

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



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SENATE
P. S. RES. NO. 540

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Loren Legarda

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL, LIVELIHOOD, HEALTH, AND TOURISM IMPACTS OF THE OIL SPILL IN ORIENTAL MINDORO, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENCOURAGING OVERSIGHT FROM ALL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

WHEREAS, on 28 February 2023, MT Princess Empress, carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil, capsized and sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, resulting in widespread pollution and blackened waters, which disrupted the source of income of our fisherfolks and posed several health risks to families living nearby;

WHEREAS, as of 7 March 2023, the municipalities of Pola, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay, and Bulalacao, totaling 77 coastal villages, were affected by the oil spill and were placed under a state of calamity;

WHEREAS, the municipality of Caluya, Antique was also placed in a state of calamity as the oil spill reached the shorelines of Sitio Sabang in Barangay Tinogboc; Taong, Banua Proper and Sitio Balibago all in Barangay Semirara; and Sitio Liwagao in Barangay Sibolo;

WHEREAS, the oil spill might affect about 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves, and 6,000 hectares of seagrass in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique and Palawan according to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute;

WHEREAS, news reports state that an estimate of around 13,000 families in Oriental Mindoro, and 7,100 families in Caluya, Antique have been affected by the oil spill;

WHEREAS, the Department of Tourism (DOT) reported that the oil spill affected marine protected areas in Pola, Oriental Mindoro, specifically - the King Fisher Reserve, St. John the Baptist Marine Sanctuary, Song of the Sea Fish Sanctuary, Stella Mariz Fish Sanctuary, Bacawan Fish Sanctuary, St. Peter the Rock Fish Sanctuary, and the San Isidro Labrador Fish Sanctuary;

WHEREAS, the DOT also reported that beach resorts in Oriental Mindoro, specifically - Bihiya Beach, 3 Cottage, Long Beach, Aguada Beach Resort, Oloroso Beach Resort, Munting Buhangin Tagumpay Beach Resort, and Buhay na Tubig White Beach Resort, were also affected by the oil spill;

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) created Task Force Naujan Oil Spill, led by Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Marilou Erni as Task Force Commander;

WHEREAS, the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) also created a task force headed by UPV oil spill expert Prof. Resurreccion Sadaba, Ph.D., to respond to the oil spill;

WHEREAS, there is a need to determine if Republic Act No. 9483, or the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007, which places the liability for oil spills on the owner and insurer with provisions for what damages are covered and circumstances that exempt them, would need revision;

WHEREAS, coastal communities need to be apprised of health hazards, any means to safely contribute to the containment efforts, as well as the required acts for preserving evidence and documenting damage estimates in order to avail of any reimbursement for clean-up assistance, payments for damage suffered and livelihood support as appropriate and necessary.

WHEREAS, the Senate of the Philippines, in the strongest sense, urges the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Maritime Industry Authority (MIA), Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Council (PDRRMC), and other responsible government agencies, to conduct a whole-of-government approach in the immediate resolution to the adverse effects of the oil spill;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the Senate, to direct the appropriate Senate committees to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the environmental, health, and tourism impacts of the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro, on the sufficiency of the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007, on the measures from government and other sectors necessary to reduce damage to ecosystems and fishing grounds and restore livelihoods or support new ones, and on the transparency requirements that can apprise the public of liability, documentation of damage suffered, local actions and means to reduce damage, with the end view of encouraging oversight from all government agencies.

Approved,


LOREN LEGARDA