Ministers from countries backing further Antarctic marine protection met on 29 September to discuss how to win support of Russia and China for increased action. European Commissioner, Virginijus Sinkevičius, is hosting ministers ahead of the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources (CCAMLR) that will decide on three large-scale protection proposals in the Southern Ocean. Two of these proposals - in the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea - have been put forward by the EU.

This meeting is a key opportunity for ministers to agree to a final high-level push in ensuring that these proposals will be agreed this year. "Protecting these areas will build resilience in the Southern Ocean against the increasing impacts of the fast-changing climate, as well as removing other stressors such as..."
industrial fishing, generating benefits for both fisheries and wildlife. They are a key response to the climate and biodiversity crises,” said Claire Christianson from ASOC.

Russia and China are currently the only countries blocking the required consensus for designation of the proposed Antarctica marine protected areas within CCAMLR.

“European leaders committed their diplomatic and economic clout to win Russia and China. There is still no sign that this support has been secured, but with concerted and coordinated action states could agree to the largest act of ocean in protection this year,” said Pascal Lamy, president of the Paris Peace Forum and Antarctica2020 champion.

The CCAMLR meeting will take place just days after China hosts a major UN biodiversity Conference (15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 11-15 October) that will agree a 10-year plan to save nature.

"Ministers must make clear to China that blocking the protection of an ocean critical to planetary health and marine life is totally incompatible with their role as hosts of this very important meeting on biodiversity," said Geneviève Pons, director general and vice president of Europe Jacques Delors and Antarctica2020 Champion.

Recently leading scientists sent a letter to CCAMLR member states calling on them to designate marine protected areas in the Antarctic Ocean.

"Without immediate and significant emissions reductions as identified in the Paris Agreement targets, the earth will soon reach tipping points with disastrous consequences not only for Antarctica and its marine life, but also for the rest of humanity. Action is also needed by other relevant bodies, including those that oversee the international governance of Antarctica’s Southern Ocean, which accounts for 10% of the world’s ocean," said Hans Pörtner, co-author of the scientist letter and IPCC scientist.

Antarctica2020 is a group of influencers from the world of sport, politics, business, media and science that are working to ensure the full and effective protection of Antarctica’s Southern Ocean through a network of effective marine protected areas in the region. They are supported by Ocean Unite, The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

Link to Scientists letter to CCAMLR member states:

The #CallonCCAMLR campaign, is a joint initiative of NGO partners including the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, Antarctica 2020, Ocean Unite, Only One, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and SeaLegacy. They have gathered the support of almost 1.5 million people worldwide for a petition calling world leaders to act now.

CCAMLR: The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Resources (CCAMLR) was established under the Antarctic Treaty System to preserve the biodiversity of the Southern Ocean. CCAMLR is a consensus-based organization consisting of 26 Members, including the EU and eight of its Member States. CCAMLR’s mandate includes fisheries management based on the ecosystem approach, the protection of Antarctic nature and the creation of vast marine protected areas allowing the ocean to increase the resilience to climate change.

In 2009, CCAMLR member countries began to undertake their responsibilities to establish a network of MPAs throughout the Southern Ocean and established the first high seas MPA on the southern shelf of the South Orkney Islands. In 2016 the world’s largest MPA was agreed in the Ross Sea (proposed by the United States & New Zealand; 2.02 million km2).

There are three proposals for the creation of new MPAs in the Southern Ocean.
- **East Antarctica**: from the EU / France, Australia, Norway, Uruguay, UK and the United States - 0.95 million km²;  
- **Weddell Sea**: from the EU / Germany, Norway, Australia, Uruguay, UK and the United States - 2.18 million km²;  
- **Antarctic Peninsula**: from Argentina and Chile - 0.65 million km².

The protection of these three large areas would safeguard nearly 4 million km² of Antarctica's ocean. That is roughly the size of the EU and represents 1% of the global ocean. Together this would secure the largest act of ocean protection in history.

**The 40th meeting of CCAMLR will take place from 18-29 October 2021.**