



WILL THE GOVERNMENT ALLOW BUSINESS LEADERS TO DICTATE NORWAY'S FISHERIES POLICY IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN?

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Antarctic krill fishing is dominated by a single Norwegian company and has serious consequences for penguins, seals, whales and seabirds. Antarctic krill is a keystone species in the Southern Ocean ecosystem and also plays an important role in the ocean's carbon cycle.

This autumn, Norwegian representatives will meet with other countries to discuss how Antarctica should be protected. Will the Norwegian authorities show leadership this time and act to protect these species, or will Norway continue to prioritise industrial fishing in vulnerable areas?

My expeditions to Antarctica over several decades have given me a front-row view of the dramatic changes taking place in this fragile environment: the polar ice is melting and wildlife species are threatened with extinction. Yet we continue to extract natural resources – with Norway at the forefront.

Krill are small, shrimp-like crustaceans that convert plankton into food for other species. Over the past decade, Norwegian companies have taken the largest share of the total krill catch, which was previously distributed across different zones. Those spatial restrictions have now expired, allowing companies to concentrate their fishing in critical areas around the Antarctic Peninsula – an important feeding ground for whales, penguins, seals and seabirds. Commercial considerations can now determine where companies take their catch, and the

waters around the Peninsula are favoured because they are rich in krill and cheaper to operate in.

In October, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the body responsible for managing Antarctica's marine ecosystems, will meet. Will Norway's delegates once again propose almost doubling the krill catch limit, as they did last year?

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre recently said that Norway must be at the forefront of knowledge about the polar regions and that calling ourselves a polar nation “comes with responsibilities”.

Støre now has an opportunity to listen to the scientific evidence and put sustainability ahead of the profits of a Norwegian fishing giant. Norway must lead the way by calling for both restrictive catch limits and the creation of protected areas around Antarctica. If we, as by far the largest krill-fishing nation, do not take the lead, conservation measures will once again be blocked and the industry will be free to carry on unchecked.

I hope Norway's representatives at CCAMLR listen to the Prime Minister. Calling ourselves a polar nation comes with responsibilities!

The precautionary principle must now be put into practice. Norway should oppose any proposal to increase catch limits, support the protection of vulnerable areas and lead efforts to phase out krill fishing.

ANTARCTIC AVENGERS