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SENATE

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INTRODUCED BY THE HONORABLE SENATOR MAR ROXAS

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A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND COMMERCE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE TWO-YEAR BAN ON PURSE SEINE FISHING IMPOSED BY THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION (WCPFC) AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TUNA INDUSTRY IN THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN MINDANAO, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF PROPOSING LEGISLATIVE MEASURES THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN TRADE LAWS, CONVENTIONS AND AGREEMENTS ON THE TUNA INDUSTRY, PROTECT STAKEHOLDERS DEPENDENT ON TUNA FISHING, AND CUSHION THE EFFECT OF THE BAN ON THE MARKET, PARTICULARLY ON CONSUMERS.

WHEREAS, the Philippines ranks 7<sup>th</sup> among the top tuna producing countries in the world, 2<sup>nd</sup> in world tuna catches and 3<sup>rd</sup> among canned tuna producers;

WHEREAS, the tuna industry accounts for twelve percent (12%) of the total fish production of the country that generates more than 120,000 jobs and \$280-million in annual exports;

WHEREAS, according to Stanley Swerdloff, GEM senior fisheries advisor in 2002, who was quoted in the Philippine Daily Inquirer article that reported that the European Union (EU) had just accredited the Philippines as a legal and sustainable source of tuna, "Tuna is responsible for almost \$1 Billion that is circulating in the national economy, much of it goes to Mindanao";

WHEREAS, the tuna industry in Mindanao has a current annual value of roughly Php6 Billion;

WHEREAS, in General Santos City, popularly known as the "Tuna Capital of the Philippines," the tuna industry is 60% of the local economy that supports 75,000 direct jobs and generates about \$160 Million in foreign exchange earnings;

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has even predicted that fisheries production is expected to grow by as much as 5% in 2010;

WHEREAS, on 12 December 2008, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission ("the Commission") established by the United Nations Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, of which the Philippines is a member, issued Conservation and Management Measure No. 2008-01 or the "Conservation and Management Measure For Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean" closing certain portions of the high seas in the Pacific Ocean to purse seine fishing of tuna stock;

WHEREAS, access to these tuna-rich fishing grounds, especially in neighboring countries, is vital to the tuna industry such that the imposition of the ban, according to the same Philippine Daily Inquirer article, would affect the jobs of at least 150,000 people and result to a projected 20% drop in tuna supply in the local and world markets;

WHEREAS, the drop in tuna supply will inevitably cause a spike in tuna prices to the prejudice of not only tuna traders and fishermen, but also domestic and international consumers, which consumption also has a direct bearing and impact on the country's trade standing and development;

WHEREAS, the projected decrease in the output of the tuna industry would undoubtedly cause an adverse impact on the stability of tuna trade in the country, particularly that in General Santos City, where 6 of the country's 8 tuna canneries and 12 of the country's 15 tuna processing plants are located;

WHEREAS, there is a real and genuine need to address the ban on tuna fishing in order to protect and preserve the country's national interest relative to its domestic and international tuna trading position;

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED*, to direct the Senate Committee on Trade and Commerce to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the two-year ban on purse seine fishing imposed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and its impact on the tuna industry in the country, particularly in Mindanao, with the end in view of proposing legislative measures that would strengthen trade laws, conventions and agreements on the tuna industry, protect stakeholders dependent on tuna fishing, and cushion the effect of the ban on the market, particularly on consumers.

Adopted,

  
MAR ROXAS  
Senator