



**An Bille um an gConradh Antartach (Aontachas agus
Cur i nGníomh), 2026**
**Antarctic Treaty (Accension and Implementation) Bill
2026**

Meabhrán Míniúcháin
Explanatory Memorandum



**AN BILLE UM AN gCONRADH ANTARTACH (AONTACHAS
AGUS CUR I nGNÍOMH), 2026
ANTARCTIC TREATY (ACCENSION AND
IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2026**

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Purpose of the Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to enable the State to accede to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991), along with associated instruments of the Antarctic Treaty System. The Bill establishes the legal framework necessary for national implementation, regulation of activities by Irish citizens and bodies in the Antarctic Treaty area, and compliance with international obligations.

Provisions of the Bill

Part 1 – Preliminary and General

Part 1 sets out the short title, commencement provisions, and definitions used throughout the Act.

Part 2 – Accession and Responsible Minister

This Part empowers the Government to accede formally to such parts of the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid Protocol as it considers appropriate. It designates the Minister for Foreign Affairs as the responsible Minister for all matters relating to the Antarctic Treaty System, including representation at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM) and the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP).

The Minister is empowered to make regulations, prepare reports, coordinate national implementation, and give domestic effect to measures, decisions, and guidelines adopted under the Treaty System.

Part 3 – Permits, Environmental Protection and Activities

Part 3 creates a permit system for Irish citizens and corporate bodies undertaking activities in the Antarctic Treaty area. Activities requiring a permit may include scientific expeditions, tourism operations, activities within protected areas, introduction of organisms, construction, waste management actions, or any activity with potential environmental impact.

Applicants must submit environmental impact assessments proportionate to the scale and effects of the proposed work. The Minister determines the appropriate level of assessment, including whether a Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation (CEE) is required.

The Minister may impose conditions on permits relating to monitoring, reporting, environmental protection, insurance, or emergency preparedness. Permits may be varied, suspended, or revoked.

The Part also provides for designation of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) and Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMAs), sets out waste management obligations, prohibits mineral resource activities except for scientific research, and requires operators to maintain contingency plans for environmental emergencies.

Part 4 – Compliance, Enforcement and Jurisdiction

Part 4 allows the Minister to appoint inspectors with powers to access vessels, premises, and documents, and to require the provision of information.

Part 5 – Miscellaneous

It affirms that the Act does not limit scientific research or peaceful uses of the Antarctic. The text of the Antarctic Treaty, the Protocol and its Annexes may be accessed at the official Antarctic Treaty website www.ats.aq.

Malcolm Byrne, TD,

Máta, 2026.