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Still, A Minerals Gap

A Report on the 1990 Special Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Parties

by Ron Naveen



Elephant Island ©1991, Ron Naveen

On December 6, 1990, the Antarctic Treaty Parties concluded their three-week-long Special Meeting in Viña Del Mar, Chile.

The express purpose was to discuss comprehensive environmental measures for Antarctica and the still unwritten liabilities protocol for the proposed Antarctic minerals controls treaty. In light of the years-long, acrimonious debate about minerals, many expected a final showdown about the best way to protect Antarctica from future exploitation.

That showdown never happened. In fact, the Antarctic Treaty minerals gap remains wide, and unclosed.

For those expecting hot-breaking news and palpable, concrete results, Viña produced whimpers, not cosmic breakthroughs. One delegation member compared the meeting to the "excitement of watching grass grow" and the London Financial Times called it a "dismal failure."

This latter judgment may be premature. The Parties moved toward establishing an Environmental Protocol that covers various and sundry "green" issues and which, ultimately, will be the context for resolving the minerals issue – if at all. The Parties also made progress toward establishing a small Treaty Secretariat, which would improve the ability to share scientific information and other data, coordinate inspections, and, hopefully, monitor the Antarctic environment.

The real news is subtle, and involves a potentially important change of focus – both diplomatically and substantively.

Although minerals were pushed off center stage in Viña, a return engagement is imminent, but in a new context and, possibly, with a new set of pressures. Instead of arguing about a minerals controls treaty governed by environmental principles, attention now shifts to a many-faceted, more comprehensive, environmental scheme, with minerals just one of many important issues that are linked together. This negotiating framework is more complex and, perhaps, is less likely a victim of single-issue politics. If the umbrella, Environmental Protocol gains serious momentum, the Parties may find closing the minerals gap unavoidable.

Whether Viña is remembered as seminal or a waste of time depends on upcoming events. A Special Meeting has been called next April in Madrid to continue work on the Environmental Protocol, and this will be followed by the regular Treaty meeting next October in Germany.

This report offers a refresher on Antarctic Treaty politics, a review of the Treaty's minerals gap, and a summary of results at the Viña Special Meeting. Also, there is a sidebar reviewing the specifics of CRAMRA and an editorial about closing the minerals gap.

The Forgotten, Internal Compromise

As a short refresher, the Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 and went into force two years later amid a rampant feeling of worldwide good will generated by the International Geophysical Year of the late '50s. The agreement enjoys its 30th

anniversary in 1991, but, contrary to some accounts, it does not expire on that anniversary (although a review conference may be called by one of the Parties). It now has been endorsed by 38 nations, representing more than two-thirds of the world's population.

Business is conducted at regular, biennial meetings where policy "Recommendations" are adopted by consensus vote (meaning that all must agree), then, theoretically, implemented by laws and regulations in the various countries. The voting, or Consultative, Parties are countries that have established bona fide scientific station operations in The Ice (See **The Antarctic Century Newsletter**, Number 1). Occasionally, as with Viña, Special Meetings are called.



Deception Island Crater ©1991, Ron Naveen

These meetings are a gigantic horse-trading event, with diplomats nudging together very complicated embellishments, deals and compromises. It is important to note that all Treaty decisions must balance the interests of more than twenty voting Parties and a host of regional and geopolitical interests: "Haves" vs. "Have-nots" (developed vs.

undeveloped countries); East-West (capitalist vs. socialist-Communist); and, North-South.

In practice, the Treaty sets Antarctica aside as a totally denuclearized, demilitarized, scientific park, owned by no

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one. The Treaty's delicate checks and balances defuse a substantial, political "hot" potato: the territorial claims of seven countries, three of which – the Chilean, British, and Argentine sectors – overlap in the Antarctic Peninsula area. Essentially, the Parties agreed to disagree about claims or potential claims by ignoring them.

Thus, the territorial claims of seven countries (Australia, New Zealand, France, Norway, Chile, Argentina, and the United Kingdom) and the potential claims of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are muffled, private management by claimants or potential claimants is barred, and free access to the Continent by nationals of all countries is guaranteed.

