

Brussels, 27/10/2020

Object : URGENT – CCAMLR Meeting 2020 – Establishment of marine protected areas in Antarctica

As Members of the European Parliament, we are writing to express our deepest concerns regarding the current deadlock in the negotiations on the establishment of three large marine protected areas (MPA) in the Southern Ocean (Antarctica) - in East Antarctica, in the Weddell Sea and in the Antarctic Peninsula within the framework of the Commission on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Negotiations have been ongoing for several years, and in light of the standstill situation, we are calling for the concerned parties to engage all their means towards a rapid solution.

The Ocean is one, continuous and global, its good ecological status is critical to ensure the continuity of its ecosystem services, especially as climate regulator. Indeed, the Ocean has absorbed over 90% of the heat trapped by our carbon dioxide emissions and is the world's largest active carbon sink, it has sequestered over 30% of the carbon from those emissions<sup>1</sup>.

However, the alteration of marine and coastal ecosystems and the accelerating loss of marine biodiversity is weakening the resilience of the Ocean, especially in remote and fragile ecosystems such as the Antarctic Ocean, home to an extremely rich and diverse biodiversity, in great need of protection.

Many efforts have already been made, such as the prohibition of activities related to Antarctic mineral resources, but as the Antarctic ocean is facing more and more cumulative pressure such as marine pollution, climate change, IUU fishing, ocean acidification and increased ocean temperatures, the need to protect vulnerable marine ecosystem is even more necessary. Extending Marine Protected Areas is crucial to ensure that Antarctica ecosystems and activities such as tourism and krill fishing are properly managed and regulated.

The EU is already engaged in negotiations with the UN for the establishment of an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in particular to ensure a mechanism for the designation, and the management, of highly protected marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. As Members of the European Parliament, we call for the European Union to continue its leading role and support this historic step for the protection of international patrimony. We call on the EU and the CCAMLR to intensify bilateral and multilateral efforts in this regard and in particular, with countries that have expressed repeated oppositions.

Overcoming this deadlock would be an important step and a strong political signal ahead of the COP 15 in China to push for ambitious international biodiversity objectives.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Catherine Chabaud  
MEP Jan-Christoph Oetjen  
MEP Tonino Picula

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/ocean-and-climate-change>, Bindoff et al., 2007; Rhein et al., 2013; Cheng et al., 2019

MEP Magdalena Adamowicz  
MEP François Alfonsi  
MEP Margrete Auken  
MEP Brando Benifei  
MEP François-Xavier Bellamy  
MEP Stéphane Bijoux  
MEP Benoît Biteau  
MEP Malin Björk  
MEP Manuel Bompard  
MEP Gilles Boyer  
MEP Sylvie Brunet  
MEP Milan Brglez  
MEP Reinhard Bütikofer  
MEP Pascal Canfin  
MEP Damien Carême  
MEP Isabel Carvalhais  
MEP Olivier Chastel  
MEP Ilana Cicurel  
MEP David Cormand  
MEP Katalin Cseh  
MEP Jakop Dalunde  
MEP Jérémy Decerle  
MEP Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield  
MEP Karima Delli  
MEP Pascal Durand  
MEP Bas Eickhout  
MEP Laurence Farreng  
MEP Fredrick Federley  
MEP Daniel Freund  
MEP Alexis Georgoulis  
MEP Sandro Gozi  
MEP Klemen Groselj  
MEP Christophe Grudler  
MEP Claude Gruffat  
MEP Francisco Guerreiro  
MEP Bernard Guetta  
MEP Valérie Hayer  
MEP Anja Hazekamp  
MEP Pär Holmgren  
MEP Sophie in't Veld  
MEP Yannick Jadot  
MEP Pierre Karleskind  
MEP Fabienne Keller  
MEP Ska Keller  
MEP Petros Kokkalis  
MEP Alice Kuhnke  
MEP Katrin Langensiepen  
MEP Nathalie Loiseau  
MEP Javi Lopez  
MEP César Luena  
MEP Elżbieta Łukacijewska  
MEP Marian Marinescu  
MEP Eva Maydell  
MEP Tilly Metz  
MEP Iskra Mihaylova  
MEP Javier Nart  
MEP Hannah Neumann  
MEP Niklas Nienaaß  
MEP Ville Niinistö  
MEP Juozas Olekas  
MEP Grace O'Sullivan  
MEP Demetris Papadakis  
MEP Jutta Paulus  
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MEP Nikolaj Villumsen  
MEP Thomas Waitz  
MEP Salima Yenbou  
MEP Stéphanie Yon-Courtin  
MEP Chrysoula Zacharopoulou