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SENATE

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Introduced by Sen. Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE UNABATED PRACTICE OF DYNAMITE FISHING IN THE COUNTRY WHICH INDISCRIMINATELY KILL LARGE NUMBERS OF FISHES AND OTHER MARINE ORGANISMS, DAMAGE AND DESTROY OUR VULNERABLE MARINE AND CORAL ECOSYSTEM, AND CAUSE NUMEROUS INJURIES AND DEATH TO OUR FISHERMEN, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF FURTHER ENACTING LEGISLATIVE MEASURES THAT WILL PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND SAFE FISHING PRACTICES IN THE COUNTRY

WHEREAS, while some of the world's most extensive coral reefs are found in the Philippines and that coral reefs constitute vital ecosystems for fisheries and wildlife and are even a source of medicine, they are under such sustained assault by dynamite fishing causing the corals to be on the verge of utter collapse;

WHEREAS, dynamite fishing is the practice of using explosives to stun or kill schools of fish for easy collection. This illegal practice can be extremely destructive to the surrounding ecosystem, as the explosion often destroys the underlying habitat (such as coral reefs) that supports the fish. The underwater shockwaves produced by the explosion cause the fishes' swim bladder to rupture, thus stunning them. A number of fishes float to the surface, but most sink to the sea floor. The explosions indiscriminately kill large numbers of fish and other marine organisms in the vicinity and can damage or destroy the physical environment, including extensive damage to coral reefs. Moreover, juvenile fishes are killed and larvae destroyed;

WHEREAS, commercial dynamite or homemade bombs are constructed using a glass bottle with layers of powdered potassium nitrate and pebbles or an ammonium nitrate and kerosene mixture. Such devices are known to explode prematurely without warning and have been known to injure or kill the person using them, or innocent bystanders;

WHEREAS, data indicate that dynamite fishing in the Philippines is responsible for at least 50% of the destruction of the corals reefs in the country. Studies indicate that a beer bottle bomb shattered stony corals in an area of approximately 5 meters in diameter. The radius of coral killed per blast is 2.5 meters, hence the area affected per blast is 19.6 square meter. A large dynamite boat, carrying 15 crew can easily throw 10 to 15 bombs per day, 20 days per month, and 10 months per year for a total number of blasts estimated to be 2000 to 3000 per year. As such, it takes 20 such boats less than a year to wipe out an entire square kilometer of coral reef;

WHEREAS, data gathered from numerous news articles indicate that ten percent of more than 700,000 municipal fishermen have used dynamite explosives in their fishing practices. Although outlawed, the practice remains widespread all over the

country. One 1999 report estimated that some 70,000 fishermen (12% of the Philippines' total fishermen) engaged in the practice of dynamite fishing;

WHEREAS, one form of dynamite fishing is the practice of "piggybacking" on the operations of commercial fishermen. By trailing the commercial fishers who use sophisticated equipment, the dynamite fishers are able to track down schools of fish which they blast away before their commercial competitors can get at them with their bulky nets;

WHEREAS, a new-found technique at long-distance detonation has made dynamite fishers more confident. Instead of throwing the bomb into the water right after lighting its wick with a hand-held cigar, dynamite fishers invest money on batteries and hundreds of meters of solid electrical wire. One end of the wire is "hitched" to the fuse of the bomb and the other to an improvised detonating switch that is energized by 2 AA batteries. After dropping the homemade bomb at the target spot, dynamite fishers sail hundreds of meters away until it is enough to detonate the bomb. This method eliminates the risk of accidental blowups that have either killed or injured hundreds of fishers. It also enables blast fishers to trick law enforcers by staying far from the scene of the crime and lowering the sound of explosion by planting the bombs deep down the coral reef areas;

WHEREAS, the frequently improvised nature of the dynamite explosives used in dynamite fishing endangers the fishermen with accidents, injuries and deaths. Last January 24, 2009, a dynamite explosion killed a fisherman and severely injured his wife in sitio Mahayahay, Barangay Daang Lungsod, Medellin, Cebu. The couple was fishing off the shore of Sitio Mahayahay when they spotted a school of fish. The fisherman allegedly lighted a dynamite that unfortunately exploded even before it was thrown to the sea. Moreover, last April 2009, newspaper reports indicate that 4 fishermen suffered serious injuries after a dynamite they were using to catch fish exploded while still on their boat off the waters of Ibutgon Island in Banate, Iloilo;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need on the part of the agencies of government to coordinate with the local government units and provide alternative economic livelihood programs for these illegal fishermen using dynamite for fishing in order to provide income opportunities for this sector and reduce the practice of dynamite fishing in the country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved to direct the appropriate Committees in the Senate to conduct an inquiry, *In Aid of Legislation*, into the unabated practice of dynamite fishing in the country which indiscriminately kill large numbers of fishes and other marine organisms, damage and destroy our vulnerable marine and coral ecosystem, and cause numerous injuries and death to our fishermen, with the end in view of further enacting legislative measures that will promote sustainable and safe fishing practices in the country.

Adopted,


MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator