



Ocean conservation: EU leads the international effort to establish new Marine Protected Areas in Antarctica

Brussels, 28 April 2021

Today, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** hosted a ministerial meeting to build support among the Members of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) for the designation of new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean, in particular the EU proposals to establish MPAs in East Antarctica and in the Weddell Sea. The meeting was key in shaping a [joint strategy](#) to work together towards the adoption of new MPAs in CCAMLR and to present the Commission's actions under the [European Green Deal](#) that contribute to protecting the Antarctica.

Speaking after the meeting, Commissioner **Sinkevičius** said: "*Biodiversity loss and the climate crises are going faster than we had ever anticipated. It is critical to act now, if we are to turn the tide and conserve the rich and vulnerable marine life of the Southern Ocean. I am glad that we all expressed our commitment today in a joint declaration for the world's largest marine protected area which would cover more than 3 million km². I particularly want to thank the US and New Zealand for joining the other active co-sponsors in protecting that area around Antarctica.*"

The ministerial meeting was a success in bringing further support for the Marine Protected Areas in East Antarctica and in the Weddell Sea with co-sponsorship announced by the United States and New Zealand. These two countries are joining the European Union and the other earlier co-sponsors (Australia, Norway, the United Kingdom and Uruguay). Participants also expressed support for the proposal from Argentina and Chile to create a Marine Protected Area in the Western Antarctic Peninsula.

The designation of new Antarctic marine protected areas remains a high priority for the EU and its Member States and is a key deliverable of both the [EU's Biodiversity Strategy 2030](#), adopted last May, and of the EU's International Ocean Governance agenda. The Biodiversity Strategy sets the goal of at least 30% of European seas to be protected. The creation of new Antarctic MPAs would also be fully consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG14) and the ambitions set forth for the COP15 of the Convention on Biological Biodiversity, which China will be hosting later this year.

Background

The Marine Protected Area proposals in East Antarctica and in the Weddell Sea are based on the best available science, as determined by the CCAMLR Scientific Committee. If these two new large-scale MPAs are approved, they would make an essential contribution to achieving a representative system of Marine Protected Areas in Antarctica, covering an area of more than 3 million km².

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) was established by an international convention in 1982 with the objective of conserving Antarctic marine life. This was in response to concerns that an increase in krill catches in the Southern Ocean could have a serious impact on populations of other marine life, which are dependent upon krill for food.

For more information

[Ministerial Joint Declaration on the designation of Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean](#)

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