

**Proclamation
No. 1028
June 28, 1997**

SUBJECT : Declaring the Entire Sulu and Celebes Seas as an Integrated Conservation and Development Zone, Creating a Presidential Commission for the Integrated Conservation and Development of the Area and Providing Funds Therefor

WHEREAS, the Sulu and Celebes Seas represent large marine ecosystems with outstanding and universal value on marine biodiversity;

WHEREAS, the Sulu and Celebes Seas harbor an extremely rich diversity of corals, reef, fish, sea turtles, sea birds, whales, dolphins and large pelagic such as tuna, shark, jacks, mackerels, whale sharks and manta rays;

WHEREAS, the Sulu Sea is a major source of livelihood for local fishermen from Palawan, Visayas, Mindanao, Quezon and Bicol and is regarded as the most important fishery basin in central and southern Philippines;

WHEREAS, the Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park and the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area, the first marine park and the only UNESCO World Heritage site in the country and the world's first transborder protected area of endangered sea turtles, respectively, are both found in the Sulu Sea;

WHEREAS, the Celebes Sea is the richest tuna fishing ground of the country and where rare endangered marine mammals may be found;

WHEREAS, it's the national policy to promote the well-being of the Filipino people through an integrated approach to conservation and development of coastal and marine resources;

WHEREAS, it is a national commitment to promote the global conservation of highly diverse coastal and marine areas for the benefit of humanity;

WHEREAS, there is a need to vigorously pursue a joint partnership program with local communities and business for maintaining marine conservation areas in the Sulu Sea;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FIDEL V. RAMOS, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers granted in me by law, and upon the recommendation of the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, do hereby declare the Sulu and Celebes Seas as Marine and Coastal Integrated Conservation and Development Zone (MCICDZ)).

The primary purpose of this proclamation is to conserve the rich biodiversity of the Sulu and Celebes Seas while implementing sustainable development activities particularly in the fisheries and tourism sector, thus ensuring the economic well-being of coastal communities surrounding the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

Section 1. Organization. There is hereby created a Presidential Commission for the Integrated Conservation and Development of the Sulu and Celebes Seas, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission" to formulate, recommend and implement programs aimed at ensuring the conservation of the rich marine biodiversity while providing income-generating opportunities to coastal communities through sustainable development activities.

Sec. 2. Composition. The Commission shall be composed of the following:

- a. Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources – Chairman
- b. Secretary of National Defense - Member
- c. Secretary of Agriculture - Member
- d. Secretary of Interior and Local Government - Member
- e. Governor, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao - Member
- f. The Presidential Assistant for Mindanao - Member
- g. Executive Director, Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development - Member
- h. Two NGOs with integrated conservation and development projects in Sulu Sea or Celebes Sea, to be appointed by the Chairman of the Commission - Member

Sec. 3. Duties and Responsibilities. The Commission shall perform the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. Formulate and recommend to the President policies pertinent to the conservation and development of the Sulu and Celebes Seas and their environs;
- b. Formulate a framework for the development and implementation of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects in the Sulu and Celebes Seas;
- c. Pursue cooperative projects and agreements with neighboring countries and international organizations;
- d. Consult the communities, up to the barangays and sitios located on the remotest islands and their local government leaders, regarding the values they have for the Sulu and Celebes Seas and their natural riches;
- e. Inform, educate, organize and use these communities and local government units about the importance of these ecosystems for their food security and ecological survival;
- f. Coordinate and facilitate the resolution of issues and concerns affecting the area;
- g. Assist in drawing up a scientific, social and economic research agenda;
- h. Submit quarterly reports to the President on its activities and development; and

- i. Perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the President;

Sec. 4. *Technical Working Group.* The Chairman of the Commission shall create a Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of representatives from each of the aforementioned agencies together with experts from other organizations and institutions. The TWG shall be headed by the Undersecretary for Field Operations – DENR, who shall constitute a Secretariat to support the Commission and the TWG.

Sec. 5 *Establishment of a Trust Fund.* To ensure the sustainability of integrated conservation and development programs for the Sulu and Celebes Seas, the amount of Twenty Million Pesos (P20,000,000.00) from the Office of the President – Department of Budget and Management is hereby provided as a seed capital for a Trust Fund. The Commission is authorized to organize a Board of Trustees to constitute a foundation that will generate additional funds to increase the principal amount.

Ssec. 6 *Effectivity.* This Proclamation shall take effect immediately.

(Sgd.) FIDEL V. RAMOS
President

By the President:

(Sgd.) RUBEN D. TORRES
Executive Secretary