

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

6 FEB 20 12:09

SENATE
P. S. R. No. 450

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEES
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO
PREPARE FOR AND MITIGATE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS
IN THE COUNTRY, SUCH AS THE RECENT LANDSLIDE IN SOUTHERN LEYTE

WHEREAS, on 17 February 2006, at around 10 a.m., a landslide occurred in the village of Guinsaigon in St. Bernard, Leyte after several weeks of heavy rain;

WHEREAS, according to news reports in the 18 February 2006 issue of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, rescue workers from both the government and non-government organizations immediately flocked to the disaster area to aid the victims; by nighttime, survivors numbered 100, with 33 villagers confirmed dead;

WHEREAS, as of this date, around 1,500 people are still missing, including about 300 pupils and their mothers who were at Guinsaigon Elementary School to celebrate Women's Day when the landslide occurred;

WHEREAS, residents of neighboring villages Sug-angong, Nueva Esperanza, and Tambisa have been evacuated for fear that a flash flood might occur in the wake of the landslide;

WHEREAS, former Environment Secretary now Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said in a television interview that according to studies made by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Southern Leyte is one of the critical areas in the country that are prone to landslides;

WHEREAS, in 2003, a landslide hit Panaoan Island killing 105 people; in November 1991, about 6,000 people were killed by floods and landslides triggered by a tropical storm;

WHEREAS, Dr. Sandra Catane, a professor at the University of the Philippines National Institute of Geological Sciences, said in the *Inquirer* report that the shallow root systems of the coconuts and grass which dominate the farmlands in Southern Leyte do not contribute much to soil stability in the area;

WHEREAS, television news reports about the disaster noted the stark lack of forests cover on the mountains of Southern Leyte, which authorities say may be due to the presence of illegal logging and to the adverse effects of the *kaingin* system;

WHEREAS, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, head of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), said that heavy rainfall in the area during the last two weeks may have been the direct cause of the landslide; from February 1 to 16, 500 millimeters of rainfall fell in the Southern Leyte area, a huge amount compared to the average February rainfall of 127 millimeters recorded in the area in the last 30 years;

WHEREAS, according to the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), increases in the incidence of typhoons, floods, and frequent heavy rains since November last year may be explained by the development of a La Niña phenomenon;

WHEREAS, from January to February 12, some parts of the Philippines received 300 times more than the average rainfall, triggering flash floods and mudslides in the Visayas and in Mindanao, even before the deadly landslide occurred in Southern Leyte;

WHEREAS, prior to the Leyte landslide, the Office of Civil Defense reported 14 fatalities, one injured person and six persons missing due to rains this year; around 280,000 people or 57,000 families in 24 municipalities and seven provinces in the rest of the country have been affected by the heavy rains;

WHEREAS, prior to the landslide in Southern Leyte, concerned government agencies already predicted that the eastern seaboard of the Philippines would be the hardest hit by the La Niña phenomenon; this includes Cagayan Valley, Isabela, Southern Leyte, Leyte, Agusan del Sur and Norte, Davao Oriental, Samar, Aurora, and the Bicol provinces;

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the government to undertake the necessary measures to prepare for the onslaught of heavy rains and landslides and to minimize the damage to life and property;

WHEREAS, given the following facts: (1) that concerned government agencies, especially the DENR, already possessed knowledge that Southern Leyte is a landslide-prone area; (2) that deadly landslides had ravaged Southern Leyte repeatedly in previous years; (3) that scientists have already predicted the threat of a La Niña phenomenon in the country, and that Southern Leyte would be one of the hardest hit areas; (4) that heavy rains four times the average received by the area have besieged Southern Leyte continually in the past two weeks; it is readily apparent that there has been a failure of coordination between concerned government agencies when it came to the preparation for and mitigation of the effects of landslides in the area; for instance, villagers could have been evacuated earlier given the presence of continuous heavy rainfall that may, and in fact *did*, cause landslides in the area; now be it

RESOLVED by the Philippine Senate to direct the proper Senate Committees to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the institutionalization of appropriate government programs to prepare for and mitigate the adverse effects of natural disasters in the country, such as the recent landslide in Southern Leyte;

RESOLVED FURTHER to investigate the causes of deforestation in the Southern Leyte area, which initial reports attribute to illegal logging and the devastating effects of the *kaingin* system, as adequate forests cover could have prevented or mitigated the effects of the Leyte landslide;

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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