



BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
(DUBLIN 2)

Mr. Christopher J. Wilson
Uisce Bhan
Ballinamorrhagh
Curraclloe
Nr. Enniscorthy
Co. Wexford

23 November 2006

Our Ref: POL060678

Dear Mr. Wilson,

I refer to your letter dated 23 September 2006 addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr Dick Roche TD, to which he has asked this Department to reply.

As you are aware, Ireland is not party to either the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 or the Protocol to this Treaty known as the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection of 1991.

While the Treaty has been in operation since 1961, support for it is far from universal and less than one quarter of UN member states have become party. This is also the case with the 1991 Protocol. The reason for the relatively small number of States Parties is that many states take the view that the Antarctic, like the deep sea bed and outer space, should be declared part of the "common heritage of mankind", the benefits of which must be shared with mankind as a whole on an equitable basis. These states consider that a new UN agreement into which all states could have an input would be the best means of ensuring full accountability for actions undertaken in and concerning Antarctica.

Ireland is sympathetic to the view that the Antarctic should be seen as part of the common heritage shared universally and this has influenced our approach to date on the question of accession to the Treaty and the Protocol. As a result, while Ireland endorses the greatest degree of transparency in relation to Antarctic matters, accession to the Antarctic Treaty or the Madrid Protocol is not at present under consideration.

The Government follow closely Antarctic related developments. Ireland supported the adoption of United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 57/51 on 30 December 2002 and 60/47 on 8 December 2005 which, amongst other things, affirmed that the management and use of Antarctica should be conducted in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of mankind as a whole. The Government also welcome the practice whereby States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty regularly provide the UN Secretary-General with information on their consultations and activities in Antarctica.

I hope that this information is of assistance to you and to the Tom Crean Society.

Yours sincerely,