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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 256

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
NATURAL RESOURCES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION,
ON THE REPORTED INCREASE OF STRANDED MARINE MAMMALS IN THE
COUNTRY

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 states: "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 28 September 2010 issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported that in the last 11 years, the number of dolphins, whales, and sea cows stranded on Philippine shores has been unusually high;

WHEREAS, the stranding of more than 500 dolphins, whales and sea cows on Philippine shores or in shallow waters produced several hotspots around the archipelago, according to the country's first database on marine mammal-stranding from 1998 and 2009;

WHEREAS, Doctor Lemnuel Aragon, team leader of a group of 10 scientists, veterinarians and policymakers who put together the database, reportedly said that the Philippines was in a better situation now because it has a database as well as a response program, which were often nonexistent in developing countries;

WHEREAS, the team explained that stranding happens when sea creatures, which are sick, lost and weak take refuge on shores or when their remains are washed ashore;

WHEREAS, the database also included information on illegal fishing practices and environmental changes that caused the unusually high incidence of stranding;

WHEREAS, it was reported that at least 116 of 163 individually stranded dolphins, whales, and dugong were found alive, a rate considered by local scientists to be high; the scientists speculate that these animals might have sought refuge on the beach due to noise trauma from dynamite fishing, and interactions with fish or biotoxins from harmful algal blooms;

WHEREAS, the report also stated that the stranding incidents happened mostly in Central Luzon, Central Visayas, the Ilocos and Bicol regions; however, the provinces of Zambales, Cagayan, Zamboanga City, Negros Oriental, Bohol, Pangasinan, and Bataan are considered hotspots because of the frequency of stranding incidents there;

WHEREAS, some places are also considered hotspots because rare species retreated to their shores: the Longman's beaked whale (*Indopacetus pacificus*) was seen

in Davao City; the first recorded specimen of the pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*) was seen in Bulakan, Bulacan; while the highest number of stranding baleen whales was documented in Batangas;

WHEREAS, it was through the database that the team validated that 23 of the 28 confirmed species of marine mammals in the Philippines had been stranded;

WHEREAS, the database showed that the top five stranded species were the spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*), short-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), melon-headed whale (*Peponocephala electra*), Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) and common bottlenose dolphin (*T. truncatus*); the records also showed seven stranding cases of dugong (*Dugong dugon*) since 2001;

WHEREAS, the team called attention to the plight of the Irrawaddy dolphin and dugong because these have been most endangered by human activities;

WHEREAS, the team recommended the continued collection of comprehensive data to reach "greater accuracy in determining the possible causes of stranding (incidents) and the influence of human activities on these events"; they also urged further investigation on the impact of dynamite fishing and other causes of stranding;

WHEREAS, the government should make it mandatory for fisherfolk communities to attend seminars and educational programs on the dangers and harms of dynamite fishing and other prohibited fishing procedures;

WHEREAS, the legislature should likewise enact measures that will improve the response capability of communities and groups, and open facilities to support the rehabilitation of stranded marine animals;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the Senate Committee on environmental and natural resources to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported increase of stranded marine mammals in the country.

Adopted,

acc. 
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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