

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
House Bill No. ~~4834~~

Introduced by REP. MARK A. VILLAR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

We have all the reasons to be appalled and deeply perturbed by the seizure of black corals, sea shells and stuffed green sea turtles at the Manila Port on the 1st of May 2011 from Cotabato. It was reported that the so-called "rape of the ocean" destroyed coral reefs across an area roughly twice the size of the City of Manila.

Rebuilding the corals' ecosystem takes a long time. It took 25 years or even more for these corals to grow. They only grow one centimeter a month. Hence, there is a need to ensure that this kind of crime will not again happen especially considering that this affects not only the present but also the future generation. It transcends geographical boundaries and race.

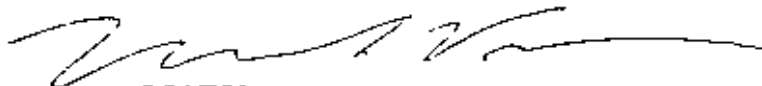
In view of the enormous amount involved by selling them in foreign markets, organized syndicates take the chance of being caught especially considering that the present law, Republic Act No. 8550 otherwise known as the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, which seeks to protect our marine environment, seems to lack enough teeth, so to speak, to address the atrocity against them.

Particularly, Section 91 of the aforesaid law merely punishes any person or corporation who gather, possess, sell or export ordinary precious and semi-precious corals, whether raw or in processed form, except for scientific or research purposes with an imprisonment of six (6) months to two (2) years and a fine from (PhP2,000.00 to PhP20,000.00).

Obviously, unscrupulous individuals would simply brush off the penalty imposed by the said law in exchange for huge sums of money.

As such, if only to wage war against these syndicates, there is a need to ensure that the punishment will be commensurate to the severity of the crime. There is a need to amend Section 91 of R.A. 8550 for the purpose of increasing the penalty stated therein.

Hence, the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



MARK A. VILLAR

Representative, Lone District of Las Piñas City