Throughout the minerals debate, the internal compromise was ignored, although this discord-avoidance device lies at the Treaty's heart. The preciousness of this internal compromise becomes apparent with the reality that: the British and Argentines already have fought one war in the Southern Ocean; the Dufek Massif in the Pensacola Mountains may contain rich minerals deposits; and, that the Massif lies in an area jointly claimed by Britain, Argentina, and Chile.

The consensus operating procedures are, no doubt, laborious, but they have worked rather successfully. In fact, over the years, the Parties have been able to close various "gaps" in the original Treaty: whales are now conserved by reference to the International Whaling Convention and there are separate conventions conserving Antarctic seals and marine living resources (krill and fish). But, closing the last, huge gap – the future exploitation of Antarctic oil, gas, and minerals – has become a sore, Achilles' Heel.

The Minerals Gap

Antarctica and its surrounding ocean shelves may contain large, untapped amounts of minerals, oil and gas, but, as yet, there are no Treaty-wide arrangements for managing their exploitation. Putting an effective, regulatory system in place before economically viable deposits are discovered makes sense, and one need search history no further back than the mid-1800's and the California gold rush to think of chastening examples.

While everyone agrees that the minerals gap needs closing, Viña is stark evidence that the issue continues to divide the Parties. Very early in Viña, it was apparent that minerals discussions, as structured, were doomed.

The proposed minerals controls treaty – CRAMRA – took seven years to negotiate, and had been vigorously scrutinized for another two years. Also known as the Wellington Convention, the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Minerals Resource Activities (CRAMRA) was adopted by the consensus of 20 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties on June 2, 1988 and was opened for signature on November 25, 1988. It contained 67 articles and 65 pages of text, compared to the original Treaty's 15 paragraphs and three pages length.

This complicated regime starts with the premise of a morato-

rium on all exploration and development activities, then sets forth a dizzying array of hoops, procedures, and perhaps prohibitive controls that a potential developer would have to traverse before, possibly, being allowed to proceed. CRAMRA theoretically provides a mechanism for regulating Antarctic minerals activities and an agreed-upon system that would avoid confrontation and instability among the Parties. (See **Sidebar**, this issue, for more details.)

But soon after the final version of CRAMRA was announced, Australia and France – two claimant countries that had to sign in order for CRAMRA to take effect – backed out of the deal, objecting to even the prospect of future development. This point-of-view argues that a simple, "just say no" agreement is the necessary (and best) protection. The concern is that CRAMRA would encourage development and open the door for legal, mining rights in The Ice.

The countervailing point-of-view is that "saying no with bureaucracy" – CRAMRA's potential flood of procedures and tough environmental standards – is the best way to close the gap. The concern is that a simple moratorium is too easily changed if there's a discovery, and that there is little chance of strong controls being enacted in the midst of a "gold rush." This side argues for a regulatory scheme that respects the integrity of the whole Treaty System, stabilizes a potentially divisive issue, and legalizes CRAMRA's strong environmental principles (which are more restrictive than those found in other international agreements). On the last point, all critical decisions under CRAMRA must be based on sufficient information that allows appropriate environmental judgments to be made (which is a much higher standard than one relying on best available data).

In Viña, Australia, France, and New Zealand held firm to opposing CRAMRA and its bureaucratic approach totally. Reflecting arguments of the preceding year, this minority



Chinstrap Penguins on Ice ©1991, Ron Naveen

view argued for a permanent ban on any prospective development. There were decidedly more votes on the other side, including the U.K. and Japan, which made clear that an arrangement totally and permanently setting Antarctica off limits would be unacceptable, and that the bureaucratic framework was preferred.

Neither side could break the deadlock and because of the consensus operating rules, neither side prevailed. The impasse was a sad ending to an extraordinary buildup of emotions, promises, and hopes that had dominated Antarctic politics for more than a year.

So where does the issue go from here? The only certainty is



Weddell Seal ©1991, Ron Naveen

a new context. The Parties intend their new Environmental Protocol to prohibit minerals exploitation in some fashion, but specifics aren't delineated and will require further negotiations.

There also may be some evolving attitudes and, we can hope, attempts to find a compromise. The U.S., which enacted anti-minerals-exploitation legislation during the year, is one of many countries that now seems amenable to a long-term, but not necessarily permanent, moratorium. This idea was broached at the heads-of-delegation level in Viña, but didn't go very far, there being no agreement on the length of such a moratorium (e.g. 30, 40, or 50 years), how it would/might be reviewed or lifted, and what regime would exist if/when that happens.

With neither side prevailing on either a permanent moratorium or CRAMRA, and still no compromises in sight, it's appropriate to ask: Will the Parties ever make a deal? An optimistic view focuses on the fact that everyone is still talking. Despite the failure in Viña to put minerals to rest, there will be a minerals article in the Environmental Protocol and, importantly, the Parties have agreed to continue their policy of "voluntary restraint." This means that there will be no prospecting, exploration, or development as long as good faith discussions proceed.

But, what gap-closing solution will emerge? The Parties could continue, indefinitely, their *ad hoc* policy of "voluntary restraint," but this adds nothing permanent to the System. A second option is folding CRAMRA totally into the Environmental Protocol, to be used only if/when a moratorium breaks. This might work if the moratorium is deemed sufficiently lengthy, but still raises the ghost of last year's acrimony over CRAMRA. A third choice would try linking a time-limited moratorium to selected portions of CRAMRA, restructuring and extracting CRAMRA's principles and articles until a mix is found that produces consensus.

One experienced Antarctic observer suggests that time is running out on the Parties and that if no deal is struck by October, the present "window of opportunity" will be squandered. In other words, the fourth possibility, that of outright failure – a permanent, minerals gap – still looms large.

A Broad Umbrella

The new, draft Environmental Protocol is another attempt to continue the Treaty System's positive evolution. Indeed, the environmental-consciousness of the Parties never has been higher. In addition to minerals, questions have been raised about tourism, vessel source pollution, ocean dumping, the open burning of garbage at research stations, and the expansion of Treaty's protected area system. With minerals put to the side, these concerns became the prime focus in Viña, and with more positive results.

Competing suggestions and proposals were melded into a single document, which now will be the stalking horse for upcoming discussions. This draft Protocol sets forth a number of legally binding, environmental principles and standards to which annexes – covering specific topics – would append. Initially, the Parties will consider annexes on marine pollution, waste disposal, environmental impact assessments, and revised measures to protect Antarctic flora and fauna.

Treaty-wide issues like tourism are expected to be the focus of future annexes. There also was agreement that a new Advisory Committee should be established to advise the Parties on the interpretation of the Protocol.

The proposed annex on marine pollution tracks recent, international regulations by the International Maritime Organization and applies these rules on oil pollution and waste disposal to the Antarctic Treaty area. However, the problem of applying these rules to government vessels and vessels flying the flag of non-Antarctic countries (e.g. some of the cruise ships) remains a hot topic for discussion.

The proposed annex on waste disposal tracks last year's Recommendation of the Parties to cease the open burning of waste, with some revised target dates reflecting the time some clean-up operations might take.

The annex on environmental impact assessment procedures will require assurances that scientific support and technical activities cause no environmental damage. The likely result is a system that reviews all proposed activities for potential environmental impact and requires a draft environmental evaluation to be circulated to all Parties well before the commencement of any activity. However, this annex is

unlikely to incorporate a system that requires the collective, prior authorization of scientific research.

The proposed annex on conserving Antarctica's fragile flora and fauna would revise the current Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna. The annex would expand various definitions and authorize the issuance of permits for the taking of birds and mammals during the construction or operation of scientific support facilities. These measures would be applicable to all individuals visiting The Ice.

The Parties did not choose to deal with tourism as a separate issue at this time. However, many of the provisions in the annex on flora and fauna will impact the operation of tourist vessels, for example, harmful interference by zodiacs and small boats getting too close to concentrations of penguins and seals. That future annexes will focus on border-crossing issues like tourism is a hopeful sign, because these problems can't be solved by one country acting alone.

Other Developments

Behind the scenes, there was progress on establishing a standing committee for environmental protection and a minimal Treaty Secretariat for sharing documents and information and to allow better coordination of inspection procedures. These are very positive steps. Many of the South American countries have resisted a Secretariat for years, mainly over concern that this institution would infringe on still reserved sovereignty rights.

The importance of a Secretariat is that it might lead the way to some realistic oversight commissions regarding the sharing of

scientific data and charts, enforcement and inspections, and, perhaps, the regulation of tourism.

The Crystal Ball

The glory of the Antarctic Treaty is a thirty-year history of successful, international diplomacy, but the impasse in Viña is a portent that these glory days, very easily, might end. Hopefully, the Parties will find an accommodation that prevents the minerals divisiveness from infecting the broad, Environmental Protocol.

Indeed, momentum for this many-faceted Protocol might eliminate minerals as the bellwether, Antarctic political issue. The stakes, now, have grown. If the tide runs fiercely toward formalizing the overall, environmental scheme of the Protocol and its annexes, the Parties will be hard pressed to continue their dalliance over minerals. Indeed, they may find political pressure building for a complete, environmental package that, among other things, closes the minerals gap.

The logjam might be broken by a time-limited moratorium tied to stringent rules if such moratorium lapses. But this will require hard discussions and compromising on lingering issues: What is the difference between prospecting and science? Can any of the CRAMRA definitions be tightened? Should opening an area to prospecting require consensus? How can the Parties strengthen compliance and the Treaty-wide inspection system? What environmental disputes might be submitted to compulsory arbitration?

Viña whimpered to a close, but history's judgment is still unknown.

SIDEBAR

Details of the Proposed Minerals Controls Regime (CRAMRA)

Because CRAMRA represents the fruits of a long, protracted negotiation, it is necessarily a compromise, a gamble. By its terms, it does not guarantee the absolute, pristine nature of Antarctica forever, but that, nonetheless, might result from the framework it establishes. What it clearly does provide is a means by which all Parties commit to, and are bound by, the same set of legal principles and standards.

The intent is to produce a framework, not a mining code. Once a specific area of the Antarctic is identified for exploration and development, CRAMRA's institutions would assess the situation, appraise the proposed activities against strong environmental standards, and then allow decisions on whether to go forward or not.

The five new institutions provided by CRAMRA include an Antarctic Minerals Resources Commission, a Special Meeting of the Parties, a Scientific, Technical and Environmental Advisory Committee, various Regulatory Committees, and a Secretariat.

The Commission is the key body. It would promote the exchange of information necessary to evaluate the environmental impacts of any proposed activities, designate areas where such activities should be prohibited or restricted, adopt necessary measures to protect the environment of Antarctica, and to determine, initially, whether or not to open-up an area for exploration or development. While many Commission decisions involve a three-quarters vote, consensus – that is, agreement by all – is required for budgetary and financial matters and, most importantly, for the opening-up decision required to identify any area for possible exploration or development.

For each area that would be opened-up, a Regulatory Committee is established to evaluate the exploration/development activities proposed for the area in question. The ten-seat membership on each Regulatory Committee is complicated, trying to balance the interests of those proposing the exploration or development with at least four claimant Parties, including the claimants of the area in question, and six nonclaimant Parties, including the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Votes in this arena require a two-thirds majority, except a simple majority for procedural matters (all of which also depends on the number of claimants and nonclaimants voting in the majority).

Prospecting is deemed the initial stage of minerals resource activities, and defined as those "activities, including logistic support, aimed at identifying areas of mineral resource potential for possible exploration and development, including geological, geochemical and geophysical investigations and field observations, the use of remote sensing techniques and collection of surface, seafloor and sub-ice samples." But, prospecting is not restricted by the need to obtain prior authorization by any of the institutions established by CRAMRA. Indeed, no consensus is required for such activities, although prospecting could be regulated by legislation in individual countries.

In many ways, CRAMRA is a lawyer's dream and a developer's nightmare: reams of papers to be filed and evaluated by tough environmental standards before any exploration or development occurs. Article 4 of CRAMRA enumerates these strong principles, against which all Regulatory Committee decisions would have to be made. The principles make clear that all decisions shall be based on adequate information which allows informed judgments about impacts to be made. In short, CRAMRA would block the approval of any activity until sufficient information is available to make the necessary environmental judgments.

Based on this assessment of possible impacts, no exploration or development activity shall take place until it is judged that it would not cause: significant adverse effects on air and water quality; significant changes in atmospheric, terrestrial or marine environments; significant changes in the distribution, abundance or productivity of populations of species of flora and fauna; further jeopardy to endangered or threatened species or populations of such species; degradation of, or substantial risk to, areas of special biological, scientific, historic, aesthetic, or wilderness significance; or, significant adverse effects on global or regional climate or weather patterns.

