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SENATE

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P. S. RES. NO. 538

Introduced by Senator JOEL VILLANUEVA

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE/S OF THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ORIENTAL MINDORO OIL SPILL AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD OF THE PEOPLE IN THE AFFECTED AREAS

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 16 of the Constitution of the Philippines provides that the “State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.”

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, cargo ship MT Princess Empress sank off the coast of Oriental Mindoro and was located 7.5 nautical miles from Balingawan Point, facing the municipality of Pola. It had a crew of 20 persons and was carrying 800,000 litres of industrial fuel;¹

WHEREAS, the oil has reached the shores of nearby coastal villages of Oriental Mindoro, and the prevailing wind condition brought by the monsoon season made it possible for the oil slick to reach the provinces of Antique and Palawan;²

¹ March 8, 2023. Philippines oil spill: Residents report nausea and dizziness in affected villages. BBC. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64871285> (Accessed on March 9, 2023); March 6, 2023. Tanker behind Oriental Mindoro oil spill located. CNN Philippines. Available at <http://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/3/6/oriental-mindoro-oil-spill-tanker-located.html> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

² March 8, 2023. Oil spill could trigger fish shortage – expert. The Manila Times. Available at <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/08/news/national/oil-spill-could-trigger-fish-shortage-expert/1881663> (Accessed on March 9, 2023); March 6, 2023. 76 coastal barangays across 9 Oriental Mindoro towns put under state of calamity. Rappler. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/oriental-mindoro-declares-state-calamity-coastal-barangays-oil-spill-march-6-2023/> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

WHEREAS, the oil spill affected 26 out of the 34 or 80% of the marine protected areas in 10 municipalities. According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), an estimated 591 hectares of coral reefs, 1,626 hectares of mangroves and 362 hectares of seagrass and seaweeds can be affected by the oil spill. Meanwhile, the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) reported that an approximate 20,000 hectares of coral reef, 9,900 hectares of mangroves and 6,000 hectares of seagrass may be affected based on the oil spill trajectories;³

WHEREAS, locals in the coastal villages reported cramps, vomiting, headaches, and dizziness. Residents were advised to refrain from drinking water from underground water pumps and from eating seafood from oil spill areas, and to wear industrial masks. This prompted Governor Humerlito Dolor to declare a state of calamity in 76 Barangays across 9 Municipalities of Naujan, Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalag, and Bulalacao;⁴

WHEREAS, the affected communities rely on fishing as their main, if not only, source of income. To date, the oil spill caused 18,000 fishermen to lose their livelihood;⁵

WHEREAS, according to Dr. Irene Rodriguez of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), the oil spill is worse than the incident in 2006 in Guimaras, which involved around 500,000 liters of spilled oil.⁶ According to a study, the incident resulted in the contamination of the marine ecosystem in the affected areas even after five years from the incident;⁷

WHEREAS, there is a need to review our current policies to protect marine environment and the millions of Filipino people who depend on the seas for food and livelihood;

³ March 3, 2023. Oil slick spreads to most of marine protected areas in 10 Oriental Mindoro towns. CNN Philippines. Available at <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/3/3/Oil-slick-spreads-to-most-of-marine-protected-areas-in-10-Oriental-Mindoro-towns.html> (Accessed on March 9, 2023); March 4, 2023. 36,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves possibly affected by Mindoro oil spill. Available at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/03/04/2249267/36000-hectares-coral-reefs-mangroves-possibly-affected-mindoro-oil-spill> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

⁴ March 6, 2023. Philippines oil spill: curfew imposed as nearby residents report health problems. The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/06/philippine-officials-believe-they-have-located-leaking-oil-tanker-mt-princess-empress> (Accessed on March 9, 2023); March 7, 2023. DOH: Asthma, headaches recorded due to Mindoro oil spill. Available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/regions/863070/doh-asthma-headaches-recorded-due-to-mindoro-oil-spill/story/> (Access on March 9, 2023). March 6, 2023. 76 coastal barangays across 9 Oriental Mindoro towns put under state of calamity. Rappler. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/oriental-mindoro-declares-state-calamity-coastal-barangays-oil-spill-march-6-2023/> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

⁵ March 8, 2023. Oriental Mindoro oil spill leaves fishers short on cash and food. PhilStar. Available at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/03/08/2250158/oriental-mindoro-oil-spill-leaves-fishers-short-cash-and-food> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

⁶ March 8, 2023. Oil spill could trigger fish shortage – expert. The Manila Times. Available at <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/08/news/national/oil-spill-could-trigger-fish-shortage-expert/1881663> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

⁷ August 13, 2011. Guimaras oil spill recovery goes on. Inquirer. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/41161/guimaras-oil-spill-recovery-goes-on> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES, that the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change and other appropriate committee/s of the Senate to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the Oriental Mindoro oil spill with the end view of determining the cause and the ways to combat the negative effects of the oil spill and recommending policy measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Adopted,



SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA

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