

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION
MR. A.D. BROWN OF AUSTRALIA.**

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I am pleased to open the second meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The first meeting, which was held last June shortly after the Convention came into force in 1982, made some important progress towards establishing machinery to implement the Convention but a number of administrative arrangements remain to be resolved. I hope the present meeting of the Commission and the Scientific Committee will be able to complete the administrative arrangements for the operation of the regime established under the Convention and that Representatives will be able to give attention to the substantive issues involved in pursuing the objectives of the Convention.

The time available for our meetings is limited and the agenda is quite extensive. We will need to make the maximum use of the time which is available in order to take essential decisions at this meeting if we are to have an effective program for the Secretariat in the coming year.

I do not wish to understate the difficulty of resolving the problems before us. The Convention is recognised as unique in the approach it takes to conserve the ecosystem of Antarctic waters. It would perhaps have been optimistic to expect to introduce a management system unlike any already in existence without a long and arduous process of preparation.

While we may appreciate the complexity of the issues which confront the Commission and the Scientific Committee, it is also apparent that the pace of international developments demands that progress should be made without undue delay.

Members of the Commission have, by their ratification of the Convention, acknowledged the merits of the international regime which it establishes. The international credibility of this regime will depend upon the ability of parties to the Convention to bring it into effect quickly and efficiently.

There have been signs of increasing international interest in the Antarctic and its resources – by Governments, private groups and individuals. On the basis of even the limited scientific data available to us, it is apparent that the marine resources of the Convention area could come to be seen as a significant source of world food supplies. The Convention has as its objective the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources and establishes a regime which should ensure an appropriate relationship between protection of endangered species, maintenance of marine resources and the rational use of the resources for the benefit of the world community.

While there is much which must still be done, there have been worthwhile achievements in the past year. The Secretariat is now established in Hobart and is demonstrating it can provide members with a high degree of support in approaching the issues on the agenda.

Our present meetings will endeavour to resolve outstanding administrative problems affecting the establishment of the Secretariat, its budget and staff arrangements. The relationship of the Convention and its machinery with other bodies and organisations concerned with similar questions will also be considered.

I am sure we would all welcome an early conclusion of arrangements which will permit the Scientific Committee to proceed with its substantive work and bring forward proposals for its program of activities. This is an essential ingredient in the pursuit of the objectives of the Convention.

The active co-operation and commitment of all parties to the Convention and its objectives will be required if our meetings are to make progress. We are all aware of the limitations on our knowledge of the Antarctic ecosystem, the interrelation between species and the impact of harvesting. We will need an early and firm effort to remedy this situation.

These are challenging new areas for international co-operation. The first meeting of the Commission and Scientific Committee established a basis for progress. I am sure I can count on the support of all Delegations present in looking to our meetings to build on past efforts, resolve outstanding problems and come up with a program for constructive work for the next year.