

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 1309



Introduced by: Hon. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED MASSIVE BLEACHING OF THE COUNTRY'S CORAL REEFS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF INTENSIFYING NATIONAL AND LOCAL EFFORTS ON CORAL REEF CONSERVATION FOR THE FUTURE OF NEXT GENERATIONS OF FILIPINOS

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 16 of the Philippine Constitution states that, "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, the Philippines is state party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, recognizing the conservation of biological diversity as a common concern of humankind and an integral part of the country's development through sustainable means;

WHEREAS, according to international marine watchdog group Reef Check, the Philippines and nearby Indonesia, another vast archipelago, account for 30 percent of the world's coral reefs;

WHEREAS, the waters of the Philippines is part of the Coral Triangle, a 5.7-million square kilometer area which contains 75 percent of the world's coral species, and considered one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the world;

WHEREAS, the Philippine coral reefs total about 6.5 million acres (26,000 square kilometers);

WHEREAS, coral bleaching is a stress condition in reef corals which is characterized by the whitening of its appearance due to the death of zooxanthellae, the protozoa that gives it coloration;

WHEREAS, coral bleaching is often caused by warmer-than-normal ocean water temperatures brought about by global warming;

WHEREAS, the first ever mass-bleaching event in the Philippines was reported in 1998-99, which began at Batangas, off Luzon, in June 1998 (an El Nino year) and then proceeded nearly clockwise around the Philippines, correlating with anomalous sea-surface temperatures;

WHEREAS, global warming has already led to increased levels of coral bleaching, and this is predicted to increase in frequency and severity in the coming decades and that such bleaching events may be the final nail in the coffin for already stressed coral reefs and reef ecosystems;

WHEREAS, scientists confirmed at least eight areas that are bleaching hot spots that include popular dive sites: Batangas (Nasugbu, Lian, Bauan, Mabini, Lobo and Calatagan), Oriental Mindoro (Calapan) and Quezon (Pagbilao);

WHEREAS, bleaching has also been reported in the coral reefs of Puerto Galera, Lubang Island Bolinao in Batangas, Iloilo, and other parts of Palawan;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has recently released videos showing the devastating impact on the marine environment and coral reef in the seabed of Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal;

WHEREAS, according to the recent report, extensive underwater surveys conducted by the PCG revealed alarming findings, indicating a significant loss of marine life and deliberate activities that may have caused irreparable damage;¹

WHEREAS, the Coast Guard in a statement said that "The results of these surveys showed that the marine ecosystem in the subject West Philippine Sea features appeared lifeless, with minimal to no signs of life";

WHEREAS, since the reefs provide food and sanctuary to other marine animals, the bleaching of corals would affect the country's fisheries and tourism industry, as well as livelihoods of coastal residents;

WHEREAS, experts said that the country's coral reefs could be greatly diminished in 50 years if bleaching happens every ten (10) years or so;

WHEREAS, it is important to consider the recommendations of local scientists regarding this environmental phenomenon, particularly in ensuring that coral reefs remain healthy to withstand and recover quickly from bleaching and other stressors; creating marine protected areas to hasten the recovery of the coral colonies; providing a stimulus program for post-bleaching recovery through restoration and effective reduction of other man-made stressors in affected coral reefs; and raising awareness about the bleaching of coral reefs and encouraging reportage of its occurrences to the proper agencies of government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the House of Representatives to direct the Committee on Ecology to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported massive bleaching of the country's coral reefs, with the end in view of intensifying national and local efforts on coral reef conservation for the future of next generations of Filipinos

Adopted,


KEITH MICAH "ATTY. MIKE" D.L. TAN
4th District, Quezon

¹ Coast Guard videos show massive damage to Rozul Reef, Escoda Shoal, Jacque Manabat, ABS-CBN News, September 18, 2023 (<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/18/23/pcg-videos-show-damage-to-rozul-reef-escoda-shoal>)