



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 106

Resolution calling upon the United States and the United Nations General Assembly to implement an interim moratorium on industrial longline fishing in the Pacific Ocean and take other measures critical to the protection of endangered sea turtles and other threatened and endangered marine species.

By Council Members Gennaro, Brewer, Fidler, Koppell, Nelson and Palma

Whereas, According to the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, the practice of longline fishing employs fishing lines that stretch up to 60 miles and dangle thousands of baited hooks, such that over one billion hooks are set worldwide annually that can and do catch and often kill many animals that are not used for any commercial purpose, a consequence known as “bycatch”; and

Whereas, Bycatch from longline fishing accounts for 25% to 40% of animals captured and often killed; and

Whereas, As a result of bycatch, commercial longline fishing seriously adversely impacts a broad range of species of mammals, birds, and fish, many of which are threatened or endangered, including an estimated 4.4 million porpoises, whales, sea lions, seals, seabirds, billfish, dolphins, and sharks each year; and

Whereas, According to a recent study by Duke University titled “Quantifying the effects of fisheries on threatened species: the impacts of pelagic longlines on loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles,” global bycatch on average each year also includes over 250,000 loggerhead turtles and 60,000 leatherback turtles, many of which are breeding-age females; and

Whereas, According to an article from the journal Nature titled “Pacific leatherback turtles face extinction,” Pacific female leatherback turtle populations have been decimated in recent years, plummeting from 91,000 individuals in 1980 to less than 3,000 in 2002—a total decline of 95%—such that it is now estimated

that the species, which has survived for 100 million years, will be driven to extinction in the next 5 to 30 years without active intervention; and

Whereas, Several measures taken together, including an interim moratorium on high seas commercial longline fishing, the establishment of sustainable Marine Protected Areas, better education of those using longlines to reduce bycatch mortality, better international cooperation, and increased monitoring, compliance, and enforcement of penalties for violations in the Marine Protected Areas, are essential to combating the ecological devastation caused by longline fishing and for ensuring the recovery of endangered sea turtles and other threatened and endangered species; and

Whereas, The 1982 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea allows for international efforts to conserve and manage our ocean resources; and

Whereas, The Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference of the Parties (COP) 7 Decision VII/5 and the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea of June 2004 both call on the UN General Assembly to urge states to take action, where necessary, to prevent vessels under their jurisdiction from engaging in practices that adversely impact vulnerable marine habitats; and

Whereas, Treaties such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea have established international codes and principles for the protection of our common marine resources; and

Whereas, In May 2005, one thousand seven (1,007) scientists from ninety-seven (97) countries and representatives of two hundred eighty-one (281) Non-Government Organizations from sixty-two (62) countries petitioned the UN to implement a moratorium on high seas commercial longline fishing in the Pacific Ocean until such practices can be done without harming leatherback turtles; and

Whereas, The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on November 24, 2003, requesting

that efforts be taken by member states to solve the problem of bycatch of sea turtles; and

Whereas, The COP 7 Decision VII/28 of the Convention on Biodiversity recommended the establishment of a network of high seas Marine Protected Areas for the permanent protection of threatened and endangered species from longline fishing and other threats; and

Whereas, Pacific Ocean longlining vessels originate from many United Nations member states; and

Whereas, Pacific leatherback sea turtles migrate throughout the world's oceans, and other species that fall victim to longline fishing, such as dolphins, whales, sea lions, seals, seabirds, billfish, and sharks, also may migrate or cover great distances, so that international cooperation is required to successfully conserve these species; and

Whereas, The establishment of a network of high seas Marine Protected Areas in migration corridors could provide permanent protection for the target species, and these areas could be left open to recreational fishing, marine tourism, and non-motorized near-shore fishing as long as it does not harm protected species, and the effort could include transitional resources for affected fishermen and fisherwomen to help them shift to sustainable practices; and

Whereas, Any interim moratorium must be backed up with compliance monitoring, enforcement, and penalties for violators, where needed, and should be maintained until there is scientific evidence that endangered sea turtles and other threatened and endangered species impacted by longline fishing have adequately recovered; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States and the United Nations General Assembly to implement an interim moratorium on industrial longline fishing in the Pacific Ocean and take other measures critical to the protection of endangered sea turtles and other threatened and endangered marine species.

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