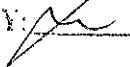


FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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S E N A T E

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR VILLAR

RESOLUTION
URGING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED
INDISCRIMINATE PLUNDER OF PHILIPPINE CORAL REEFS AND ENDANGERED
TURTLES WITH THE END IN VIEW OF STOPPING THIS DASTARDLY ACT AND
PRESERVING, RESTORING AND RETURNING SAID MARINE WEALTH TO
PHILIPPINE WATERS

Whereas, Section 16 Article II of the 1987 Constitution states that, “The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature”;

Whereas, the total area of the world’s coral reefs amounts to less than one quarter of one percent (1%) of the entire marine environment yet some estimates put the total diversity of life found in, on and around coral reefs at up to two million species, making them home to twenty-five percent (25%) of all marine life, and form the nurseries for about a quarter of the ocean’s fish including commercially important species¹;

Whereas, coral reefs offer multiple benefits to people and the economy by providing food, sustaining livelihoods, supporting tourism, protecting coasts and preventing certain diseases;

Whereas, threats to coral reefs are careless tourism, sedimentation caused by coasts and inland construction and coral mining²;

Whereas, coral mining is a situation where coral reef species are removed from the reef and traded in numerous domestic and international markets for use as curios, limestone, traditional medicines, live marine ornamentals, coral and “live rock” for aquaria, and construction materials;

Whereas, coral mining can include blasting of massive areas of reef with dynamite or large scale removal of coral manually in patches throughout a reef³;

Whereas, while these practices provide economic benefits, if done irresponsibly they are destructive and undermine the important long-term benefits provided by reefs;

¹ http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/coasts/coral_reefs/

² http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/blue_planet/coasts/coral_reefs/

³ <http://www.icran.org/pdf/CoralMiningIssueBrief.pdf>

Whereas, the Philippines is in the Coral Triangle region with the highest diversity of corals, fish, and other reef species anywhere in the world and is recognized as the global epicenter of marine biodiversity;

Whereas, recently, the Bureau of Customs foiled a plot to smuggle out of the country over P35 million worth of endangered turtles and other marine life, and a shipment containing sacks of rare black sea corals⁴;

Whereas, in connection to the same, experts believe that about 7,000 hectares of a “reef complex” were destroyed when poachers harvested 161 sea turtles and over 21,000 sea shells and black corals off the waters of Cotabato⁵;

Whereas, in the same report, at least 168 sacks containing 375 pieces of the endangered marine species, identified by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) as “black sea fan” corals were accounted for;


Whereas, black corals are among the species protected by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;

Whereas, concerned agencies like the Department of Justice, Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Finance, in accordance with its respective mandates, should file the most severe cases with the maximum penalties against these natural resources plunderers;

Whereas, the State, consistent with its Constitutional mandate to protect the environment, and honoring its commitment to international treaties concerning environment protection, should protect and safe-guard its marine life and natural resources from individuals or groups who abuse and harm the same for their own selfish and personal gain by prosecuting those who are liable and restoring these seized marine treasures back into the Philippine sea;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to urge the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alleged indiscriminate plunder of Philippine coral reefs and endangered turtles with the end in view of stopping this dastardly act and preserving, restoring and returning said marine wealth to Philippine waters.

Adopted,


MANNY VILLAR
Senator

⁴ “More black corals seized” by Jocelyn R. Uy, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 26, 2011

⁵ *Ibid.*