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SENATE
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Introduced by SENATOR SONNY ANGARA

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT AN INVENTORY AND INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND PROJECTS ON FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCE CONSERVATION; MARITIME TRANSPORT, SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIR; SEAFARER'S RIGHTS AND WELFARE; MARINE TOURISM AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO THE COUNTRY'S MARITIME AND OCEAN AFFAIRS, WITH THE END-GOAL OF FORMULATING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL POLICY ON THE STRATEGIC AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S "BLUE ECONOMY"

1 WHEREAS, throughout the centuries, Filipinos maintained a distinctly ocean-
2 based, seafaring culture, emerging from a long maritime history that included the
3 Malay migration via the Balangays, the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade under the
4 Spanish Crown from 1565 to 1815, and as some researchers suggest, even the
5 population of the islands in modern-day Polynesia some 3,000 years ago;

6 WHEREAS, the World Economic Forum (WEF) dubbed the Philippines in 2017
7 as among the world's 83 "ocean" states, considering that the country's total
8 sovereign area is more than 80 percent underwater and that 78 percent of its 80
9 provinces and 56 percent of its 1,634 municipalities are found along coastal areas;

10 WHEREAS, the Philippines is the 2nd largest archipelagic country in the world
11 (with up to 7,500 islands), has the world's 5th longest coastline (at least 36,000
12 kilometers long), and covers a total "offshore" or "sea" area that is roughly 2.2
13 million square kilometers, including its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as stipulated
14 by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

1 WHEREAS, all the country's territorial waters—including its brackish water
2 ponds, nipa and mangrove swamps, estuaries and estuarine rivers, sandy beaches,
3 seagrass beds, algal flats, coral reefs and other soft bottom habitats—are found
4 within the Coral Triangle, a region considered to be the global center of marine
5 biodiversity including corals, fish, seagrass and other forms of marine life, and thus,
6 a global priority for conservation;

7 WHEREAS, the Philippines has the third-largest reef area in the world, with 22,500
8 square kilometers of coral reefs which represents up to 9 percent of the global total.
9 Such reefs are home to 464 species of hard corals, 1,770 species of reef fish, and 42
10 species of mangroves;

11 WHEREAS, the Philippines lies at the apex of the so-called "Coral Triangle"—
12 an area covering the waters of 6 countries that serves as the home of up 76 percent
13 and 37 percent of the world's coral species and coral reef fish species respectively.
14 Various studies have described the country's waters as a global center of marine
15 shorefish biodiversity;

16 WHEREAS, the World Resources Institute (WRI) noted in its 2012 report that
17 almost all of the country's reefs and marine areas are threatened by human
18 activities, including overfishing, destructive fishing, coastal development, and
19 watershed-based 14 like agricultural run-off. On top of these, many of the country's
20 coral reefs are under the threat of coral bleaching, which is a result of increased
21 acidity and temperature of our oceans, brought about by climate change;

22 WHEREAS, a 2015 report by Ocean Conservancy and the McKinsey Center for
23 Business and Environment found that next to China and Indonesia, the Philippines is
24 the world's 3rd biggest source of plastic pollution, leaking half a million tons of
25 plastic waste into the ocean, on account of the prevalence of single-use plastic
26 sachets and lapses in the implementation of solid waste management policies;

27 WHEREAS, such threats imperil the lives of up to 40 million Filipinos who
28 reside along in coastlines that are within 30 kilometers of such reefs, and in
29 particular, the lives of at least 1 million small-scale fishermen who are directly
30 dependent on reef fishing for employment;

31 WHEREAS, the continuous degradation of the country's marine resources
32 would render many Filipino households "food-insecure" considering that according to

1 the 2015 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) by the Food and Nutrition Research
2 Institute (FNRI-DOST), "fish and fish products" represent 11.9 percent of the mean
3 one-day per capita food intake of Filipino households—making it the third-most
4 consumed food group, next only to "vegetables" (14.6 percent) and "cereals and
5 cereal products" (42.4 percent);

6 WHEREAS, results of a 2018 Social Weather Station (SWS) survey,
7 commissioned by Oceana Philippines, showed that 54% of Filipinos say that fish and
8 seafood in the market are smaller in size while 82% believe that fish and seafood
9 are more expensive compared to 10 years ago. The survey also revealed that more
10 than half of the respondents find there are fewer varieties and less catch of fish and
11 seafood, 55% and 57% respectively;

12 WHEREAS, according to the Fisheries Situation Reports of the Philippine
13 Statistics Authority (PSA), fish production dropped by 13% over the last decade,
14 which means that the country is producing 650 million metric tons of fish less than
15 what was produced in 2008. Reasons for the steady decline can be attributed to a
16 lot of factors such as population growth, increased of human activities in coastal
17 areas, high demand of fish from other countries which resulted to increase in
18 number of fishers employing different fishing methods, including destructive ones,
19 and climate change that brings about prolonged hot weather conditions followed by
20 strong typhoons;

21 WHEREAS, the Philippines' marine territories include, but are not limited to,
22 such resource-rich areas like 1) Reed Bank, which the US Energy Information
23 Agency estimated in 2013 to have energy reserves of up to 55.1 million trillion cubic
24 feet (tcf) of natural gas and 5.4 billion barrels of oil; 2) Scarborough Shoal, which
25 has long been the fishing grounds of Filipino fishermen; and 3) Philippine Rise
26 (formerly Benham Rise), a 13-million hectare underwater plateau off the coast of
27 Aurora province, believed to house immense mineral deposits and which researchers
28 have found has several sites with 100-percent coral cover, despite global incidence
29 of coral bleaching;

30 WHEREAS, Presidential Proclamation No. 489 declared 50,000 hectares of the
31 Rise, including the pristine Benham Bank, as strict protection zone, which is closed
32 to human activities, except for scientific studies. Presidential Proclamation No. 489

1 also declared 300,000 hectares of the Philippine Rise as Fisheries Management Area
2 (FMA), where fishing using active gears is banned to ensure that there will be no
3 illegal fishing and overexploitation of marine resources;

4 WHEREAS, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing continues to be a
5 major threat to the country's marine resources despite the prohibitions and penalties
6 set forth in Republic Act 8550 or the Fisheries Code, as amended by RA 10654.
7 According to Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-Fisheries Protection
8 and Law Enforcement Group, a total of 649 apprehensions of illegal fishing activities
9 were recorded from 2016 to 2017. The highest recorded violations included
10 unauthorized fishing, intrusion of commercial fishing vessels within municipal waters,
11 dynamite fishing, use of illegal and active fishing gears in municipal waters such as
12 "hulbot-hulbot" (Danish seine) and bottom trawling and employment of unlicensed
13 fishers;

14 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and BFAR have yet to draft
15 guidelines for Vessel Monitoring Measures (VMM), as mandated by the Fisheries
16 Code and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR). Municipal fisherfolks
17 complained that unmonitored and unregulated vessels weighing 3.1 to 30 gross
18 tons, continue to encroach on municipal waters, defined as 15 kilometers from the
19 coastline and reserved for registered fisherfolks and their organizations;

20 WHEREAS, according to 2014 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) data,
21 the Philippines is 10th among the world's top fishing nations (with 2.4 million metric
22 tons of capture production in 2014), the 3rd largest tuna producer, the 8th tuna
23 exporter and the 5th aquaculture producer in the world;

24 WHEREAS, in 2016, total fishery exports from the Philippines reached 257,219
25 Metric Tons (MT), valued at roughly P45.37 billion and the gross value added (GVA)
26 of the fisheries sector amounted to P185.2 billion, representing only a little less than
27 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP);

28 WHEREAS, a 2017 joint article from the University of the Philippines, the
29 Ateneo De Manila University, University of California, Santa Barbara, and the
30 National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) estimated that the total
31 annual monetary value associated with the country's marine ecosystems (coral reefs,
32 mangroves and seagrass areas) amounts to at least P1.553 trillion (or US\$9.298

1 billion in 2007 prices), or up to P9.183 trillion (or US\$ 581.341 billion in 2007 prices),
2 if the continental shelf is included;

3 WHEREAS, despite the huge economic potential arising from the country's
4 marine ecosystems, fisherfolk remain among the poorest sectors of the country,
5 living on an average daily wage of P178.43 and exhibiting a 34-percent poverty
6 incidence rate in 2015, which was much higher than the 21.6-percent national
7 poverty incidence rate measured at the time;

8 WHEREAS, the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and
9 International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) estimated in 2016 that 25 percent—or 1 out
10 of 4—of the 1.5 million seafarers in the world are Filipino, underscoring how for
11 nearly five decades, the Philippines was known as the "Seafaring Capital of the
12 World," being the leading supplier of manpower to the world's maritime fleet, up
13 until 2015 when it lagged behind China in terms of producing officers;

14 WHEREAS, the Philippine maritime industry faces an opportunity to upgrade
15 the skills and competencies of its ranks—especially of its "ratings" or seafarers who
16 have yet to earn a certificate of competence—given that in a 2016 report, BIMCO
17 and ICS found that there is currently a shortfall of 16,500 officers and estimated that
18 an additional 147,500 maritime officers will be needed by 2025;

19 WHEREAS, the country's ongoing economic expansion is still being hindered
20 by a substandard domestic shipping industry, whose quality of port infrastructure
21 ranked 114th out of 137 in the World Economic Forum's 2017 - 2018 Global
22 Competitiveness Index and which the World Bank and the International Finance
23 Corporation said in 2014 was characterized by "high costs, low quality of service,
24 and a poor safety record" as demonstrated by frequent maritime accidents and the
25 highest absolute maritime casualty rate in the East Asia Region;

26 WHEREAS, the Philippines currently stands as the world's 4th largest
27 shipbuilding nation, with a Shipbuilding and Ship Repair (SBSR) industry poised to
28 expand in light of MARINA's efforts at modernizing the domestic fleet under its
29 Maritime Industry Development Program (2018 - 2028), which could potentially spur
30 more economic activity and generate more jobs throughout the country;

31 WHEREAS, Philippine tourism—already a booming sector of the economy—
32 can grow and expand even further with the development of "cruise tourism"

1 throughout the country, considering that cruise ship arrivals in the Philippines
2 jumped nearly 2000 percent in January 2018 compared to the year before;

3 WHEREAS, given the nation's archipelagic geography, it is imperative that
4 ongoing efforts to modernize the Philippine Navy's assets and capabilities are
5 enhanced and ramped up to such degree that the country is able to respectably
6 safeguard Filipino lives, especially during natural calamities; to defend its national
7 sovereignty; and, to enforce Philippine laws against such transnational crimes as
8 human trafficking, piracy, and sea-based smuggling.

9 WHEREAS, several policies have been implemented in relation to the country's
10 maritime and ocean affairs, including the 1994 National Marine Policy (NMP)
11 formulated by the Cabinet Committee on Maritime and Ocean Affairs (CABCOM-
12 MOA) under EO 186, S. of 1994, the National Coast Watch System (NCWS) created
13 under EO 57, S. 2011, and the Fisheries Code of the Philippines under Republic Act
14 8550 as amended by Republic Act 10654;

15 WHEREAS, despite these policies, institutional fragmentation, redundancy and
16 overlap of agency mandates have resulted in piecemeal and hence limited
17 interventions in sustainable marine resource management and conservation;

18 WHEREAS, such institutional gaps and deficiencies make it imperative and
19 urgent to formulate and implement an integrated and holistic development plan for
20 the entire country's maritime economy and ecosystem;

21 WHEREAS, such plan should consider the spatial or geographic requirements
22 of the country's highly diverse marine environment and should be aligned with the
23 "blue economy" model outlined in the 2012 Changwon Declaration, which the
24 Philippines signed, and in fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #14 on
25 the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources;

26 WHEREAS, there have been proposals to separate BFAR from DA and
27 establish a Department Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DoFAR) for a more
28 focused, streamlined and centralized management of the country's marine
29 resources;

30 NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct
31 the appropriate Senate Committees to conduct an inventory and inquiry, in aid of
32 legislation, on the Philippine government's policies and projects on fisheries and

- 1 marine resource conservation; maritime transport, shipbuilding and repair; seafarer's
- 2 rights and welfare; marine tourism and other matters relating to the country's
- 3 maritime and ocean affairs, with the end-goal of establishing a comprehensive
- 4 national policy on the sustainable and strategic development of the country's "blue
- 5 economy".

Adopted,



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