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Times Forum

[Times Forum] Dwindling Fishery Resources

By Sohn Hong-keun

Dr Ranson Myers of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, writes in a research report in Nature, "... a drastic commercial catch reduction of at least 50 percent may be necessary to protect some threatened species..." The study warns the depletion of the ocean's megafauna could bring about mass extinctions. "Since 1950 with the onset of industrialized fisheries we have rapidly reduced the resource base to less than 10 percent _ not just in some areas, not just for some stocks, but for entire communities of these large fish species from the tropics to the poles..." The report continues, "... Industrial fishing fleets have systematically stripped 90 percent of the giant tuna, swordfish, marlin and other big fish from the world's ocean... Fishing fleets are now competing for the remnants of the biggest fish in the oceans..."

The Honolulu Advertiser carried an article entitled "More fishing for fewer fish," where some drastic figures of commercial mullet catch dropped 91 percent from 1955, 104 pounds to 9,210 pounds, and some catches dropped by two-thirds during the same period. The West Hawaii Fisheries Council says that "... fish are not only fewer, they are getting smaller..." It is argued that fishing pressure has increased both because there are more people fishing and through the application of new fishing techniques.

A study by Dr Daniel Pauly of the University of British Columbia examined how the worldwide catch of all seafood has been on the decline since the 1980s, evidenced by the dwindling catches of an expanding global fishing fleet. The heavy loss of these fish suggests a serious problem for

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fishery managers from the 192 nations that signed a declaration in 2002 at a U.N. summit to restore fish to healthy levels by 2015, as Mike Gordon writes in The Advertiser in Honolulu.

Amanda Hodge of The Australian writes, ``...the loss of so many of the ocean's predatory fish through overfishing has already been linked to the burgeoning population of giant squid, which are also growing larger as they capitalize on the reduced competition for food....''

The Hawaii government division of aquatic resources has long been realizing that Hawaii's reef fisheries were declining, and has conducted an investigation of Main Hawaiian Islands Marine Resources. The project was to look at the status of inshore fisheries, to look at management, how to improve abundance, including land use issues, like runoff and its impact on fish. They plan to include reducing the flow of pollutants and other damaging threat onto the reef by establishing marine protected areas of no fishing zone. These are added restrictions of fishing on how many, how big and when you can catch a fish.

The debating point is not about the validity of any particular study on fish stocks, but the general growing concern about the process of rapidly depleting wide range of fish species in the global oceans. The real fact is that too many fishes have been caught since World War II, and most of the biggest fish were killed too much.

Fisheries are renewable resources if proper management and control are well implemented. A timely inclusion of comprehensive fish management is crucial for the total control and maintenance of the fish stocks. Local and global management of fish resources with strict guidelines on fishery regulations are serious issues of both global and national interests. Enforcement of these proper policies will enrich the stock of resources and this will become long-term investment for the future generations.

With limited natural resources available on the Korean peninsula, an issue of implementing long-range policy of renewable resources is indeed a national task of great importance. Fishing pressure is one typical problem to deal with. Exploring unknown resources off the shore of the Korean peninsula is another challenge. Significant reduction of depleting resources in the world further aggravates the global issue of instability and hatred conflict across the nations. It must be recognized that world peace and stability are directly related to the dwindling trend of natural resources _ both depletable and renewable.

South and North Koreans are always on alert over the fishing activities near the border of two countries, and we have vivid memory of troubles and conflicts over the fishing vessels. Natural resources are not the domain of present generation, and the stake for the future generations is just too high. Dwindling fishery resources is just one issues standing out for the renewable natural resources, and we must maintain the level of fisheries stock for the generations to come. I for one believe this is the responsibility of this generation for the future.

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