



**SENATE**

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Introduced by **SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED DENUDED STATE OF FORESTS AND WATERSHEDS AS WELL AS THE APPARENT HEAVY SILTATION ON RIVERS AND TRIBUTARIES, WHICH LARGELY CONTRIBUTED TO THE MASSIVE FLOODING IN LUZON DURING THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE RECENT TYPHOONS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREST COVER AND WATERWAYS IN ORDER TO MITIGATE, IF NOT ALTOGETHER AVOID, THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS**

1           WHEREAS, Article II, Section 16 of the Constitution enshrines that "The State  
2 shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful  
3 ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature";

4           WHEREAS, under Presidential Decree (PD) No. 705, series of 1975 or the  
5 "Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, it has been declared a policy of the State  
6 that "The protection, development and rehabilitation of forest lands shall be  
7 emphasized so as to ensure their continuity in productive condition." and it further  
8 provides, among others, that "critical watersheds, national parks and established  
9 experimental forests shall not be subject to commercial logging or grazing  
10 operations";

1           WHEREAS, Executive Order (EO) No. 318, series of 2004 on Promoting  
2 Sustainable Forest Management in the Philippines provides, among others, that "it  
3 shall be the Policy of the Government to pursue the sustainable management of  
4 forests and forestlands in watersheds. Watersheds shall be deemed as ecosystem  
5 management units and shall be managed in a holistic, scientific, rights-based,  
6 technology-based and community-based manner" and that "the priority development,  
7 protection and management activity shall be the rehabilitation of open and/or  
8 denuded, degraded, fragile forestlands; and slope stabilization and protection to  
9 address occurrence of floods, landslides and similar ecological disasters";

10           WHEREAS, EO No. 23, series of 2011 declared it the "obligation of the State to  
11 protect the remaining forest cover areas of the country not only to prevent flash floods  
12 and hazardous flooding but also to preserve biodiversity, protect threatened habitats  
13 and sanctuaries of endangered and rare species, and allow natural regeneration of  
14 residual forests and development of plantation forest"; and for this purpose, the same  
15 EO declared a moratorium on the cutting and harvesting of timber in the natural and  
16 residual forests and created the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force to enforce the said  
17 moratorium, and the development of the National Greening Program (NGP), which is  
18 a DA-DENR-DAR Convergence Initiative anchored on the government's goal of poverty  
19 reduction, food, security, climate change adaptation and mitigation;

20           WHEREAS, EO No. 23 further provides that "it is imperative to arrest the  
21 degradation, pollution and contamination of the river and water systems and to stem  
22 the wanton destruction of the forest resources";

23           WHEREAS, as an initiative to promote environmental stability and biodiversity  
24 conservation, and enhance climate change mitigation, EO No. 26, series of 2011  
25 declared the implementation of a National Greening Program (NGP), which aimed for  
26 the planting of some 1.5 billion trees covering about 1.5 million hectares from 2011 to  
27 2016 in the following lands of the public domain, to wit: (a) Forestlands; (b) Mangrove  
28 and protected areas; (c) Ancestral domains; (d) Civil and military reservations; (e)  
29 Urban areas under the greening plan of the LGUs; (f) Inactive and abandoned mine  
30 sites; and (g) Other suitable lands;

1           WHEREAS, EO No. 193, series of 2015 extended the implementation of NGP  
2 from 2016 to 2028 and expanded its coverage to include all the remaining  
3 unproductive, denuded and degraded forestlands, which contribute to environment-  
4 related risks such as soil erosion, landslides, and flooding;

5           WHEREAS, under the Republic Act No. 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of  
6 1995, it has been declared that "It shall be the responsibility of the State to promote  
7 their rational exploration, development, utilization and conservation through the  
8 combined efforts of government and the private sector in order to enhance national  
9 growth in a way that effectively safeguards the environment and protect the rights of  
10 affected communities.";

11           WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 7586 or the NIPAS Act of 1992 established a  
12 National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), which shall encompass  
13 ecologically rich and unique areas and biologically important public lands that are  
14 habitats of rare and threatened species of plants and animals, biogeographic zones  
15 and related ecosystems, whether terrestrial, wetland or marine, all of which shall be  
16 designated as 'protected areas';

17           WHEREAS, under this NIPAS Act and its amendatory law, RA No. 11038 or the  
18 Expanded NIPAS Act of 2018, the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park in the Province  
19 of Isabela and the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape in the Province of  
20 Rizal, which play hosts to significant watersheds in Luzon, were among those granted  
21 with protected area status;

22           WHEREAS, due to the geographical location of the Philippines along the  
23 typhoon belt in the Pacific Ocean where warm ocean temperature occurs and serves  
24 as a perfect breeding ground for tropical storms, an average of 20 tropical cyclones  
25 enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) each year, more than anywhere else  
26 in the world;<sup>1</sup>

27           WHEREAS, just in the first half of November 2020, four (4) typhoons, namely  
28 Typhoons Rolly, Siony, Tonyo and Ulysses, consecutively entered the Philippine Area

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bagong.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/tropical-cyclone-information>

