

Correspondence

Identify and punish ozone depleters

Emission rates of the ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbon CFC-11 are no longer in decline (see S. A. Montzka *et al. Nature* 557, 413–417; 2018). We suggest that Asia's construction boom could be part of the cause, by provoking a rapid increase in the unauthorized production of this chemical for building-insulation materials.

The 1987 Montreal Protocol resulted in a global ban on production of CFC-11. However, production has resumed since 2013 in some parts of China (see go.nature.com/2mj8ijg), coincident with the country's increased demand for insulation foam (C. Yang *et al. Energy Build.* 87, 25–36; 2015). The same could be happening elsewhere, so other offenders urgently need to be identified.

If the fragile stratospheric ozone layer is to recover, the production and disposal of building-insulation materials must be more effectively monitored and managed, backed by stricter legislation. The development of low-cost alternatives to ozone-depleting substances for building materials is also a priority, given the pace of urbanization in China and other nations.

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Glacier engineering must mind the law

Proposals such as those of John Moore and colleagues (*Nature* 555, 303–305; 2018) for Antarctic glacier geoengineering understate the legal challenges presented by the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). This system is crucial to Antarctic governance, but faces considerable geopolitical pressure (*Nature* 558, 161; 2018). It is essential that any activities

affecting the Antarctic ecosystem properly engage with the ATS from the outset.

Antarctic geoengineering proposals would not “require global consent” as Moore *et al.* state, but instead would need the approval of the 29 consultative parties to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research is an important independent contributor to the ATS. However, it is actually the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), created by the 1991 Madrid Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, that formally advises the consultative parties about proposals affecting the Antarctic environment.

The Madrid Protocol bans mining and declares Antarctica a natural reserve. We think that the CEP is likely to advise that the “major disturbances to local ecosystems” arising from Moore and colleagues' proposals — particularly quarrying of local rock and dredging — would infringe Madrid Protocol protections. Geoengineering that affects marine ecosystems might also require separate permission under the 1982 ATS Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

Any discussion of geoengineering in Antarctica needs to preserve and strengthen Antarctic governance, not weaken it. This is a task for international lawyers and policymakers as well as scientists.

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Underpin tourism regulation with data

We understand the concerns of Philippe Borsa and colleagues over the New Caledonia government's plans to open the Chesterfield reefs to ecotourism cruise ships (*Nature* 558, 372; 2018). In our view as conservation

biologists, conservationists also need to consider context — such as the benefits that tourism could bring to the islands' fragile economy — and to discuss with government how to make such tourism sustainable.

The Natural Park of the Coral Sea, which harbours the reefs, is one of the largest marine protected areas in the world. As it becomes increasingly autonomous, New Caledonia is legitimately looking for ways to diversify its economy and is turning to the resources offered by its maritime exclusive economic zone. The zone measures 1.74 million square kilometres and hosted 219 cruise liners carrying some 500,000 passengers in 2017.

We call on the scientific community to work with local authorities in guiding New Caledonia towards sustainable use of its wild and remote oceanic space. More data are needed on the seabirds that inhabit the fragile, low-lying island ecosystems in these areas, including on the ecological and behavioural consequences of human incursions on seabird breeding. These data must be shared openly. Lessons can also be learnt from tourism management of other tropical islands, such as those associated with Australia's Great Barrier Reef, and in the polar regions.

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Political pressures on Romania's research

Last month's Rectors' conference of Romanian premier universities, the Universitaria Consortium, expressed concerns about Romania's academic system. This is increasingly diverging from international standards (see, for example, M. Miclăuş and O. Micu *Nature* 558, 189; 2018). In our view, these concerns are being fuelled by government moves that

undermine the status of the country's leading universities, whose resistance to political interference is well known.

At the end of last year, the Ministry of Education hired a commission of foreign experts to reform Romania's university-ranking system. Although insight into the process itself is limited, we were given the commission's first draft report at a public consultation with the universities (see go.nature.com/2lsbwxo for the preliminary version; in Romanian). For example, less than one-quarter of the latest draft's proposed performance indicators seem to accord with those used in major international university rankings; instead, many are used to evaluate institutional facilities such as lecture halls and dormitories. Under this system, all publications would carry equal weight, irrespective of whether they had been peer reviewed.

The draft's criteria seem designed to serve political, not scientific, ends. We are concerned that rewarding small, local universities that have no international standing, rather than those with a record of academic excellence, could foster hierarchies of political influence and further isolate Romania's research community. Rather, Romania needs a ranking system that can accelerate its integration into the international academic arena.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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