

## **The Pew Charitable Trusts: Southern Ocean Sanctuaries Project**

**Remarks by Karen Sack, Director, International Ocean Conservation**

**18 March, 2013**

Honorable John F. Kerry, Secretary of State to the United States, Senator, the Honorable Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Your excellency, the Honorable Mike Moore New Zealand Ambassador to the United States, honored guests, in particular their Excellency's the Ambassadors from Australia, Chile, Italy Sweden, Uruguay and the Ukraine. Distinguished guests.

Good Evening.

On behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts, I'd like to thank you all for attending our reception on the conservation of the Ross Sea and the creation of Antarctic marine reserves.

*Imagine icy blue water teeming with sea life but barely understood ...  
Imagine a place that is known as a sea, but which is studded by ice ...  
Imagine populations of emperor and Adélie penguins whose numbers  
are unequaled in any other landscape...*

*Imagine a place so remote that it has barely been touched by humans...*

Such a place exists. It is the Ross Sea, a majestic domain in the vast expanse of the Southern Ocean, a great wilderness ... remote, frigid, and remarkable.

While known as a “sea,” a portion of it is frozen solid 365 days a year. The small islands of ice that flow through the water during warmer spring and summer months serve as stepping stones for Adélie penguins as they forage for food, splash in the glacial waters or flee from leopard seals .

And below the surface, there is yet another remarkable world ... an ecosystem that remains a mystery to humans, but that includes magnificent diversity. It provides critical habitat for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, fish, and invertebrates, including 38 % of

the world's Adélie penguins and 26% of the world's emperor penguins. It is also a haven for species found nowhere else on the planet.

The Ross Sea straddles the known and the unknown. It is the venue for a wide range of marine research in the Southern Ocean, including marine geology, glaciology, hydrography and biology. In recognition of its research value, hundreds of scientists around the world have signed a statement calling for its full protection. So while we have much to learn about this special place, what we do know is that it is a place of astounding beauty, wondrous biological diversity and pristine water. And it is our sincere hope that before the end of this year, the international community will act to keep it that way.

More than half a century ago, at the height of the Cold War many of the countries represented here tonight joined together in a show of true multilateralism, to sign a visionary treaty that declared Antarctica a place of peace and science. Twenty years later, that Treaty was enhanced when the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, or CCAMLR, was created, focusing attention on the need to conserve and protect the marine life that teems in the waters around Antarctica. This summer, CCAMLR parties have the opportunity to establish sanctuaries in two of the world's most pristine

marine areas, the Ross Sea and East Antarctica; marking the beginning of a circumpolar network of protected areas across the great Southern Ocean.

There are just 4 months left in which to first strengthen and then secure consensus support for the protection of these iconic areas - decisions that would make history by creating the largest marine parks in the world for some of the last truly wild places on earth – 116 days to ensure the integrity of these systems and their future for all of humankind.

Our speakers tonight represent 3 of the original Antarctic Treaty signatories.

Our first speaker will be Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator Bob Carr, who continues his country's legacy of ocean and Antarctic protection. In fact, in his first speech as Foreign Minister, Senator Carr focused on the threats to our oceans and our atmosphere, voicing concerns about the twin threats of climate change and human activities to ocean life.

We are also joined by his Excellency, Ambassador Mike Moore, former Director General of the World Trade Organization, former NZ Minister of External Relations and Trade, and a former Prime Minister of New Zealand. New Zealand is the Ross Sea's closest neighbor.

Finally, we are honored to have U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, a true champion of ocean conservation since elected to the U.S. Senate almost 4 decades ago, with us this evening. In 1992, as a Senator, Secretary Kerry sponsored a bill to implement the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

I am now pleased to welcome the Honorable Senator Bob Carr, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Thank you Senator Carr, Ambassador Moore and Secretary Kerry. I'd like to take a moment to recognize Kerri Anne Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, and Ambassador David Balton, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries, and Evan Bloom, director of the State Department's Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, who are with us tonight and have spent a great deal of time and effort on this issue. It is absolutely clear that work remains to be done to secure the protection of ocean life in the Antarctic. We would urge all parties to actively work together to achieve the highest level of protection for these areas – and secure a true ocean legacy for our planet.

In closing, we would also like to especially thank our hosts at the National Geographic Society for providing this excellent space for this evening's event – we could think of no better place that represents the spirit in which we all gather.

Please now join us in experiencing the majesty and beauty of Antarctica's Ross Sea - a place that most of us will only ever see through the images captured by Pew marine fellow John Weller, to your left, and in Pete Young's award-winning movie, "The Last Ocean". Once again, on behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts, thank you for coming tonight. Please join us in the auditorium next door for the movie.