PRESS RELEASE

Joint press release issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and Mercator Ocean International

Bulgaria signs Convention establishing the Mercator International Centre for the Ocean

Aheloy, 20 November 2026 - Bulgaria today became the fourth signatory to the Convention establishing the Mercator International Centre for the Ocean, after France, Norway and Greece. Professor Georgi Valchev, Minister of Education and Science, signed on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria at the First Balkan Polar Conference in Aheloy.

European States are working together to create a new intergovernmental organisation for the digital ocean. Bulgaria contributes expertise in Black Sea and Antarctic research, drawing on the work of its scientists, research institutes and universities.

Professor Georgi Valchev, Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria, said: *"For Bulgaria, participation in this initiative is a natural continuation of our efforts to strengthen our national scientific capacity. Our country has a long-standing tradition and expertise in research on both the Black Sea and the polar regions. Our ambition is not simply for Bulgaria to benefit from the achievements of the international scientific community, but to make its own contribution through the knowledge and dedication of our scientists, research institutes and universities, as well as through our support for new generations of researchers."*

The future Mercator International Centre for the Ocean will give its Member States a direct say in how ocean intelligence is governed. Together, they will shape the digital ocean systems and information services they increasingly rely on to support a sustainable and competitive blue economy, strengthen coastal resilience, respond to ocean warming and address maritime security challenges.

Pierre Bahurel, Director General, Mercator Ocean International said: *"We warmly welcome Bulgaria's signature of the Convention and thank Minister Professor Georgi Valchev for his commitment. Trusted ocean intelligence is a strategic asset, both for climate resilience and political sovereignty, and no single country can manage the ocean by itself. By signing this Convention, Bulgaria is helping lay the foundations for a trusted and publicly governed source of ocean data, predictions, and actionable intelligence for leaders and decision-makers for decades to come."*

Researchers at the Bulgarian Antarctic Base on Livingston Island are studying changes in glaciers and witnessing first-hand how closely Antarctica and the global ocean are connected, and the importance of reliable ocean intelligence.

PRESS RELEASE

Speaking on behalf of the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute, Professor Christo Pimpirev said: "*Reliable ocean forecasts and digital ocean systems support safer navigation in polar waters and better planning of our expeditions. Just as importantly, they offer a framework in which the observations of Bulgarian scientists become part of a shared European and global picture of the ocean.*"

The Convention establishing the Mercator International Centre for the Ocean is open for signature by 31 eligible States: the 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Monaco, Norway and the United Kingdom.

ENDS

About the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria: The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria is responsible for developing and implementing national policies in education, science and research. The Ministry supports scientific excellence, the development of research infrastructures, and the international cooperation of Bulgarian universities and research organisations. Through national research programmes and participation in European and international initiatives, it promotes the integration of Bulgarian science into the European Research Area. The Ministry also supports research in marine and polar sciences, including Bulgaria's Antarctic research programme, and encourages scientific cooperation to address global challenges such as climate change and ocean sustainability.

About Mercator Ocean International: Mercator Ocean International is a global leader in ocean monitoring, forecasting, and Digital Ocean systems. It provides operational ocean information services for public authorities, international organizations, and the scientific community worldwide. It operates the Copernicus Marine Service for the European Commission and plays a central role in the development of the EU Digital Twin of the Ocean, working with a pan-European network of scientific and operational partners. By combining ocean observations, numerical modelling, high-performance computing and artificial intelligence, Mercator Ocean delivers operational digital ocean services supporting ocean prediction and decision-making. Mercator Ocean is currently transitioning towards the creation of a new intergovernmental organization dedicated to Digital Ocean systems and information services. www.mercator-ocean.fr

Press contacts
Press@mercator-ocean.fr
Laurence Collet, Corporate Communications & Media Relations
M : + 33 6 76 86 85 15

nicholas@impactandinfluence.global
Nicholas Moore, Account Director, Impact & Influence. M : + 44 7527 695 154