Proposed Visitor Site Guidelines for Argentine Islands, Wilhelm Archipelago

**Proposed Visitor Site Guidelines for Argentine Islands, Wilhelm Archipelago**

**Working paper submitted by Ukraine**

***Summary***

Visitor Site Guidelines have been prepared for Argentine Islands, Wilhelm Archipelago, in accordance with the ATCM XLII Resolution 3 (2019) on assessing sites for new guidelines. The experience gained over the last few years, regarding the conservation of the site and the evaluation of the visits, evidenced the need to producing the Visitor Site Guidelines so as to contribute to a better management of the site. Ukraine recommends that the CEP submit the site guidelines for adoption by the ATCM.

***Background***

1. The Argentine Islands (65º15' S; 64º16' W) are a small group of islands in the Southern part of the Wilhelm Archipelago, lying 5-6 km North West of the Antarctic Peninsula, and separated from Graham Coast by Penola Strait.
2. The site is recognised as being one of the southernmost recorded Gentoo penguin colonies as well as a number of other confirmed breeding bird species and a considerable coverage of old moss banks and lichens communities.
3. Ukrainian Vernadsky station, situated on Galindez Island, has been regularly visited by tourists since 1968, and it has seen a growth in visitor numbers in recent years. According to the IAATO statistics, this site is amongst the twenty most visited sites.
4. In order to minimize possible impacts on environmental values more restrictions on access and numbers of visitors are required. It is proposed that the maximum number of passengers should be 36 at a time and 270 per day, maximum ships per week limited to 2.
5. For the first time it is suggested to designate the landing requirements not only for the cruise ships, but for the private yachts, and limit the number of yachts visiting the site to three yachts per day.
6. Special tourist routes are developed to divert visitors away from the station buildings toward alternative attractions.
7. Proposed Visitor Site Guidelines for the Argentine Islands (see Appendix A with attached two maps and supplementary photos) have been prepared in accordance with the ATCM XLII Resolution 3 (2019) on assessing sites for new guidelines, and effectively harmonized with previously adopted Visitor Guidelines for the Winter Island (Resolution 1 (2010), as well as the Ukraine policy regarding visits by tourists to Vernadsky Station (ATCM XXXIV IP-110).

***Recommendation***

Ukraine recommends that the Committee for Environmental Protection:

1. Approve the attached Visitor Site Guidelines (see Appendix A) for the Argentine Islands.
2. Request the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting to adopt the Visitor Site Guidelines for the Argentine Islands.