Further Article 4 provides that no activities shall take place unless the best technology and procedures exist to insure safe operations and compliance with these environmental standards. Also, there must exist the capacity to monitor compliance with these standards and to respond effectively to accidents. All Article 4 judgments require cumulative impacts to be evaluated and Article 8 provides for an operator's strict liability if any damage is caused to the Antarctic environment.

NEWS



New Consultative Parties. Netherlands and Ecuador became Consultative (voting) Parties just before the start of the Viña meetings. With the merger of the two Germanys also taking place in 1990, the new lineup is 26 Consultative Parties and 12 Non-Consultative (non-voting) Parties. The 26 voting countries include: the U.S., the U.S.S.R., France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Norway, Japan, China, India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Spain, Sweden, Finland, the Republic of Korea, Peru, Netherlands, and Ecuador. The 12 non-voting countries include: Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Romania, Bulgaria, Colombia, Greece, Papua New Guinea, Hungary, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Austria and Canada.

New Ships/Tourism.

On the South American side of the Antarctic, there are four ships operating this season: the Society Explorer (Society Expeditions), the Illiria (Travel Dynamics), the Polar Circle, a new, ice-reinforced, 50-passenger vessel (Travel Dynamics), and the Ocean Princess, a huge, 380-passenger, non-ice reinforced vessel (Ocean Cruise Lines). On the Australia/New Zealand side, two ships are operating: the Frontier Spirit, a new, ice-reinforced, 140-passenger vessel (Salen Lindblad Cruising) and the World Discoverer (Society Expeditions). Between 2,000 and 3,000 passengers are expected to partake of these ventures.

There has been concern regarding the Ocean Princess, which is making its first Antarctic run. Essentially, the ship is a Mediterranean "love boat," accommodating hundreds of passengers on a vessel without a high ice rating. Owners and operators of the vessel have tried to assure the U.S. National Science Foundation and various environmental groups that the ship will be run in a competent and safe manner, but these reassurances have not dispelled the anxiety. Many believe that there are few landing sites in The Ice that can accommodate 400 passengers per visit, even if such visits are staggered over the course of a whole day.

Society Expedition's new ship, the Society Adventurer, is due to begin operations in time for the 1991-92 Antarctic tourist season. It will provide passage for 160 passengers, and be ice-rated.

Ozone Hole.

For a second straight year, the early, austral spring ozone hole above The Ice was large. The fear, of course, is that the increased ultraviolet radiation is damaging phytoplankton and zooplankton, which in turn, could destroy the entire Antarctic food chain.

Mysterious Die-off.

The Australians have recorded a die-off of King Penguins at Macquarie Island. The deaths appear to have resulted from stampeding, but the exact cause is, at yet, unknown. For now, airplane overflights have been ruled out.

Wild Ice: Antarctic Journeys.

Oceanites' co-sponsored Antarctic book, Wild Ice, co-written and co-photographed by Ron Naveen, was officially published on November 15, 1990 by Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC (USA). The book has sold extremely well, and is expected to go to a second printing in 1991. There already is an Italian edition, and other translations are in the works. Smithsonian Institution Press has done a marvelous production job. If you haven't yet obtained your copy, U.S.-based orders may be placed by sending a \$40 check (per copy) to Oceanites. The cost includes UPS postage and handling.

Publications.

Also available is a new publication from the World Resources Institute (WRI) called SOUTHERN EXPOSURE: Deciding Antarctica's Future, which was written by Lee Kimball. The book was published in collaboration with The Tinker Foundation, Inc. For further information, contact WRI at 1709 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006 (USA), 202-662-2596. A report on the Viña meeting also is available.

Oceanites Items:

A Japanese-language translation of Oceanites' Antarctic Traveler's Code is under preparation. As mentioned in previous Newsletters, the Code is now available in English, Spanish, German, and French and copies may be obtained, gratis, by writing to Oceanites.

Continuing its efforts to affect low-impact tourism, the Oceanites Board of Directors recently approved an Oceans and Islands



Iceberg ©1991, Ron Naveen

Visitor's Code regarding traveler's behavior when visiting fragile oceans and islands habitats, and will be distributed to the various expedition cruising companies. The Code provides that:

Travelers will not:

- Disturb these fragile habitats in any fashion whatsoever.
- Introduce any non-native plant or animal.
- Dump plastic or other non-biodegradable garbage overboard or leave any garbage in areas visited.
- Show any disrespect to the cultural heritage, customs, traditions, and habits of indigenous peoples.
- Violate the personal space of the native animals in these fragile habitats.
- Interfere with protected areas or scientific research.
- Collect or buy specimens or products that threaten wildlife and plants in these fragile habitats.

Recent and upcoming slide show presentations by Ron Naveen include:

Smithsonian Institution Resident Associates,	
Washington, DC	January 29, 1991
Baltimore Aquarium, Baltimore, MD	February 28, 1991
St. Louis Zoo, St. Louis, MO	April 3, 1991
Lancaster County (PA) Bird Club	April 12, 1991
Houston Zoo, Houston TX	May 8, 1991

-EDITORIAL-

What To Do About The Minerals Gap

The Viña meetings didn't close the minerals gap, exploitation remains a rather serious threat, and there is the fear that the minerals impasse puts us back, nakedly, to Square One. The two sides are still at the abyss and haven't pulled back sufficiently to find the gap-closing, common ground.

Closing the Antarctic minerals gap is a complicated, two-part mission: "Question A" is how to effectuate a moratorium (permanent or time-limited) quickly and effectively; "Question B" is how to effectuate – at the same time – some tough rules that will apply if the moratorium collapses in the future. We need to take advantage of the "window of opportunity" that's presently available and focus on answering both questions.

Why? Because there are no guarantees. Today's consensus potentially becomes tomorrow's disarray and leads to the claims-oriented discord the Treaty was supposed to prevent, threatening the System's precious, internal compromise. Governments change too quickly. Within the last few months, the New Zealand and British leadership have changed, and there will be more changes, inevitably. So, why not negotiate a system that's impervious to these ebbs and flows?

Few would disagree that a legal moratorium needs to be formalized in the Antarctic Treaty System. The "voluntary restraint" that the Parties have shown for the last few years is not fixed. But, in trying to turn today's voluntary restraint into a more permanent closure of the minerals gap, the Parties can't ignore Question B. Avoiding the second question is tantamount to an incomplete fix, which leaves the plight of Antarctica to a less propitious moment-in-time. If Question B dangles and twists in the wind, we face a Pyrrhic victory.



Adélie Penguins ©1991, Ron Naveen

Simple words or platitudes – a wilderness preserve or world park – mean little if the Parties don't want to abide by them, or if new leaders change them at will. That's why the anti-minerals "contract" the Parties need to sign must be a whole lot tougher than simply a moratorium or a special wilderness designation. The more comprehensive the contract, the better, because it will be much harder to break, legally, politically, and otherwise.

If CRAMRA or its remaining shreds offer anything positive on Question B, it is the continued willingness of "Pragmatist" countries to agree to complicated rules if/when a moratorium breaks. There's been much, advantageous groundwork laid in this respect, and it would be a shame to lose the complicated procedures that the Pragmatists still may embrace.

This reaches a basic concern. With the efforts of so many in the past year to paint Antarctic minerals as a black-and-white issue, there's the troubling prospect that we'll lose the multinational dialogue the Antarctic Treaty System has preserved for three decades. The lack of concrete results in Viña suggests that the strain is starting to show.

