

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
Second Regular Session )

JAN 29 2018

SENATE  
P.S. Resolution No. 594

RECEIVED BY: 

---

Introduced by: Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino IV

---

**A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATE OF MARITIME RESEARCH BY FILIPINO SCIENTISTS AND THE PROGRAM OF THE GOVERNMENT TO PURSUE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION IN THE PHILIPPINE RISE**

**WHEREAS**, the Benham Rise is a 13-hectare marine area off the coast of Aurora province. With more than fifty species of fish and tiered plate corals, its rich biodiversity makes it a valuable resource for present and future generations of Filipinos. It also holds strategic minerals, oils and natural gas of potentially economic significance to the country;

**WHEREAS**, in 2012, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLCS) confirmed the Philippines' claim to Benham Rise as part of its extended continental shelf;

**WHEREAS**, the Benham Rise was renamed Philippine Rise and designated as a Protected Food Supply Exclusive Zone in May 2017 by virtue of Executive Order No. 25;

**WHEREAS**, in May 2014, Filipino scientists from the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI) conducted the first ever benthic survey in the continental shelf. The survey team was composed of researchers from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), UP Los Baños (UPLB) School of Environmental Science and Management (SESAM), UPLB Institute of Biological Sciences (IB), UP Mindanao, UP Baguio, Xavier University (XU), and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU).<sup>1</sup> This was part of the approved program of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) to initiate scientific research and exploration in the Philippine Rise;

**WHEREAS**, once again, in 2016, a team of Filipino scientists from BFAR, UP and Oceana Philippines aboard the research vessel M/V DA-BFA explored Benham Bank, the shallowest part of the Benham Rise. The team found terraces

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/regions/05/07/14/scientists-explore-benham-rise>

of soft and hard corals, fish, algae, and sponges. The scientists were able to extensively study the underwater terrain of Benham Bank through cutting-edge technology. The team covered 12 research stations and analyzed hours of video footage daily<sup>2</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, last January 19, 2018, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) granted China's request to conduct maritime research in Philippine Rise.<sup>3</sup> The permit allows the Institute of Oceanology of Chinese Academy of Sciences (IO-CAS) to be joined by the UP MSI. Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque defended the approval granted by saying that China is the only one qualified to conduct research because it is capital intensive and the Philippines cannot afford to conduct its own research in the area;<sup>4</sup>

**WHEREAS**, UP MSI, in a statement, clarified that the maritime research that will be conducted is a joint exploration between Filipino and Chinese scientists. They said that studying major ocean current system dynamics is "complex and requires extensive resources," hence the importance of international collaboration;<sup>5</sup>

**WHEREAS**, UP Institute of Maritime Affairs and Law of the Seas Director Atty. Jay Batongbacal said that the limitations in the capacity of Filipino scientists to conduct research in the area is not a matter of poverty, but of lack of priority.<sup>6</sup> With the proper budgetary support from government, clear research goals, vision and objectives, confidence in our own people and expertise, the Philippines would not have to depend on other countries for its scientific research;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate of the Philippines to direct the Senate Committee on Science and Technology to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the state of maritime research by Filipino scientists and the program of the government to pursue scientific research and exploration in the Philippine Rise.



---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/science-nature/environment/135636-2016-benham-rise-exploration-coral-reefs>

<sup>3</sup> <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/01/19/Philippines-allows-China-research-Benham-Rise-Cayetano-confirms.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/194318-malacanang-filipinos-need-china-benham-rise>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/641116/fil-chi-research-in-benham-rise-to-study-climate-driving-ocean-currents/story/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/194435-group-filipino-scientists-research-benham-rise>