

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

6 FEB 20 7 21 0

SENATE

P.S. Resolution No. 454

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator M.A Madrigal

**A RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH, WOMEN AND FAMILY
RELATIONS TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE
GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO PROTECT WOMEN AND CHILDREN AS THE
VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY FROM THE LA NIÑA CRISIS IN THE
WAKE OF THE SOUTHERN LEYTE TRAGEDY THAT LEFT 1,800 PEOPLE
MISSING AND FEARED DEAD.**

WHEREAS, pursuant to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), particularly Articles 3 (3) and (4)3, it is the State's obligation to "take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures, taking into account that policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost. To achieve this, such policies and measures should take into account different socio-economic contexts, be comprehensive, cover all relevant sources."

WHEREAS, as of December 2003, forest lands in the Philippines covered 15,854, 922 million ha. Or 52.8% of the country's land area. The remaining 47.2% or 14,145,078 million ha., of the land area is classified as alienable and disposable lands. Although the area of forest lands officially recognized is rather extensive, the area actually covered with forest, is in reality much less, just 5.39 million hectares or 17.9% of the total land area.

WHEREAS, deforestation in the Philippines is the result of two major activities (a.) the conversion of primary forests to secondary forests by logging (both legal and illegal) and, (b.) removal of secondary forest cover by expansion of upland agriculture caused by migration;

WHEREAS, with the deplorable state of the Philippines' forests, it is now highly vulnerable to ecological disasters caused by climate change and other natural disturbances;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has alerted the government of the impending La Niña crisis in the country;

WHEREAS, La Nina is a weather phenomenon characterized by heavy rains and featuring unusually cool surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean resulting in storm surges and strong winds;

WHEREAS, according to PAGASA Chief Graciano Yumul, the persistence of present oceanic and atmospheric patterns in the next two months will confirm the occurrence of a La Niña episode and will continue to influence the climate of the Philippines and as such, the conditions in the country will be characterized by normal to above normal rainfall at least up to May and the probability of more tropical cyclones within the PAR (Philippine Area of Responsibility) and flooding in some areas;

WHEREAS, according to PAGASA climatology chief Flaviana D. Hilario, 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 Mindanao;

WHEREAS, PAGASA said the eastern seaboard of the Philippines, which includes Cagayan Valley, Isabela, Southern Leyte, Leyte, Agusan del Sur and Norte, Davao Oriental, Samar, Aurora and the Bicol provinces would be hardest hit by the La Niña phenomenon;

WHEREAS, last February 17, incessant rains attributed to the La Nina phenomenon coupled with a mild earthquake triggered a landslide in the village of Guinsaugon in Southern Leyte, which left 1,800 missing and feared dead;

WHEREAS, the landslide obliterated Guinsaugon, a village in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte, from the map;

WHEREAS, many of the dead in the calamity that ensued were believed to be women and children who were in Guinsaugon Elementary School when the mud came down and covered the schoolhouse;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to assess, evaluate, and immediately implement an effective disaster-preparedness program for the regions most likely to be hit by the La Niña phenomenon in the coming months given the precarious condition of our environment;

WHEREAS, the disaster in Leyte is not an act of God. It is not fortuitous. It could have been avoided if the government has taken into consideration its State obligation to have a more comprehensive environmental plan that takes into consideration how climate change can wreak havoc to a country that is prone to national disasters.

WHEREAS, having a very good forest cover is a way to combat climate change but we did exactly the opposite. There is already climate change and then there is excessive land use.


WHEREAS, the Leyte tragedy will replicate itself and we will have more Quezons, more Ormoc and more Leytes if we do not take action now. The environment is already in a critical state and if the government continues to ravage the Philippines in the name of development and to enrich a few, then these tragedies will continue.

WHEREAS, the State has failed to take into consideration the plight of the poor and marginalized in its environmental and development policies. It continues to harp on making money through environmental exploitation without taking into consideration its deleterious effects. It is the State's obligation to protect. Here, the government has miserably failed to address the situation.

WHEREAS, there is an imperative need to know the extent of government preparation in the protection of the vulnerable members of society, the women and children;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the Committee on Youth, Women and Family Relations to investigate, in aid of legislation, on the government's ability to protect women and children, as the vulnerable members of society from the La Nina crisis in the wake of the Southern Leyte tragedy that left 1,800 people dead missing and feared dead.

Adopted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M.A. Madrigal", written in black ink. The signature is fluid and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

M.A. MADRIGAL