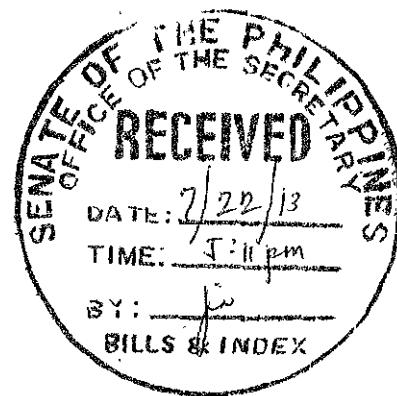


SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



SENATE
P. S. R. No. 93

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PRESERVATION OF CETACEAN
ECOTOURISM HOTSPOTS IN THE COUNTRY

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, based on news reports, Prof. Lemmuel Aragonés of the University of the Philippines in Diliman Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology said there is a host of potential cetacean ecotourism hotspots in the country and this underscores the fact that they are areas of concern;

WHEREAS, hotspots for dolphin and whale watchers include the areas off the Batanes and Babuyan groups of islands, Cagayan, Isabela, Awora, Bataan, and Zambales in Luzon;

WHEREAS, other hotspots include the Sulu Sea off southern Negros and the Zamboanga peninsula; Tañon Strait between Negros and Cebu islands; the sea between Bohol and Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, and Misamis Oriental; or the waters off the Bohol Triangle consisting of the islands of Bohol, Siquijor, and Camiguin;

WHEREAS, the determination of hotspot areas resulted from more than 10 years of studying Philippine waters; such clearly demonstrates how Philippine waters are richer in dolphins and whales than anybody assumed;

WHEREAS, the cetaceans, together with the dugongs, are the marine mammals found in the Philippines; Aragonés and his co-researchers have reportedly documented 28 cetacean species in Philippine waters, or more than a third of all cetacean species in the world;

WHEREAS, the dugongs, now classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Redlist as vulnerable to extinction, are distributed along the northeast and the entire eastern coast of Luzon, all coasts of Palawan, the coasts of Guimaras, southeastern Panay, and northern Negros, the entire southern coasts of Mindanao island, the coast of Agusan del Norte, the coasts of Basilan, Sulu, and the Tawi-tawi group of islands; marine mammals could face as a result of tourism activities;

WHEREAS, it was reported that these hotspots are places where there is great diversity and abundance of marine mammals and presence of apparent conflicts, related to human activities such as fishing, which could have deleterious effects on these animals;

WHEREAS, among these dangers are the 'proliferation of trash, abandoned fishing nets, and the increasing number of active fishing gear such as nets and permanent fish corrals and cages; cetaceans mistake trash for food and get entangled or trapped in the nets;

WHEREAS, it was also reported that overfishing could deprive dolphins and whales of their food; dugongs are especially vulnerable to human activity because they survive only along coasts where seagrass, their staple, can be found and where human activities are also greatly felt;

WHEREAS, all cetaceans in the Philippines are in danger of being hunted, some are run over by boats; underwater noise from dynamite blasts and seismic surveys can damage their hearing and impair their ability to navigate;

WHEREAS, dolphin-watching and other such economic activity should be conducted with high standards of professionalism or else it will not be sustainable; being watched by tourists should not add stress to these mammals' existence;

WHEREAS, safeguards should be established in these ecotourism hotspots to ensure its sustainability and conservation;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate to direct the proper Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the preservation of cetacean ecotourism hotspots in the country.

Adopted,

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
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