

**MEDIA ADVISORY for immediate release:  
Ambition on Melting Ice (AMI) High-level Group on Sea-level Rise and  
Mountain Water Resources  
International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI)**

**Small island states and low-lying countries appeal to Antarctic Treaty meeting to help halt climate-change-induced ice loss and avert catastrophic sea-level rise**

**ATCM Side Event: Antarctic ice melt threat to world's low-lying countries**

**Time: June 1st, 5pm to 8pm,**

**Venue: Helsinki, Scandic Grand Marina hotel, Meeting room: Eliel and Selim**

(located next to the ATCM venue: Marina Congress Center)

**Representatives of non-Antarctic Treaty countries such as Mexico are in Helsinki for the annual meeting of the *Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty (ATCM)*, which lasts until June 8, 2023. These countries are not signatories to the Treaty, but wish to stress their concern about the impacts of increasingly rapid climate warming on the Antarctic ice sheet, and the consequences of its melting ice for low-lying nations and small island states.**

"An increasing number of studies of growing sophistication published in the past year are converging on temperatures between 1.5°C and 1.8°C as critical thresholds triggering irreversible loss of portions of the ice sheet, especially the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS), but also portions of East Antarctica", said Dr. Lydie Lescaumontier, Antarctica Director of the *International Cryosphere Climate Initiative*. The WAIS alone holds four meters of potential sea-level rise, enough to wipe out vital coastlines in many low-lying nations, says Lescaumontier.

The annual ATCM, hosted in turn by one of the 27 Consultative members, this time Finland, is attended by the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, which conduct significant research there. The meetings traditionally focus on research cooperation and the management of human activities in connection with protecting Antarctic biodiversity and ecosystems.

Until now, climate change has been discussed mainly in terms of impacts within Antarctica and on the Southern Ocean. However, there is a growing awareness that the greatest human consequences of climate changes affecting the Antarctic will be felt not by the small research and tourism communities active on the continent but by vulnerable millions living in low-lying countries and regions around the globe.

For the first time since the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1961, one whole day of the 12-day meeting will be devoted to Climate Action. The host government, Finland, has organised an unusual joint plenary of the ATCM and its related scientific body, the *Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP)*, to discuss the challenges posed by climate change. On the eve of *Climate Action Day*, the *Ambition on Melting Ice (AMI) High-level Group on Sea-level Rise and Mountain Water Resources*, created by a diverse group of 20 ministers at last year's UN Climate Conference COP27 in Egypt, is inviting delegates and interested parties to hear leading scientists, including IPCC lead author and Co-Lead for the *SCAR INSTANT Programme on future sea-level rise from Antarctica* Tim Naish, discuss these important and looming thresholds.

The *World Meteorological Organization* which Dr. Naish represents at the Helsinki meeting, announced this week that it will elevate the cryosphere to one of its top priorities, given the increasing impacts of diminishing sea ice, melting glaciers, ice sheets, permafrost and snow on sea level rise, water-related hazards and water security, economies and ecosystems.

Dr. Lescarmontier will present the latest information on the global consequences of the related key issue of acidification of the Southern Ocean, which has major consequences for fisheries and food security. "Atmospheric CO2 concentrations of 450ppm have long been identified as a serious threshold for these changes, which will last 30 to 70,000 years", says Lescarmontier. "Our current growth in CO2 will have us passing this level in just eleven years."

AMI includes not only polar and mountain countries, but others far distant that would be disastrously affected by sea level rise or loss of water resources from glaciers and snow. Mexico, for example will be deeply impacted by Antarctic ice sheet loss: much of the Yucatan Peninsula coast, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites and the tourist region of Cancun, would be wiped out at four meters of sea-level rise associated with loss of the WAIS alone. Monrovia, the capital of the African country Liberia, is at risk of disappearing with only 1-2 meters of sea-level rise. AMI members Vanuatu, Senegal and Tanzania would also have their coastlines rewritten if the West Antarctic Ice Sheet were to collapse.

"Protecting the cryosphere through vigorous climate action is not a matter for mountain and polar nations alone: it is a matter of urgent global concern, because the greatest impacts on human communities lie well outside these regions", the AMI partners write in their Declaration.

"It is a matter of international and inter-generational justice to keep this Antarctic ice frozen, surrounded by a healthy Southern Ocean", noted ICCI's Lescarmontier." Although not a formal part of the Antarctic Treaty, global impacts from Antarctica represent a key message for ATCM governments, she explained: "The aim is to raise the importance of Antarctica, to motivate emissions reductions consistent with the lower Paris Agreement limit of 1.5°C and with minimum overshoot, in order to avoid waking ever-greater portions of this sleeping giant".

## **ENDS**

Background:

Ambition on Melting Ice:  
<https://ambitionmeltingice.org/>

International Cryosphere Climate Initiative:  
[www.iccinet.org](http://www.iccinet.org)

Other climate events at ATCM, Helsinki:  
<https://iccinet.org/atcmhelsinki2023/>

Available for interview and comment at the event:

**Tim Naish**, IPCC lead author, Co-Lead for the *SCAR INSTANT Programme on future*

*sea-level rise from Antarctica*, winner of the *SCAR Tinker Muse Prize for Antarctic Science and Policy*, representing the *World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)* at the Helsinki meeting

**Lydie Lescarmontier**, award-winning polar researcher and Antarctica Director at ICCI.

Contact for both: [lydie@iccinet.org](mailto:lydie@iccinet.org)  
[amy@iccinet.org](mailto:amy@iccinet.org)

**Background:**

AMI:  
<https://ambitionmeltingice.org/>

AMI Event at Helsinki ATCM:  
<https://iccinet.org/atcmhelsinki2023/>

State of the Cryosphere 2022 Report:  
<https://iccinet.org/statecryo22/>