

2nd Kobe PCRC / KOPRI Antarctic Governance Workshop:
Re-confirming Antarctica as Natural Reserve devoted to Peace and Science

Antarctica and the Climate Crisis: A Youth Cry for Action

Anna Lauenburger
M.A. Candidate in Polar Law
University of Akureyri, Iceland



Antarctica and the Climate Crisis: A Youth Cry for Action

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Anna Lauenburger and I am a graduate student at the University of Akureyri, Iceland, currently writing my MA thesis in Polar Law on the Rights of Nature in Antarctica.

Before I begin with my message, I want to thank Kobe PCRC and ArCS II from the bottom of my heart for their support and for making it possible for me to participate in this event.

In recent years, young people around the world, inspired by movements like Fridays for Future, have raised their voices to demand meaningful and immediate climate action. Antarctica is deeply interconnected with the rest of the world. Its ocean and wind currents, coupled with the growing threat of melting ice sheets, place it at the heart of the climate crisis. Changes in its environment amplify global climate impacts, threatening ecosystems, vulnerable communities, and future generations.

The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) stands as a model of international collaboration, yet its effectiveness is tested when scientific recommendations are ignored or watered down. For example, despite compelling evidence from scientists, including those represented by ASOC, the protection of Emperor Penguins—a species facing existential threats—remains unresolved. Since the 44th ATCM in Berlin, this issue has been discussed without meaningful action.

The 48th ATCM in Hiroshima next year must not repeat this pattern of delay. It must be a space where scientific expertise informs decisive policy. Listen to the scientists who dedicate their lives to understanding these fragile ecosystems. Listen to ASOC's calls for urgent protective measures. Follow the intended meaning of the precautionary principle. The world leaders have agreed to limit global warming to 1.5°C. However, 2024 was already the first year to pass this 1.5°C limit. The science is clear, the recommendations are clear, and the time for action is now.

The youth, whose futures depend on these decisions, demand leadership prioritising the environment over compromises and trade-offs. If the current consensus model hinders progress, it is time to explore reforms that enable the ATS to function as an effective and proactive decision-making body while maintaining its principles of peace and collaboration.

Hiroshima has the potential to become a landmark ATCM—a moment when leaders chose to act boldly, guided by science, for the preservation of Antarctica and the planet. Let us ensure that the decisions made there reflect not just promises but result in transformative actions rooted in scientific integrity and a commitment to future generations and the health of the environment.

Time is not on our side, but we still have the power to act. Let us make Hiroshima a turning point, not a missed opportunity.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to great discussions and exchanges.