Will The Countries of the World Finally Reach A strategy for Southern Ocean Conservation?

Earlier this week, the Antarctic Ocean Alliance called on all 25 members countries at the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) to finally reach an agreement on a strategy to develop lasting and significant protections for our planet’s Southern Ocean.

“CCAMLR members have a clear task to complete: to work together to create the marine protected areas that Antarctica’s waters need,” said Mark Epstein, executive director of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition. “CCAMLR promised that this protection would come by 2012, yet the process has been stalled for the last four meetings. Global leaders—many of whom are CCAMLR members—must take action now to ensure these marine protected areas come into force at this meeting.”

The Pew Charitable Trust global penguin conservation program director Andrea Kavanagh explains, “As Russia steps into the chairmanship role of CCAMLR this year, it has the opportunity to make history in the Antarctic region yet again. “Two hundred years after discovering the continent, Russia can lead member countries to a consensus decision on establishing large and permanent marine protections in the Ross Sea and the waters off East Antarctica.”

In addition, Greenpeace International global campaign leader for the oceans, Maritza Schafer, comments, “Antarctica is one of the world’s last untouched wildernesses and is critical for scientific research, both for studying how intact marine ecosystems function and for monitoring the impacts of climate change. Fully protected marine reserves are the single most powerful tool that CCAMLR has for fulfilling its mandate and protecting the astounding array of Antarctica’s marine life and enabling the Southern Ocean ecosystem to best withstand the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.”