



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 461

Resolution urging the United States and the United Nations General Assembly to call for an immediate interim prohibition on all bottom trawl fishing on the high seas until such measures are in place and effectively implemented to ensure sustainable use of high seas living marine resources and protect deep-sea biodiversity.

By Council Members Gennaro, Brewer, Gerson, Nelson, Palma, and Sanders Jr.

Whereas, It is of paramount importance to the United States to ensure the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of living marine resources in the "high seas", those areas of the ocean beyond the zones of national jurisdiction; and

Whereas, Fisheries of the high seas annually generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity and support thousands of jobs in the United States and its territories; and

Whereas, The high seas constitute a globally significant reservoir of marine biodiversity, and compounds derived from organisms found on the high seas show promise for the treatment of deadly diseases, such as cancer and asthma; and

Whereas, "Bottom trawling" means using a bottom trawl or similar towed nets operating in contact with the bottom of the sea; and

Whereas Today's trawlers are even capable of fishing in deep-sea canyons with rough seafloors, which were once avoided for fear of damaging nets; and

Whereas, To capture certain commercially valuable species, deep-sea bottom trawl fishing vessels drag huge nets weighted with steel plates and heavy rollers across the seabed, razing the existing ocean habitats and indiscriminately scooping up all marine life in their path; and

Whereas, Bottom trawl nets can contact the sea floor almost continuously, and often dig into it,

destroying up to 98 percent of the coral cover of undersea mountains as well as encouraging the depletion of the targeted fish stocks, and impacting those organisms that rely on these habitats and species; and

Whereas, Once destroyed, many of the slow-growing species found in these habitats are either lost forever, or take decades or centuries to recover; and

Whereas, Vast numbers of non-target species are captured as bycatch in the nets and thrown back dead or dying as a waste product of the bottom trawl fishing process; and

Whereas, The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that a growing number of high seas fish stocks important to the United States are overfished or depleted; and

Whereas, The United Nations has called for urgent action to address the impact of high seas fishing practices that have adverse impacts on vulnerable marine species and habitats; and

Whereas, Bottom trawling is an important factor contributing to the decline of important high seas fisheries, and has adverse impacts on vulnerable marine species and ecosystems; and

Whereas, Relevant provisions of the United Nations Law of the Sea, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO's Compliance Agreement, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, and other relevant legal instruments; and

Whereas, Readily available and practical steps, including catch quotas, use of selective and environmentally-sound fishing gear, protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems such as deep sea corals and sponge fields, and other measures, can be taken to ensure that bottom trawling protection does not adversely impact vulnerable marine species and ecosystems; and

Whereas, Immediate international cooperation and action are essential to addressing and reforming current bottom trawling procedures, and ensuring the protection, restoration, and sustainability of high seas living marine resources; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the United States and the United Nations General Assembly to call for an immediate interim prohibition on all bottom trawl fishing on the high seas until

such measures are in place and effectively implemented to ensure sustainable use of high seas living marine resources and protect deep-sea biodiversity.

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