1 of Responsibility (PAR), with Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses severely hitting the country  
2 and causing a lot of damages in several areas in the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela,  
3 Central Luzon, Calabarzon, the Bicol Region, and even the National Capital Region;

4 WHEREAS, the most recent Typhoon Ulysses (internationally known as  
5 Typhoon Vamco), with wind strength of Storm Signal No. 3 and considered as the  
6 worst Typhoon to so far hit the Philippines this year, brought the following  
7 devastating effects, among others: (a) torrential rainfall and colossal flooding in  
8 Luzon, most prominently in Cagayan, Isabela, Rizal, and Marikina City; (b) affected  
9 a total of 3,052,049 individuals or 727,738 families, most of whom had to be  
10 evacuated; (c) Approximately Php 2.72 Billion total damages in agriculture in Regions  
11 CAR, I, II, III, IV-A and V; (d) Approximately ₱5.26 Billion worth of damage to  
12 infrastructures across Regions CAR, I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, V and NCR; (e) Power  
13 outages in cities and municipalities affected by Typhoon Ulysses; and (f) Claimed the  
14 lives of a total of 73 people<sup>2</sup>;

15 WHEREAS, in Marikina, during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses, the Marikina  
16 River's water level rose to 22 meters during the storm (higher than the 21.5-meter  
17 level it reached during Typhoon *Ondoy* in 2009), thus immensely flooding Marikina  
18 low-lying residential areas, even up to the second story of many houses, and resulted  
19 to the evacuation of at least 3,000 families;<sup>3</sup>

20 WHEREAS, in Cagayan Province, the continuous rain during Typhoon Ulysses  
21 brought landslides as well as unprecedented colossal flooding that submerged  
22 numerous houses, which was also aggravated when the nearby Magat Dam was  
23 constrained to release excess water from its reservoir in order to prevent the dam  
24 from breaking or collapsing<sup>4</sup>;

25 WHEREAS, science has taught us that forests and the watersheds should be  
26 kept healthy and protected and that deforestation should be avoided so that abundant  
27 forest trees could help forest soil absorb and retain rainwater, thereby naturally

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/11/17/typhoon-ulysses-death-toll-rise-to-73-ndrrmc.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/national-news/marikina-state-of-calamity-typhoon-ulysses-philippines-2020>

<sup>4</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1360770/what-caused-cagayan-valleys-worst-flood-in-40-years>

1 regulating the release of rainwater from hills and mountains and serving as natural  
2 protection to the adverse impacts of natural disasters, such as heavy rainfalls during  
3 typhoons and extreme flooding;

4 WHEREAS, deforestation, which is caused by illegal logging, quarrying,  
5 unregulated and open-pit mining, and slash-and-burn agriculture, among others,  
6 continues to threaten the forest cover of the country, thereby resulting to a reduced  
7 protection from the effects of natural disasters;

8 WHEREAS, while the Filipino people continually suffers from the destructive  
9 effects of typhoons, which just keep on escalating through the years as exemplified  
10 by *Ulysses*, it is equally devastating that the Sierra Madre Mountain Range, which  
11 stretches from Cagayan Province in the north of Luzon and Quezon Province in the  
12 South of Luzon and represents 40 percent of the country's forest cove, continues be  
13 threatened by illegal logging, unregulated mining activities, and unhampered  
14 quarrying<sup>5</sup>;

15 WHEREAS, the protected area (PA) Upper Marikina River Basin Protected  
16 Landscape was not spared from exploitation as well as the Masungi Georeserve, which  
17 is found on a portion of the said PA and undergoing strict conservation interventions,  
18 is allegedly being subjected to encroachment by entities involved in quarrying  
19 operations;

20 WHEREAS, the muddy quality of the water that flooded Cagayan and Marikina  
21 alike is an indication that the surrounding forests and watersheds are already so  
22 denuded such that they do not anymore retain soil water and prevent erosion;

23 WHEREAS, the apparent silted condition of the rivers and tributaries in the  
24 flooded areas did little in containing the rainwater that flowed from the mountains  
25 and so may have contributed to the rapid rise of the flood waters as well;

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<sup>5</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1361520/group-says-protection-of-forests-must-be-core-of-disaster-response>

1           WHEREAS, according to the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, "restoration and  
2 conservation of the Philippines' existing forest, from rainforests to mangrove forests,  
3 should be at the core of the country's disaster risk reduction plans"<sup>6</sup>;

4           WHEREAS, the destruction on lives and properties caused by floods during the  
5 recent typhoons underscores the necessity to protect and conserve the country's  
6 forests and watersheds as well as to maintain our rivers and its tributaries in good  
7 condition and ensure that it is free from heavy siltation, which measures appear to be  
8 the most effective ways of preventing destructive flooding;

9           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the  
10 Senate to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of  
11 legislation, on the alleged denuded state of forests and watersheds as well as the  
12 apparent heavy siltation on rivers and tributaries, which largely contributed to the  
13 immense flooding in some parts of Luzon during the onslaught of the recent typhoons,  
14 particularly Typhoon Ulysses, with the end in view of strengthening the conservation  
15 of the country's forest cover and waterways in order to mitigate, if not altogether  
16 prevent, the devastating effects of natural disasters.

Adopted,



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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.