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SENATE

RECEIVED BY: 

P. S. Res. No. 226

Introduced by Senator JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI

**RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED GOVERNMENT APPROVAL OF AN EXPERIMENT BY AN AUSTRALIAN-BASED COMPANY, OCEAN NOURISHMENT COMPANY TO RELEASE 500 TONS OF GRANULATED UREA INTO THE SULU SEA TO TEST ITS NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND OCEAN FERTILIZATION**

**WHEREAS**, on November 11, 2007, a news article which appeared on the Philippine Daily Inquirer says that an Australian-based company, Ocean Nourishment Corporation (ONC) has received the go-signal from the Philippine government on its project to release 500 tons of granulated urea into the Sulu Sea to test its new technology for carbon sequestration and ocean fertilization.

**WHEREAS**, the ONC is a private company out of the University of Sydney's Ocean Technology Group, and intends to gain both carbon credits and fish production revenue by licensing its technology to provoke massive plankton blooms in the world's oceans.

**WHEREAS**, Sulu Sea, located between several islands in the Philippines (such as Palawan, Panay, Negros, Zamboanga Peninsula and Sulu) and the island of Borneo in Malaysia, is considered the heart of the Earth's Coral Triangle and home to some of the country's richest fishing grounds, the Turtle Islands and the Tubbataha Reefs, a World Heritage Site.

**WHEREAS**, ocean nourishment is a relatively new technology of which the impact and risk of a field experiment of this magnitude have not yet been established.

**WHEREAS**, the ocean nourishment is a simple experiment that will dump massive amounts of urea into nutrient-poor sites. Urea is an organic compound derived from ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). A pressurized hose situated 50-meters below the sea will release the mixture directly into sunlit-layers where photosynthetic planktons (phytoplanktons) thrive. The premise is that urea (acting much like plant

fertilizer) would theoretically induce algal blooms. The plankton will multiply in the nitrogen-enriched waters and absorb carbon dioxide. When they die, the plankton will sink to the bottom of the sea taking the carbon dioxide with them. At the same time, increased primary production will lead to enhanced fish production, the plankton, being the food of fish.

**WHEREAS**, last November 9, 2007, the London Convention (the International Maritime Organization body that oversees dumping of wastes at sea) unanimously endorsed a scientific statement of concern on ocean fertilization and declared its intention to develop international regulations to oversee the controversial activities. It further advised that such large-scale schemes are "currently not justified."

**WHEREAS**, the respected UP Marine Science Institute in its position paper on the issue released on October 12, 2007, said that while this seems to be a simple solution to the problem of increasing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, uncertainties related to predicting the effects of artificial enrichment seem to outweigh its potential benefits.

**WHEREAS**, the UP Marine Science Institute further stated that the site chosen for the experiment is inappropriate given that the Sulu Sea dynamics are not yet well understood. In its conclusion, the Institute said "it is the recommendation of the MSI that before an Australian company conducts large scale experiments on ocean fertilization in Philippine waters, it should demonstrate their efficacy in Australian waters, such as the Gulf of Carpentaria in their Northern Territories, a tropical sea."

**WHEREAS**, there has been an allegation from Third World Network that at least one experimental dumping of urea has already occurred in the Sulu Sea – without a permit, without environmental assessment, and without public consent.

**WHEREAS**, we can not just allow unproven quick-fix solutions, with potential damaging impact to our environment, to mitigate climate change.

**WHEREAS**, it is imperative to find out which agency has approved the proposal, if indeed there was one, and what is the culpability or possible violations of our laws of that agency or its officials.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, as it is hereby resolved, for the Senate to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported government approval of an experiment by an Australian-based company, Ocean Nourishment Company to release 500 tons of granulated urea into the Sulu Sea to test its new technology for carbon sequestration and ocean fertilization.

Approved,



**JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI**