

Central Arctic: EU to enter agreement against unregulated fishing

The **EU** will soon become a **party to** an international **agreement** to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the **central Arctic Ocean**.

The Council today adopted a decision on the conclusion of such agreement, which was signed on 3 October 2018 by the five Arctic Ocean coastal states – Canada, Denmark (acting on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, Russia, and the United States – together with China, the EU, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea.

I am proud to announce that the EU will soon be a part of this historic agreement that for the first time protects the Arctic Ocean and its fragile ecosystem. It is a vital step towards achieving greater sustainability and strengthening ocean governance.

Petre Daea, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania and President of the Council

The objective of the agreement is to **prevent unregulated fishing** in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean through the application of **precautionary conservation and management measures**, as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems, and to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks.

Under the agreement, the ten parties concerned have agreed to ban commercial fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean for an initial period of **16 years** (to be extended automatically every five years), until scientists confirm that it can be done sustainably and until the parties agree on mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks.

This is the **first time** that the Arctic high seas are covered by any international conservation and management regime.

Background and next steps

Until recently ice has covered the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean on a year-round basis, thereby making fishing in those waters impossible. However, global warming has significantly reduced ice coverage in that area in recent years.

Although commercial fishing is unlikely to become viable in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean in the near future, the central Arctic Ocean ecosystems will be more and more exposed to human activities and, possibly to illegal fishing.

The decision to conclude the agreement will enter into force on the third day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The European Parliament gave its consent on the decision on 12 February 2019.

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