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Introduced by SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE/S OF THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE RECENT TECHNICAL GLITCH IN THE COUNTRY'S AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WITH A VIEW TO IMPROVING THE PHILIPPINES' OVERALL AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES, UTILIZING IT AS AN ENGINE OF FURTHER ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND ALIGNING THE RELEVANT AGENCIES' PLANS WITH THE GOALS OF THE PHILIPPINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2028 TO SPUR THE ECONOMY, REVITALIZE THE TOURISM SECTOR, AND CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB GENERATION**

**WHEREAS**, on January 1, 2023, due to technical issues experienced by the Philippine Air Traffic Management Center (ATMC), hundreds of flight operations and thousands of passengers were affected;<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, in a press briefing, Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Jaime Bautista disclosed that "[t]he primary cause identified was a problem with the power supply and the degraded uninterrupted power supply which had no link to the commercial power and had to be connected to the latter manually," and "[t]he secondary problem was the power surge which resulted in the power outage affecting the equipment," leading to the shutdown of the ATMC and resulting to loss of communication, radio, radar, and internet;<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the power outage and the ensuing power surge started at 9:50A.M., and was partially restored at 4:00P.M., resulting to limited airport operations. The system was only fully restored at 7:45P.M., or ten (10) hours after the shutdown;<sup>3</sup>

**WHEREAS**, it was reported that at least 361 flights were cancelled, diverted, or delayed and around 65,000 passengers were affected as a result of the temporary closure

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<sup>1</sup> Manila Bulletin. *DOTr: Power outage, power surge caused NAIA air traffic system glitch*. Published on 1 January 2023. Available at <https://mb.com.ph/2023/01/01/dotr-power-outage-power-surge-cause-of-naia-air-traffic-system-glitch/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Manila Bulletin. *Technical glitch in NAIA air traffic system fixed; full operation restored at 7:45P.M. on Sunday*. Published on 1 January 2023. Available at <https://mb.com.ph/2023/01/01/technical-glitch-on-naia-air-traffic-system-fixed-full-operation-restored-at-745-p-m/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

of the Philippine airspace,<sup>4</sup> and is expected to cause further flight delays and cancellations due to its domino effect on other scheduled operations;<sup>5</sup>

**WHEREAS**, following the air traffic management fiasco, DOTr Secretary Bautista stated that there is a need to upgrade the country's air traffic management system to prevent future flight suspensions, citing that the existing system, which was first introduced in 2010 but was only completed in 2018 at a cost of Php10.8 billion, and will need to be improved or modernized to a better system;<sup>6</sup>

**WHEREAS**, among those affected were around 3,000 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), most with scheduled flights supposedly going to the Middle East and other Asian countries, which may have potential adverse impact to their employment overseas for failure to return to work as required.<sup>7</sup> Non-improvement of our air traffic systems will likewise affect the mobility of other OFWs expected to continue their employment abroad. To note, the country has deployed 742,796 OFWs in 2021,<sup>8</sup> which was higher than 549,800 OFWs in 2020, but still below pre-pandemic deployment of around 2.2 million OFWs in 2019;<sup>9</sup>

**WHEREAS**, failure to address airspace traffic management will likewise continuously impact the facilitation of domestic trade and seamless business transactions due to, among others, delayed shipment of cargo via air. Based on statistics from the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) as of November 16, 2022, cargo chargeable weights for January to September 2022 reached 35,084,571 kilograms;<sup>10</sup>

