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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES }
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SENATE

P. S. Res. No. 978 RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Manny Villar

RESOLUTION**URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND
FOOD TO LOOK INTO THE REPORTED DEPLETION OF SEA
CUCUMBERS WITH THE END-IN-VIEW OF FORMULATING AND
RECOMMENDING A NATIONWIDE INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE
RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE
SEA CUCUMBER FISHERIES**

WHEREAS, studies show that Asia and the Pacific are the top sea cucumber producing regions with a total regional harvest of 20,000 to 40,000 tons per year;

WHEREAS, based on reports by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO), harvest as well as exports of said product may significantly be affected due to overfishing and with the possibility of endangering some of its species;

WHEREAS, the report also indicates that the fast paced development and supply pressure brought about by the growing international market demand for the product is apparently one of the main causes of depletion of sea cucumber population worldwide;

WHEREAS, fisheries management in our country is generally regulated by Republic Act No. 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 but there are currently no specific clauses directed at the management of sea cucumbers particularly on exportation;

WHEREAS, the open access nature of the resource due to the absence of fishing restrictions and a poor understanding of its ecology also contribute to overfishing and drive the decline of our sea cucumber resources;

WHEREAS, the depletion of these resources have forced Filipino fishermen to move to other fishing areas including foreign waters as well as in our country's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) where fishing activities are either regulated, prohibited or both and thus, becomes part of the problem;

WHEREAS, despite the fact that it is not a traditional activity, sea cucumber fishing along with fishing for molluscs and other aquatic organisms, provides an income to many poor coastal fishers not only in the Philippines but to many other Southeast Asian countries as well;

WHEREAS, reconciling the need for conservation with the socio-economic importance that these fisheries have acquired will require effective management efforts, which unfortunately, are currently lacking in many places;

WHEREAS, the National Forum on Sea Cucumber Fisheries and Management which was held in June 2007 and attended by The Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD) and other interest groups have the outlined the following strategies to sustainably manage sea cucumber fishing in the Philippines:

1. Establishment of catch quotas and minimum size limits for exported species;
2. Establishment of closed season for harvesting during the breeding season;
3. Rotational harvesting in reef areas. With collection areas divided into sections and each section opened to harvesting during certain periods on a rotational basis;
4. Designation of permanent survey sites for monitoring the harvesting pressure and seasonal variation of sea cucumber populations;
5. Establishment of reserve areas to help in the recruitment of stocks;
6. Ban on the use of SCUBA for harvesting except for species that are not found in intertidal regions and are found only in deep waters where the use of SCUBA is necessary.
7. Monitoring the volume of harvests and sales/exports to assess catches from natural stocks. Existing stocks in exploited and unexploited areas should be monitored for effective management of the resource and;
8. Artificial propagation of commercial species to provide seeds for mariculture and restocking of depleted reefs.

WHEREAS, sea cucumber fishery in the Philippines is uncontrolled and non-selective and if we want this sector to survive, there is an obvious need for appropriate and realistic guidelines to regulate it.

WHEREAS, the Local Government Code empowers coastal communities to develop their own coastal development plans but may face huge challenges in their implementation and it is for this endeavor that the national government must step in;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED to urge the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food to conduct a study on the situation of our sea cucumber industry with the intent of formulating and recommending appropriate measures for the sector's effective and sustainable management.

Adopted,


MANNY VILLAR