25 Member Countries called on by AOA to agree on lasting Southern Ocean protection

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On October 18, the Antarctic Ocean Alliance (AOA) called on 25 member countries to finally agree on Southern Ocean protection. The members were called on during the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Previously, CCAMLR had announced to create at least two marine protected areas by 2012, but the pledge did not reach agreement due to lack of consensus. In the past, two proposals were failed in last four occasions.

There are more than 10,000 unique species in the Southern Ocean and whales, penguins, colossal squid, seabirds and Antarctic toothfish are some of them. The agreement on protection of Southern Ocean will be helpful for these species.

Since the introduction of two major proposals, they have undergone several iterations. Adding to that, a number of times, CCAMLR members were forced to think about the reduction in size of protected areas. Now, the nongovernmental organizations around the globe that make up AOA want immediate designation of the proposals. The organizations don’t want any further erosion.

New Zealand and the United States have presented a joint proposal to designate a Ross Sea marine protected area (MPA) of 1.25 million square kilometers. The Ross Sea, which is also called ‘the Last Ocean’, is among the most pristine oceans remaining on the planet.

Mark Epstein, executive director of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, said, “CCAMLR members have a clear task to complete: to work together to create the marine protected areas that Antarctica’s waters need”.

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