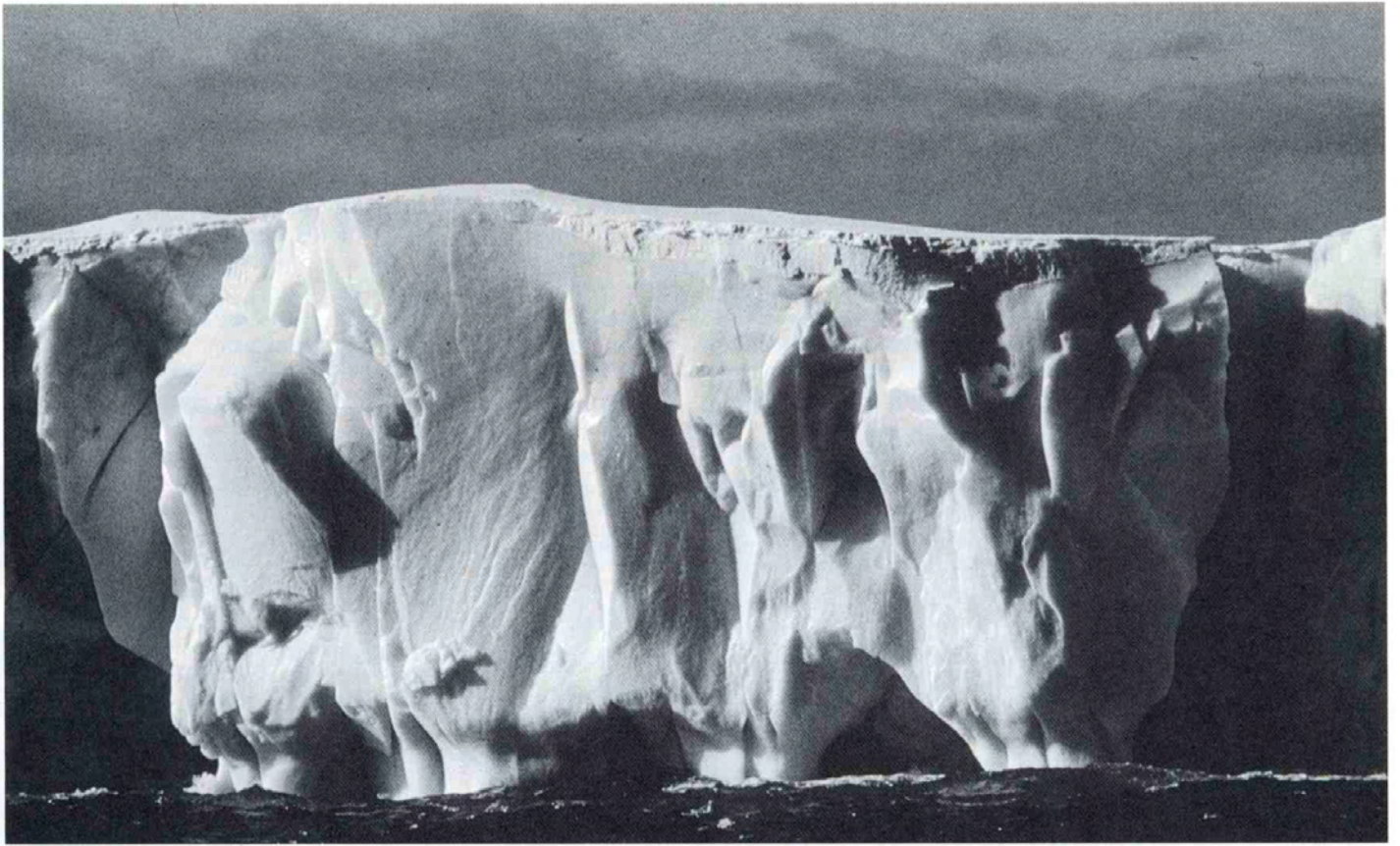
Progress in Antarctica is incremental, proceeding inch-by-inch or centimeter-by-centimeter. Great leaps and bounds are rare. There comes a time when we need to appreciate the increments or risk losing the window of opportunity that happens to be open.

Which gets back to the abyss. The fact remains that neither side of the minerals debate has the votes, even after Viña. What some see as additional support for a permanent moratorium is just as accurately characterized as a deeper split among the Parties. The minerals gap remains a minerals gap, and the high-risk posturing of the past year didn't close it.

But closure won't happen without courage on both sides to find the common ground. Some of this might marry the best aspects of the moratorium position to the best aspects of CRAMRA, all in light of the present frame of reference - the Environmental Protocol. We don't need to risk an unclosed minerals gap for the sake of visionary declarations that, for all practical intents and purposes, achieve nothing or don't work.

Real progress means addressing tight limits if or when a moratorium happens to collapse. To date, though, the wrangling has achieved nothing. If that doesn't change, the Treaty system might end up in worse shape than before. Today's contending factions need to step back from the brink, take a deep breath, and courageously find the common ground that effectively closes the Antarctic minerals gap – now, and for the future.

... Ron Naveen



Ice Shelf ©1991, Ron Naveen

