



Press Release

SPAIN BANS ANY NEW HYDROCARBON EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION PROJECT BY LAW

A clear step forward in Spain's commitment to the decarbonisation of its economy that will also bring multiple benefits for marine wildlife in Spanish waters

Wädenswil, May 13, 2021: OceanCare congratulates that the Climate Change and Energy Transition Law definitely passed today by the Spanish Parliament prohibits the search for any new hydrocarbon resources throughout its national territory (land and maritime, including the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf) [Article 9 of the Law].

"We applaud the Spanish Government and Parliament for today's decision to ban oil and gas exploration. Spain is now within the group of progressive countries that are committed to putting an end to the era of fossil fuels and moving towards the decarbonization of the economy, in compliance with the Paris Agreement", declares Nicolas Entrup, Co-Director of International Relations at OceanCare, an international organization for the protection of marine wildlife and its environment.

Spain follows countries such as France, Denmark and New Zealand which have previously taken similar legislative steps. In December 2017, France was the country taking the lead in banning the exploration of hydrocarbons in its waters.

In April 2018, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced a ban on new oil and gas exploration in the waters under its jurisdiction. New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone is the fourth largest on the planet and half of the world's dolphin and whale species live in or roam New Zealand's waters, from critically endangered species such as the Maui dolphin to the blue whale, the largest mammal on the planet.

More recently, in December 2020, Denmark ended new oil and gas exploration in the Danish North Sea as part of a plan to phase out fossil fuel extraction by 2050 with the caveat that the decision does not cover waters off the autonomous territories – Greenland and the Faroese Islands – that belong to the Kingdom of Denmark and likely to progress with the continuation of hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation.

"This ban is also a recognition of long standing Spanish civil society's fight against oil and gas exploration and exploitation projects and in favour of the protection of marine ecosystems for damages that may result from these activities", says Carlos Bravo, spokesperson for OceanCare in Spain.

In fact, this ban on hydrocarbon exploration will also have multiple benefits for marine wildlife, as it would cease seismic surveys carried out by oil companies at sea, which are among the loudest noise generating activities in the world's oceans. Such surveys have been documented to cause harm to many marine species, including marine mammals, fish and invertebrates.

OceanCare considers that the original Bill has, in general, been improved during its parliamentary processing, and is pleased to have contributed to this with a series of proposed amendments on the hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation provisions that were submitted to all the parliamentary groups and which were finally tabled by various parties as own ones.

A significant improvement achieved during the parliamentary processing with respect to exploration projects currently in the pipeline is that applications for authorisation to exploit hydrocarbons that have not been initiated prior to the date of entry into force of this Law will no longer be admissible. This will effectively put an end to most of the projects currently in the pipeline. Finally, December 31, 2042 is set as the date for the definitive termination of the last hydrocarbon exploitation concession currently in force.

With this Law, Spain provides itself with the necessary legal framework to be able to tackle climate change, [a "very serious problem" for 90% of Spaniards](#), and to move towards a low-carbon (decarbonised) economic model and therefore free from the unhealthy dependence on fossil fuels that we currently suffer.

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About OceanCare

OceanCare is a Swiss non-profit organisation. It was founded in 1989 and has a strong commitment to realistic and cooperative initiatives. The organisation works at national and international level in the areas of marine pollution, environmental changes, fisheries, whaling, sealing, captivity of marine mammals and public education. OceanCare holds Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is a partner of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UNEP/CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), as well as UNEP/MAP. OceanCare has also been accredited to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), which is the governing body of UNEP as part of the Major Group 'Science and Technology' and is a part of the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter.