


FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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SENATE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SENATE
P. S. R. No. **168**

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE
WORSENING CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY'S CORAL REEFS AND THE
OCCURRENCE OF CORAL BLEACHING

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 provides: "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 Philippines is state party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, recognizing the conservation of biological diversity as a common concern of humankind and an integral part of the country's development through sustainable means;

WHEREAS, the 6 September 2010 issue of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported that local marine scientists and divers have been witnessing and recording the massive bleaching of coral reefs all over the country, an occurrence caused by warmer-than-normal ocean water temperatures;

WHEREAS, the Philippine waters is part of the 5.7-million square kilometer Coral Triangle, one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world;

WHEREAS, experts say that what is happening underwater may be catastrophic as coral coves have been reported to have discolored, turning into brown to white which is a sign that the corals are under stress or dying;

WHEREAS, scientists from the University of the Philippines and De La Salle University said that the magnitude of the current coral bleaching could surpass the similar catastrophe in 1998, which caused 12 years ago caused millions of dollars in losses in the tourism and fishery industries;

WHEREAS, the report identifies the climate phenomenon El Niño continues to devastate many coral reefs in the Philippines and traced the recent occurrence from May this year when temperatures were in record highs;

WHEREAS, data from weather satellites show that the temperature in the oceans surrounding the Philippines rose by around 2 degrees Celsius in 2009, and have yet to cool down due to a lack of typhoons in the past months;

WHEREAS, experts also said that the most alarming aspect of this occurrence is its scale, and cited the extensive bleaching of 50 to 70 percent of corals in El Nido, Palawan;

WHEREAS, in 1998, it was estimated that El Nido lost at least \$15 million in earnings from fisheries and tourism because of the underwater phenomenon;

WHEREAS, scientists confirmed at least eight areas that are bleaching hot spots that include popular dive sites: Batangas (Nasugbu, Lian, Bauan, Mabini, Lobo and Calatagan), Oriental Mindoro (Calapan) and Quezon (Pagbilao);

WHEREAS, bleaching have also been reported in the coral reefs of Puerto Galera, Lubang Island Bolinao in Batangas, Iloilo, and other parts of Palawan;

WHEREAS, since the reefs provide food and sanctuary to other marine animals, the bleaching of corals would affect the country's fisheries and tourism industry, as well as livelihoods of coastal residents;

WHEREAS, experts said that the country's coral reefs could be greatly diminished in 50 years if bleaching happens every 10 years or so;

WHEREAS, Congress should consider, if not echo, the recommendations of local scientists regarding this environmental phenomenon:

- ensure that coral reefs remain healthy to withstand and recover quickly from bleaching and other stressors;
- create marine protected areas to hasten the recovery of the coral colonies;
- to provide a stimulus program for post-bleaching recovery through restoration and effective reduction of other man-made stressors in affected coral reefs;
- raise awareness about the bleaching of coral reefs and encourage reportage of its occurrences to the proper agencies;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, on the worsening condition of the country's coral reefs due to coral bleaching.

Adopted,

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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