

Arctic, major fishing nations agree no fishing in Arctic, for now

December 2 2017



Sea ice is seen from NASA's Operation IceBridge research aircraft in March, 2017, above Greenland, which is among parties to the Arctic Ocean commercial fishing moratorium

Arctic and major fishing nations, including China, announced Friday that they have agreed to a moratorium on commercial fishing in Arctic waters before a fishery in the icy region is even feasible.

The far north is warming at nearly twice the global average rate, causing changes in the size and distribution of [fish](#) stocks that may become more attractive to fishers in the medium to long term.

Canadian Fisheries Minister Dominic Leblanc said Canada, together with the European Union, China, Denmark—for Greenland and the Faroe Islands—Iceland, Japan, South Korea, Norway, Russia and the United States agreed "that no [commercial fishing](#) will take place in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean while we gain a better understanding of the area's [ecosystems](#)."

They also agreed that before any fishing takes places, they must establish "appropriate conservation and management measures."

To that end, the parties committed to conducting joint scientific research and monitoring to try to better understand Arctic Ocean ecosystems and whether the region can support [commercial fisheries](#) in the future.

Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, called the legally binding agreement "historic."

"It will fill an important gap in the international ocean governance framework and will safeguard fragile marine ecosystems for future generations," he said.

The agreement in principle must still be ratified by all 10 parties.

Greenpeace, praising the deal, said the moratorium is expected to endure for at least the next 16 years, covering an area of 2.8 million square kilometers (one million square miles).

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