**WHEREAS**, this may also hinder the continuous promotion of tourism in the country, whether to local or foreign tourists, as well as the much-needed recovery of all enterprises in the travel and tourism sector, which were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It must be highlighted that the closure of many tourism enterprises during the pandemic resulted in the decline of employment in the sector from 5.7 million workers in 2019 to 4.7 million workers in 2020.<sup>11</sup> As a result of the displacement of tourism sector workers due to the pandemic, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) distributed Php3.1 billion to 615,214 beneficiaries of the COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program - Tourism (CAMP2 - Tourism) allocated under Republic Act No. 11494, or the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act.<sup>12</sup> While there was a slight increase of workers in the sector to 4.9 million workers in 2021, more efforts will need to be undertaken to revitalize the industry and recover job losses. Notably, a poor air traffic management system will pose further challenges to the recovery of the industry;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Rappler. *Philippines' main airport scrambles to restore normalcy after power cut*. Published on 2 January 2023. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/business/philippines-naia-scrambles-restore-normalcy-after-power-cut/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>5</sup> GMA News Online. *Expect more flight delays due to domino effect of PH airspace shutdown - airlines*. Published on 2 January 2023. Available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/856048/expect-more-flight-delays-due-to-domino-effect-of-ph-airspace-shutdown-airlines/story/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Rappler. *DOTr chief: 'Huge amount of money' needed for urgent air traffic system upgrade*. Published on 2 January 2023. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/business/dotr-chief-huge-amount-money-needed-urgent-air-traffic-system-upgrade/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>7</sup> GMA News Online. *3k OFWs affected by air traffic system glitch assisted - DMW*. Published on 2 January 2023. Available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/pinoyabroad/dispatch/856047/3k-ofws-affected-by-air-traffic-system-gliitch-receive-aid-dmw/story/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. *OFW Monthly Statistics for 2021*.

<sup>9</sup> Senate of the Philippines, Senate Economic Planning Office. *Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on OFW Deployment and Remittances*. April 2021. Accessible at [https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/publications/SEPO/AAG\\_Migration%20and%20Remittances%20amidst%20COVID%2019\\_final.pdf](https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/publications/SEPO/AAG_Migration%20and%20Remittances%20amidst%20COVID%2019_final.pdf) (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Civil Aeronautics Board. *Domestic Airfreight Forwarders Overall Ranking 2022 (Jan-Sep)*. Available at <https://cab.gov.ph/statistics/category/domestic> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>11</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority. *Employment in Tourism Industries, 2000-2021*. Available at <https://psa.gov.ph/tourism/satellite-accounts/table> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>12</sup> Department of Labor and Employment COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program Terminal Report.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

**WHEREAS**, the Philippines' main air gateway, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), has been regarded as the worst international airport for three (3) years from 2011 to 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> worst in the world in 2014, and 5<sup>th</sup> worst in the world in 2016, which affect both the airport and the country's reputation to travelers;<sup>14</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the preceding points, among others, highlight the impact of the quality of air traffic services to the economy as well as to various stakeholders, thus, it is imperative to review and study existing policies and implement actions and measures that will improve the provision of such services to the public;

**WHEREAS**, the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 (the "Plan") recognizes that little progress has been made to improve airport infrastructures in the country<sup>15</sup> and anticipates that airport capacities in 2022 will be inadequate to cater to aviation demand, which is expected to recover by 2025.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Plan indicates the need to, among others, strategically develop airports to address future demands and meet aerodrome design safety standards, develop and connect gateway airports to feeder airports to facilitate access to various tourist destinations, adopt level of service standards in all airports to quantitatively measure the adequacy of facilities and plans for interventions, and to continue the "night-rating" of airports to alleviate airport traffic congestion;<sup>17</sup>

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES**, that the appropriate Committee/s of the Senate of the Philippines conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the recent technical glitch in the country's air traffic management system, with a view to improving the Philippines' overall air traffic services, utilizing it as an engine of further economic growth, and aligning the relevant agencies' plans with the goals of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 to spur the economy, revitalize the tourism sector, and create more opportunities for job generation.

*Adopted,*

  
JOEL VILLANUEVA 

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<sup>14</sup> Ceres Victoria Cedo & Marloe B. Sundo, *Assessment of the Level of Service (LOS) in the Check-in Area of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 using IATA Standards*. Accessible at <https://ncts.upd.edu.ph/tssp/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Cedo-Sundo.pdf> (Accessed on 2 January 2023); Public-Private Partnership Center, *NAIA ranked 5<sup>th</sup> worst airport in Asia*. Available at [https://ppp.gov.ph/in\\_the\\_news/naia-ranked-5th-worst-airport-in-asia/](https://ppp.gov.ph/in_the_news/naia-ranked-5th-worst-airport-in-asia/) (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, p.255. Accessible at <https://pdp.neda.gov.ph/philippine-development-plan-2023-2028/> (Accessed on 2 January 2023).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.262.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.271.