

## Motion

tabled by the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary groups

### Marine protected area in the Weddell Sea in Antarctica

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following resolution:

#### I. The German Bundestag notes:

The seas and their unique ecosystems are the very foundation of life for all of us and crucial to the future survival of humankind. Fish stocks used commercially provide almost one billion people with an income and for 2.5 billion people constitute an important contribution to their daily protein needs. Furthermore, the oceans make an important contribution to protecting the climate by absorbing around one third of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to date and are crucial to global oxygen production. Not least, the coastal coral reefs and mangroves provide natural protection against natural disasters such as storm tides, tsunamis or the rise in sea level. Ecologically intact world seas and oceans are of existential importance to humanity. The inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal 14 "Life Below Water" (SDG 14) in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals reflects the exceptional importance of the world's marine areas for the future of humanity. Their conservation and sustainable use are enshrined in SDG 14 and its successful implementation lies in the hands of the international community.

Our oceans are in crisis. The cumulated effects of climate change, overuse, pollution and the destruction of ecosystems are a threat to the biodiversity of the oceans, with grave consequences for humans, too – because numerous benefits provided by ecosystems and the ability to tap into these hinge on marine biodiversity. It is therefore extremely important to create retreats for marine life and to regulate the use of the oceans sustainably.

Marine protected areas are one of the most important instruments for preserving marine ecosystems and improving their resilience and adaptability in the face of overuse, climate change and depletion, and to prevent the further destruction of habitats. Proper management of protected areas backed up by protective measures and regular monitoring of compliance has the potential to stabilise sensitive ecosystems outside of the protected areas, too. As the existing international provisions on reporting, managing, monitoring and enforcing protected areas in the high seas have demonstrated implementation gaps, it is highly important to initiate prompt negotiations on a binding set of rules to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdictions.

In light of all of this, the German Bundestag welcomes the proposal by the European Union to designate a marine protected area in the Weddell Sea in Antarctica which the Federal Government played a key role in preparing and which negotiations are due to be conducted on at the upcoming annual meeting of the "Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources " (CCAMLR).

The Weddell Sea is a unique ecosystem largely untouched by man to date. In spite of the ice covering a large part of the water surface and the special climatic conditions, the Weddell Sea is a treasure trove of biodiversity. This biodiversity is comparable to that of the tropical coral reefs in some parts despite the icy temperatures. The Weddell Sea-bed alone is home to around 14,000 different species, many of which are unique, endemic or only capable of surviving in the fragile ecosystems of the Antarctic Ocean. Large krill and fish stocks form the basis of the food network in the Weddell Sea – and are the reason why many mammals, including many whale and seal species, seek out Antarctica in the first place. What is more, the ice-covered edges provide breeding grounds for one third of the world's emperor penguin population and more than half of all Antarctic procellariidae (over 300,000 pairs).

But the once untouched Weddell Sea is finding itself increasingly exposed to the pressure of international fishing fleets. Large fishing trawlers have their sights set on krill and the Patagonian and Antarctic toothfish in particular and pose an existential danger to the unique ecosystem. The demand for krill especially has shot up in recent years due to the boom in dietary supplements with Omega 3 fatty acids in industrialised countries. This has led to more and more countries sending their fleets to Antarctica, thus increasing the pressure on the one-of-a-kind ecosystems.

But climate change has also had an increasing impact on the Weddell Sea's ecosystem. The huge losses in the ice shelf surface over the last Antarctic summers and the higher than average temperatures are precursors to grave consequences in Antarctica. The rise in temperature and the melting of the ice are preventing krill from breeding, whose reproduction and food hinge directly on the sea's ice coverage, for instance.

It is still largely unknown how sensitive the unique organisms of the Weddell Sea are to the changes resulting from climate change and the rise in fishing activity. What is clear, though, is that in its entirety, the Weddell Sea is a singular and fascinating but extremely fragile ecosystem which urgently needs to be protected.

