



KATIPUNAN DECLARATION ON SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES
Walter Hogan Hall, Institute of Social Order
Ateneo de Manila University
October 20, 2015

We, the undersigned, representing participants from local government units, fisherfolk organizations and non-government organizations, come together to support Republic Act 10654, which we hope will usher in a new era of sustainable fisheries in the Philippines.

If fully implemented, we believe RA 10654, our newly amended Fisheries Code, will move the Philippines towards a sustainable path. If we are to conserve the bounty of our oceans, provisions of the law that include deterrent penalties, vessel monitoring system, harvest control rules, and strong traceability measures are steps in the right direction.

We recognize that the health and productivity of our oceans are in peril due to decades of over-extraction, over-exploitation, and rampant Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUUF) caused by weak governance.

The continuing high poverty rates in our coastal communities and among fisherfolk is due to the declining fish catch arising from weak management of our resources: a negative feedback loop that will lead to eventual collapse if not remedied in due time.

We welcome with much enthusiasm the amendments to our 17-year-old Fisheries Code, especially the introduction of stronger measures for conservation and monitoring that provide the information of what is happening in our seas that will turn around this critical decline in our fisheries health.

However, we are concerned that the needed changes will not be fully realized and the law, difficult to implement without the following important steps that we urge the government to throw their full support behind:



Empower the coastal communities and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (FARMCs) to be fully functional to support the implementation of the law.

Ensure the collaboration, coordination, and networking between agencies, government units, and among fishing communities.

Recognize that the land and sea are connected and **harmonize policies and programs** of all relevant government agencies.

Provide strong technical support from BFAR for all stakeholders and LGUs to ensure that local personnel have the skills and technical capacity to fully implement the amended law and to properly manage the resources in their municipal waters

Create a mechanism to facilitate the sharing and use of information between the BFAR and LGUs on Vessel Monitoring Measures (VMM) to allow LGUs to effectively implement the law.

Support must be given at the front lines for fisherfolk and other stakeholders to be able to take advantage of this law's revolutionary provisions that allow for **faster prosecution of IUUF and public participation in safeguarding our marine resources**, including **further institutionalizing and funding the Bantay Dagat** to ensure their safety and transparency of process.

Delineating municipal waters is crucial to achieving our objectives against Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported fishing and for the long-term food and livelihood security of our coastal communities.

We urge the BFAR to be consistent with the ban on the use of active fishing gears within 10.1 to 15 km of municipal waters, which should be dedicated for the exclusive use of municipal fishers and passive gear.

All stakeholders and relevant experts must be involved in the next steps of the amended code's implementation as each IRR is detailed and rolled out, including refining the procedural rules for BFAR's Administrative Adjudication board, rules on VMM for vessels below 30 GT, and other key fisheries management policies in the new IRR that are yet to be studied and written.



DA-BFAR must conduct massive IEC campaign on Republic Act 10654.

A Standing Scientific Advisory Group must be formed composed of experts from government, academic, research institutions and fisheries policy organizations **to provide guidance on data collection, standard methodologies, and science based policy recommendations to fisheries management decision makers.**

As there are too many boats going after declining fish stocks, **we look forward to the development of a national decommissioning program** based on harvest control rules for all destructive, illegal and overly-extractive fishing vessels.

To ensure that all seafood we consume are legally, sustainably, and equitably caught, we look forward to having in place **publicly verifiable traceability policy for all fisheries products** for both domestic and international markets.

We look forward to the second-generation reform of the law to address conflicting provisions, to further tackle poverty among fisherfolks, and to ensure the health of our fish stocks.

We call on other relevant government agencies such as DILG, DENR, among others to allocate manpower and financial resources for the effective implementation of fisheries laws that are integral to our development as an archipelagic nation.

We urge our legislators to create a Department of Fisheries that will strengthen the enforcement and regulatory functions in order for the government to effectively manage our coastal and marine resources.

We call on our political leaders to have clear and time bound platforms on fisheries management and to place sustainable fisheries as a critical pillar of their electoral agenda.

We are all reliant on the oceans for food, work, oxygen, and ultimately life. Therefore, we call on all stakeholders to commit to bringing in a new era of sustainable fishing to Philippines waters. The amendments are a step forward, **let us not derail our gains with politics and accommodating parochial interests.**

The oceans are our shared life support and shared responsibility.

Only together can we move forward to fix our fisheries in crisis.

