A RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON NORTH LUZON GROWTH QUADRANGLE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE NEED TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN LUZON THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NORTH LUZON GROWTH CORRIDOR STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE RESPECTIVE COURSE OF ACTION NEEDED BY THE NECESSARY GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN EXECUTING THE SAME

WHEREAS, the importance of regional development cannot be overemphasized, especially if a country is trying to manage the unimaginable damages brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, in response to calls of bridging the gap in regional disparities, the forty-eight (48) legislators from the Northern Luzon Alliance in the House of Representatives have collectively formulated the North Luzon Growth Corridor Strategic Plan;

WHEREAS, the North Luzon Growth Corridor Strategic Plan seeks to accelerate development in the following regions: Region I, Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and Region 2 in the next twenty (20) years inclusively and sustainably;

WHEREAS, the aforesaid strategic plan’s top priority is to make the fisheries of the North Luzon corridor globally competitive and, at the same time, will serve as a stable source of livelihood for the majority of its population;

WHEREAS, Fisheries in the Philippines in 2019 only makes up 1.2% of the country’s GDP and only around fifteen percent (15%) of the country's gross value-added in the central sector of the "Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry," which appears to be minor, considering that the country is an archipelagic nation with vast and marine resources;
WHEREAS, North Luzon can produce a total of around two hundred nineteen thousand (219,000 MT) of fish with a value of twenty-five billion pesos (PhP25,000,000,000.00), which is only around five percent (5%) and nine percent (9%) of the nation's total, respectively;

WHEREAS, most of its production is in aquaculture, which is seventy percent (70%) of the total, seconded by municipal fishing at twenty-five percent (25%), and lastly commercial fishing at only five percent (5%);

WHEREAS, issues of primary concern that confronts North Luzon's fisheries are:
   i. Low productivity and competitiveness caused by, among others, inadequate access to financing, insufficient infrastructure, and poor marketability;
   ii. Vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters;
   iii. Resource depletion due to overcrowding and pollution; and,
   iv. Destructive fishing like dynamite fishing and using destructive gears

WHEREAS, at the national level, government support remains insubstantial as the budget share of fisheries in the Department of Agriculture's budget hovers around ten percent (10%) in the past two years, which is way below its contribution to the nation's "Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry" output;

WHEREAS, to enhance the fisheries sector, it is imperative to promote utilization of modern and sustainable fishing technology, machinery, and equipment coupled with capacity-building activities to teach fisherfolk how to use modern tools best such as inculcating to fisherfolks that with use of proper gear and practices one can harvest fish every day compared to destructive fishing;

WHEREAS, to further improve the fisheries sector, the cited strategies below must be carefully considered, to wit:
   i. Improvement of financial, credit, and marketing assistance to fisherfolks;
   ii. Adopt appropriate production inputs and technologies adaptive to the adverse effects of climate change;
   iii. Provide rural infrastructures that are disaster and climate-resilient;
   iv. Strict enforcement of fishery laws such as anti-smuggling laws, Philippine Fisheries Code, and unregistered aquaculture inputs ban;
   v. Promotion and development of aquaculture primarily of bangus/milkfish industry; and,
   vi. Strengthen the linkage between the fisheries and industry sector to promote product competitiveness and increase economic productivity such as seagrass and seaweeds, which are inputs to many industrial products.
WHEREAS, while it is true that North Luzon comprises the twenty percent (20%) of the country's total land area and is in a present state of underperforming, it has demonstrated potentials for future growth;

WHEREAS, as it is now, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) under the Department of Agriculture (DA) is mandated to manage and develop the country’s marine and fisheries resources;

WHEREAS, BFAR is severely underfunded and understaffed and in dire need of more equipment, and since it is under DA, this agency cannot have a bigger budget than its mother agency;

WHEREAS, to manage and develop the country's marine and fisheries resources, BFAR in its current state needs a budget that is as big or even bigger than the DA;

WHEREAS, considering the preceding, the logical step is to consider the creation of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DOFAR) to help the Northern Luzon realize its untouched potential of bringing in economic prosperity in the region;

WHEREAS, there is an immediate need for the House of Representatives, through its Special Committee on North Luzon Growth Quadrangle, to investigate mechanisms that will afford our people from North Luzon the necessary sense of affirmation that they are not left behind in the promise of change and development especially now that we are in a middle of a health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the House of Representatives, to direct the House Special Committee on North Luzon Growth Quadrangle to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the need to accelerate the development of Northern Luzon through the relevant product and applicability of strategic plan that will advance the welfare of our people from the Northern Luzon.

Adopted,

DEOGRACIAS VICTOR B. SAVELLANO