

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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SENATE

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Introduced by Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE UNABATED DREDGING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY CHINESE WORKERS IN COASTAL AREAS IN THE PROVINCE OF ZAMBALES THAT AFFECT THE LIVELIHOOD OF RESIDENTS, CAUSE UNDUE DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT, AND IMPACT TOURISM, WITH THE END VIEW OF REVIEWING EXISTING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS, PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT, AND ULTIMATELY PROMOTING THE WELFARE AND INTEREST OF FILIPINOS

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution, mandates 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, the fundamental law declares that all lands of the public domain and all other natural resources of the Philippines are owned by the State, as explicitly provided in Article XII, Section 2:

"All lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources are owned by the State. With the exception of agricultural lands, all other natural resources shall not be alienated. The exploration, development, and utilization of natural resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the State. x x x"

WHEREAS, the Earth is continuously threatened with destruction, with several human-induced activities affecting its ecological balance;

WHEREAS, in the Philippines, particularly in the coastal towns of the Province of Zambales north of Manila, it was recently reported that dredging activities are ongoing in the coastal municipality of San Felipe, and residents sounded the alarm on

the presence of at least 14 dredging vessels being operated by Chinese crew members¹;

WHEREAS, the local government of San Felipe, through Mayor Reinhard Jeresano, justified that the dredging activities are supposed to fortify flood mitigation schemes in the heavily silted rivers and that the extracted sand is being transported to some reclamation areas;

WHEREAS, Mayor Jeresano claimed that the town was suffering from perennial flooding as its rivers, especially Sto. Tomas, remain heavily silted because of sand and lahar from the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in 1991, however, the residents refuted the claim by saying there has been no massive flooding in the area;

WHEREAS, the dredging activities are being carried out by state-owned China Harbour Engineering Co., the world's second largest dredging company and a subsidiary of China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC);

WHEREAS, the United States Embassy in Manila last year expressed concern over the involvement of the CCCC—which the U.S. had blacklisted for its role in constructing and militarizing artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea²—in Manila's reclamation projects;

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued Administrative Order No. 2019-13 rationalizing the dredging activities in the heavily-silted river channels of Bucao in Botolan town, Maloma in San Felipe town, and Sto. Tomas traversing the San Marcelino, San Narciso, and San Felipe municipalities in Zambales province³;

WHEREAS, the DENR subsequently issued Administrative Order 2020-07⁴ detailing that there is no extraction limit and that only citizen of the Philippines or any corporation registered with the corporate regulator may apply for dredging clearance with relevant government agencies;

WHEREAS, groups and environmental advocates took to social media to air their grave concerns, with the Zambales Ecological Network documenting the destruction caused by the dredging activities and "seabed mining" which resulted in coastal erosion and apparent damage to the San Felipe Coastal Road by at least four dozen dredging vessels and cargo ships;

WHEREAS, the group monitored the Chinese vessels were actually heading to China after conducting some dredging activities;

¹ Aglibot, J. "Chinese dredging ships alarm Zambales residents," 12 March 2024. Philippine Daily Inquirer. <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/227775/chinese-dredging-ships-alarm-zambales-residents>

² Lema, K. "U.S. airs concerns over involvement of blacklisted China firm in Manila Bay reclamation." Reuters. 2 Aug. 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-airs-concerns-over-involvement-blacklisted-china-firm-manila-bay-reclamation-2023-08-02/>

³ <https://mgb.gov.ph/attachments/article/790/DAO%202019-13.pdf>

⁴ <https://law.upd.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DENR-AO-No-2020-07.pdf>

WHEREAS, the group also said Chinese workers are “trashing” Zambales shores with plastic bottles, cigarette boxes, and other trash, which is a violation of Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000;

WHEREAS, it is also important to determine whether or not the Chinese workers are properly documented to conduct dredging;

WHEREAS, it is worthy for the appropriate Senate Committees to thoroughly look into the supposed seabed mining activities in the guise of river dredging in the province of Zambales, considering that these activities which have been ongoing for several years already pose a risk to the environment, affect the livelihood of residents, and negatively impact the once vibrant tourism in the coastal areas;

WHEREAS, these dredging activities could have a significant impact on the lives of the residents of Zambales who rely on fishing and may disturb the overall balance of the ecosystem;

WHEREAS, relevant agencies need to shed light and update the Senate, in the exercise of its oversight powers, on this important matter;

Resolved by the Senate of the Philippines, to direct the appropriate committees to conduct a comprehensive inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the unabated dredging activities conducted by Chinese workers in coastal areas in the province of Zambales that affect the livelihood of residents, cause undue damage to the environment, and impact tourism, with the end view of reviewing existing policies and regulations, protecting the environment, and ultimately promoting the welfare and interest of Filipinos.

Adopted,


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA