

The EGP calls for a new binding legal regime to protect the Arctic

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2 The European Green Party considers conservation and protection of the oceans an urgent matter in
3 the face of the climate and nature crisis. In an Arctic ocean, rapidly changing ~~ocean, due to the~~
4 melting of the polar ice cap, a more accessible Arctic region is more vulnerable than ever to
5 environmental, ~~and~~ industrial and geopolitical military conflicts, calling for an updated, coordinated,
6 demilitarised and –and low-tensionspecial approach to its future governance. Apart from the
7 conservation of the Arctic and its nature, this governance will also prevent military conflicts over the
8 Arctic.

9 The Arctic holds some of the world's most sensitive and fragile marine areas, in which the marine
10 environment is under a constant threat from human activities. As climate change and rising temper-
11 atures cause ice-covered areas to decrease in volume, decision-makers see commercial and indus-
12 trial opportunities rather than conservatory and preservatory ones. The Arctic is warming up to three
13 times faster than the rest of the planet. The melting of ice and thawing of permafrost in the Arctic
14 further accelerate climate change and have huge knock-on effects to oceans, sea levels and climate
15 stability. Offshore drilling and other oil and gas activities and exploration activities for seabed min-
16 eral resources, pose many dangers to the Arctic marine environment, such as operational pollution,
17 rubbish and sewage, an influx of peoples, air pollution, noise and light pollution, and emissions from
18 the burning of fossil fuels, to mention a few. In addition, new opportunities for fishing and shipping
19 threatens the unregulated areas in the Arctic and affect local populations, especially indigenous
20 ones, which culture, traditions and languages should be preserved.

21 While the EU has taken important initiatives for conservation of the Arctic, the European Green Party
22 wishes to further this stance through specifying the objectives, framework and targets by urging the
23 development of a legally binding regional agreement that regulates and prevents oil and gas and
24 seabed mineral resources oriented operations in the Arctic. The Arctic demands protection under all
25 circumstances, but in the face of a complete meltdown, ~~the Arctic region demandsit needs further~~
26 protection in accordance with the changing sea ice persistence. The EU should use its economic
27 and political weight to enforce regulatory tools to ensure a moratorium on oil and gas and seabed
28 mineral resources oriented activities in the Arctic. ~~As with imports of food to ensure food security,~~
29 ~~and the current proposal on Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, the EU should use its ability to~~
30 ~~enforce emission reduction requirements on ships navigating through the Arctic to European ports~~
31 The EU should use its ability to enforce emission reduction requirements on ships navigating through
32 the Arctic to European ports, including with the EU Emission Trading System, given the fast growing

33 traffic along the Northern Route, as well as imposing a ban on imports of oil and gas, and seabed
34 mineral resources from the region.

35 While the Arctic Ocean consists of vast areas which provide for the freedom of the high seas, and
36 the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Fish Stocks Agreement provide a relevant and
37 extensive overview of the management of the Arctic region, there is no legally binding instrument in
38 which the region is managed. While Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) exist
39 across international waters, there is a lack of regional management in the Pan-Arctic region for both
40 international as well as territorial waters. Climate change's impact on ecosystems could lead to
41 intensified competition between fisheries, causing stress for the environment. The lack of regulatory
42 instruments in place to ensure sustainable fish stocks and conservation of the marine environment
43 makes the area particularly vulnerable. Today's gap in the coverage of RFMOs across ocean areas
44 together with shortcomings in the international legal framework, calls for a new and updated regime
45 to regulate fishing and the safeguarding of marine living resources in the Arctic. It is necessary to
46 adopt a shared legal regime for conservation and management measures that are binding on the
47 coastal states and states with interest in the area to regulate the overall fishing effort in the future.

48 The protection of indigenous communities must be at the centre of protecting the Arctic, and there
49 is a need for self-determination of the peoples living in the Arctic especially since the commercial
50 prospects of the warming climate exposes them to the threat of new and intensified colonial
51 pursuits. Thus it is important to include the indigenous peoples of the areas in the processes of
52 regulation in order to guarantee that it does not infringe on indigenous rights or pose a threat to
53 traditional indigenous livelihoods.

54 The changing climate and warmer temperatures have made northern sea areas more available and
55 therefore vulnerable to exploration, and we have yet to see northern coastal states take action to
56 ensure responsible management and protection of the region. The European Green Party considers
57 today's regulatory instruments in place for the conservation of marine living resources insufficient.

58 The possible exploitation of the known and potential resources of the Arctic and the trade
59 implications of the icefield melting for international trade can also exacerbate tensions between the
60 Arctic States. The militarisation of the Arctic region is a plausible risk for the international security
61 and the environment that must be prevented.

62 **The European Green Party calls on** the EU to ~~impose~~ take the lead in the implementation of a
63 moratorium on the exploration and extraction of oil, ~~and gas~~ and seabed mineral resources in the
64 Arctic through a regional binding agreement.

65 The European Green Party calls on the EU, as an Arctic stakeholder and a global actor, to play an

66 effective and more ambitious role in the region, taking into account its growing geopolitical
67 significance and the pressing challenges relating to climate change, in order to preserve vulnerable
68 ecosystems and the livelihood of its local populations, including indigenous ones.

69 ~~**The European Green Party calls on** the EU to initiate the drafting of an Arctic-specific legal regime~~
70 ~~to ensure conservation, accountability and sustainability in the management of fish stocks and~~
71 ~~marine living resources.~~

72 The European Green Party calls for an Arctic-specific legal regime, including all Arctic countries, to
73 ensure the conservation of its marine biodiversity, including the accountability and sustainability in
74 the management of fish stocks and the respect of UN fundamental principles notably free prior and
75 informed consent of indigenous populations and UN guiding principles on business and human
76 rights. The European Green Party calls on the European Union to push internationally, including
77 towards non-EU Arctic countries like Norway, Russia, Canada and the United States, for an Arctic-
78 specific legal regime to achieve zero emission and zero pollution shipping in the region. The
79 European Green Party calls on the International Maritime Organisation to declare the sensitive
80 ecosystem of the Arctic a NECA/SECA zone and to prohibit ships to use heavy fuel oil, given the
81 destructive impact of black carbon on ice-covered land and sea. The efforts of the EU should not be
82 addressed only to the countries of the Union concerned by the Arctic (Sweden, Finland, Denmark)
83 but it must concern all the Arctic countries, Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Faroe Islands, Russia,
84 Canada, the United States. In addition, the European Green Party calls for the inclusion of indigenous
85 Arctic communities (through in particular the Inuit Circumpolar Council) in the adoption of any
86 initiative related to the region. Regions or autonomous states from Members of the Arctic Council
87 (such as Alaska, Northwest territories, Nunavut, Québec and Nunavik, Newfoundland and Labrador,
88 Greenland,...) should be involved in such initiatives as well.