Giving the Weddell Sea protected status – which would make it the largest marine protected area in the world to date – following the application for protected area status drafted by Germany and lodged with CCAMLR by the European Union would therefore be a tremendous success for international marine protection – and in accordance with the precautionary principle, the key instrument for protecting this unique ecosystem in international waters. Furthermore, making the Weddell Sea a protected area would provide new impetus for further marine protected areas in Antarctica, such as the planned protection areas in East Antarctica and the Antarctic peninsula.

## II. The German Bundestag supports

1. the international endeavours by the Federal Government to establish the largest marine protected area in the world in the territory of the Weddell Sea in Antarctica and to implement the placing under protec-

tion of a unique and still largely unexplored ecosystem in line with the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach;

2. the proposal developed by the German delegation for a protected area in the Weddell Sea in Antarctica based on the best available scientific data.

### III. The German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government

1. in light of the next CCAMLR annual meeting in October this year, to use all diplomatic and other channels and possibilities available to advocate and work towards swift acceptance of the Weddell Sea marine protected area;
2. when developing the technical proposal for a marine protected area in the Weddell Sea to ensure that the entire Weddell Sea region is considered and taken into account in the planning process in accordance with the ecosystem approach;
3. to ensure that in the planned Weddell Sea protected area, effective internationally agreed management of the entire protected area is defined and regular compliance monitoring is guaranteed;
4. with due consideration for the fragile ecosystems and the specificities of the Weddell Sea, and in concert with the international partners, to implement surveillance and biodiversity monitoring using cutting-edge information technology, such as digital techniques;
5. to follow the example of the protected area in the Ross Sea in Antarctica and to institute large-scale zero-use zones in the Weddell Sea protected area;
6. to continue to advocate and work towards the establishment of a protected area network in Antarctica and the proposed protected areas discussed at CCAMLR like East Antarctica and the Antarctic peninsula;
7. in this context, at international level, to advocate and work towards the adoption of an International Legally Binding Instrument Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), enabling 30% of the global marine area to be placed under protection by 2030 and geared towards the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) defined by the CBD.

Berlin, [...]

**Volker Kauder, Alexander Dobrindt and the CDU/CSU parliamentary group**

**Andrea Nahles and the SPD parliamentary group**

**Christian Lindner and the FDP parliamentary group**

**Katrin Göring-Eckardt, Dr Anton Hofreiter and the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group**

## Explanatory memorandum

In the scope of international agreements, the international community has committed to protecting the oceans and their biodiversity. The States Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have agreed to place 10% of the global marine area under protection by 2020. With the adoption of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and Sustainable Development Goal "Life below Water" (SDG 14), the international commitment to conserve the oceans was reaffirmed and the joint goal of protecting 10% of the global marine area renewed.

Currently 7% of the world's seas and oceans are already formally under protection or at least designated as future protected areas according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). For the 10% goal to be attained by 2020, considerable political efforts will be required, but measured in terms of the current international developments in the area of marine protection, achieving the goal by 2020 seems formally feasible. In the last three years alone, 13 of the largest marine protected areas on earth were adopted. The level and quality of protection afforded to the protected areas varies greatly worldwide, however. Particularly effective zero-use zones, as agreed in the Antarctic Ross Sea in 2016 thereby ruling out any use interests in vast sections of the protected area, are a seldom occurrence to date. Often management of the protected area remains confined to the simple regulation of catch quotas, which cannot ensure sufficient protection of the protected areas.

What is also striking here is that the vast majority of all marine protected areas are in national waters. Less than 1% of the marine protected areas worldwide are located in the high seas. The negotiations starting in September 2018 for an "International Legally Binding Instrument Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction" will lay the foundation for adopting legally binding protected areas in the high seas, too. The adoption of the marine protected area in the Ross Sea and the planned protected area in the Weddell Sea could sustainably boost this process.

The strain marine ecosystems are under is already so great, however, that in the long term, placing 10% of the world's seas and oceans under protection will not suffice to save marine ecosystems. From 2020, there will need to be an international follow-up process which sets forth ambitious targets for granting the world's seas and oceans protected status. Back in 2006, the "German Advisory Council on Global Change" already cautioned that at least 20-30% of marine ecosystems would have to be designated ecologically representative and effectively managed protected areas.