New Zealand to create massive marine sanctuary

September 29 2015

A spotted black grouper is seen in the waters of the Kermadec Islands, off of New Zealand's northeast coast

New Zealand unveiled plans to create a South Pacific marine sanctuary the size of France, saying it would protect one of the world's most pristine ocean environments.

Prime Minister John Key on Monday said the Kermadec Ocean

Sanctuary would cover an area of 620,000 square kilometres about 1,000 kilometres off New Zealand's northeast coast.

Announcing the plans at the United Nations in New York, Key said the Kermadec area was home to thousands of important species, including whales, dolphins, seabirds and endangered turtles.
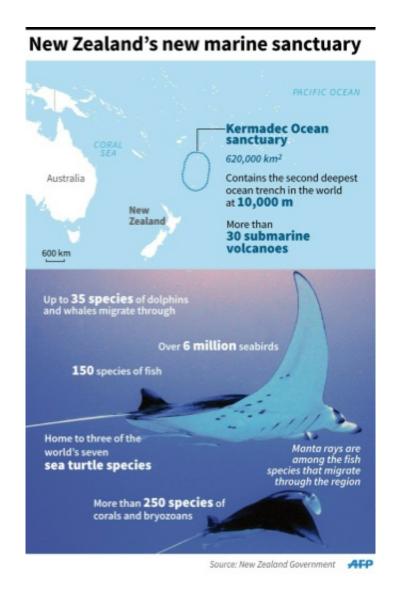
"(It) is one of the most geographically and geologically diverse areas in the world," he said in a statement.

"It contains the world's longest underwater volcanic arc and the second deepest ocean trench at 10 kilometres deep."

The sanctuary will prevent fishing and mineral exploitation in an area where marine scientists regularly discover new marine species.

Environmental groups applauded the move, saying it added to a network of protected areas in the Pacific that now covered more than 3.5 million square kilometres.

New Zealand's new marine sanctuary

PACIFIC OCEAN

CORAL SEA

Australia

Kermadec Ocean sanctuary
620,000 km²

Contains the second deepest ocean trench in the world at **10,000 m**

New Zealand

More than **30 submarine volcanoes**

600 km

Up to **35 species** of dolphins and whales migrate through

Over **6 million** seabirds

150 species of fish

Home to three of the world's seven **sea turtle species**

Manta rays are among the fish species that migrate through the region

More than **250 species** of corals and bryozoans

Source: New Zealand Government   **AFP**

Factfile on the new Kermadec Ocean sanctuary unveiled by New Zealand PM John Key

"We congratulate the government for taking decisive action to protect this incredibly special area from mining and fishing," WWF New Zealand chief executive Chris Howe said.

"This decision puts New Zealand back at the forefront of marine protection on the global stage."

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