the ozone layer above Antarctica that prompted the ban embodied in the 1987 Montreal Protocol. Today, the hole above the Antarctica is starting to close, thanks to the world's response to this discovery.

So the treaty is a blueprint for the kind of international cooperation that will be needed more and more to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it is an example of smart power at its best. Governments coming together around a common interest and citizens, scientists, and institutions from different countries joined in scientific collaboration to advance peace and understanding. I know there are scientists here today who have conducted research in Antarctica, and I thank you for your commitment and your courage. The United States military has something called the Antarctica Service Award, which it issues to any Americans, military or civilian, who have been members of expeditions to the Antarctica, have served in its waters, or worked in the stations there. And there's a special bar called the Wintered Over bar that goes to those people who stay for a full year. That gives an indication of how tough it can be down there and how determined you have to be to see your work through.

But it is important for humanity's understanding of our planet and our ability to anticipate and mitigate the changes caused by global warming. And with the collapse of an ice bridge that holds in place the Wilkins Ice Shelf, we are reminded that global warming has already had enormous effects on our planet, and we have no time to lose in tackling this crisis. I'm very pleased that the Obama Administration has made it clear that we are committed to working with you and leading in our efforts, advancing toward Copenhagen to take united action on behalf of our response to global climate change.

We need to increase our attention not only to the Antarctic but to the Arctic as well. As a senator, I traveled to the Arctic region, both in Norway and Alaska. I saw for myself the challenging issues that the region is facing today, especially those caused by climate change. This too provides an opportunity for nations to come together in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as we did 50 years ago in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We should be looking to strengthen peace and security, and support sustainable economic development, and protect the environment.

The warming of the Arctic has profound implications for global commerce, with the opening of new shipping routes. It raises the possibility of new energy exploration, which will, of course,

have additional impacts on our environment. And Arctic warming has already serious consequences for the indigenous communities that have made their homes there for many generations.

The changes underway in the Arctic will have long-term impacts on our economic future, our energy future, and indeed, again, the future of our planet. So it is crucial that we work together. Here in Washington, the State Department coordinates Arctic policy for the United States, and I am committed to maintaining a high level of engagement with our partners on this. That starts with the Law of the Sea Convention, which President Obama and I are committed to ratifying, to give the United States and our partners the clarity we need to work together smoothly and effectively in the Arctic region. There are also steps we must take to protect the environment. For example, we know that short-lived carbon forcers like methane, black carbon, and tropospheric ozone contributes significantly to the warming of the Arctic. And because they are short lived, they also give us an opportunity to make rapid progress if we work to limit them.

In advance of the Arctic Council meeting in Norway later this month, I have asked my team here at the State Department to come up with new initiatives that the United States will put forth to be a full, active partner in these efforts.

We also must push forward with research. There is still a lot more to learn about the polar regions. We are encouraged by discoveries made during the International Polar Year. Look at what's been accomplished: scientists produced detailed maps of the last unexplored mountain range on earth, sent robot submarines under the Antarctic Ice Shelf to map the sea beds, drilled deep beneath the sea floor to learn more about the effects of carbon dioxide on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, and shed light on how climate change affects the microscopic life at the base of our ecosystem.

Together, these discoveries will advance our understanding and hopefully inspire us to work more closely together to limit the impacts on our lives.

Now, these projects and many more were the result of partnerships among nations represented here. Exploring our planet, protecting its future, is too large a task for any one country to undertake. And of course, no country owns the market on good ideas. Breakthroughs can and should come from anywhere and everywhere, especially when genuine collaboration and teamwork are involved. Organizations and events like this that bring people together from across disciplines and regions are crucial. That is the model of the Antarctic Treaty, and it is reflected in events like the International Polar year and in groups like the Arctic Council.

The United States stands in strong support of both the Antarctic Treaty and its purpose: to maintain the Antarctica as a place of peace and to use the science that can only be performed there to benefit the entire planet.

I am pleased to announce that on Friday, President Obama sent to the United States Senate the Annex to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty that deals with liability arising from environmental emergencies. The President has urged the Senate to give the

Annex its consent so the United States can ratify it and we can take a major step forward in enhancing environmental protection in the Antarctica by clearly laying out how countries must prevent emergencies and respond to them if they do occur. The Annex will only take effect once all the countries in the Antarctic Treaty approve it, so I urge all of us to move as quickly as we can to fill this gap in our care for the Antarctica.

The United States has also submitted a proposal to the Consultative Parties of the Antarctic Treaty to extend marine pollution rules in a manner that more accurately reflects the boundaries of the Antarctic ecosystem. Strengthening environmental regulation is especially important as tourism to the Antarctica increases. The United States is concerned about the safety of the tourists and the suitability of the ships that make the journey south. We have submitted a resolution that would place limits on landings from ships carrying large numbers of tourists. We have also proposed new requirements for lifeboats on tourist ships to make sure they can keep passengers alive until rescue comes. And we urge greater international cooperation to prevent discharges from these ships that will further degrade the environment around the Antarctica.

For the Antarctic Treaty parties, I hope your time here over the next two weeks will be fruitful as you discuss these and other issues related to our polar regions. And as the world prepares for the UN Climate Talks this December in Copenhagen, meetings like this are more important than ever.

The Antarctic Treaty is a product of far-sighted, visionary leaders from all walks of life, from government, from academia and science, from the private sector, and others who cared deeply about the future of this great continent to our south. But it serves as a model. It is a living example of how we can form a vital partnership to meet the challenges of this time. So in the spirit of the treaty and in light of the incredible discoveries that took place during the International Polar Year, let us resolve to keep making progress with sharp research and bold action on both ends of our planet, in the south and the north, for the good of our nations and for the people, but mostly for this beautiful planet we currently share and the succeeding generations that should have the same opportunity to enjoy its bounty and its beauty.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

###