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Introduced by Sen. M. A. Madrigal

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN IMMEDIATE INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ESCALATING MINING OPERATIONS IN SIBUYAN ISLAND, DUBBED THE "GALAPAGOS OF ASIA" BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY, INCLUDING THE "MIDNIGHT APPROVAL" BY THEN OUTGOING DENR SEC. ANGELO REYES TO CUT DOWN AN ESTIMATED 69,709 TREES TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR MINING AND THE KILLING OF ANTI-MINING ADVOCATE AND ROMBLON COUNCILOR ARMIN MARIN ON OCT. 3, 2007 DURING A LOCAL PROTEST ACTION

WHEREAS Sibuyan Island is a 445-sq.km. crescent-shaped isle in Romblon province in the Southern Tagalog region whose immense biodiversity has put the local community and mining firms, mostly foreign-owned, on a collision course that has already taken one life;

WHEREAS Sibuyan Island has been dubbed as the "Galapagos of Asia" because of its unique geological history that isolated it from any connection to any part of the Philippine archipelago and which blessed the island with the highest rate of endemism of flora and fauna in the country;

WHEREAS the exact numbers of total plant and animal species in Sibuyan Island are hard to give as many have yet to be fully catalogued. In one study alone, the National Museum identified 1,551 trees in a single hectare, with 123 species of trees, and of this number, 54 are found nowhere else in the world. Sibuyan is also home to three subspecies of endemic birds, namely, the hanging parrot (*Colasisi Loriculus Philippensis Bournsi*), pygmy woodpecker (*Dendrocopos Maculatus Menagei*) and orange-bellied flower-pecker (*Dicaeum Trigonostigma Sibuyanicum*) as well as the critically endangered fruit bat, *Nyctimene Rabori*;

WHEREAS Sibuyan Island has been proclaimed as the world's densest forest, with primary forests covering 140 square kilometers or 33% of its land area. Consequently, Mount Guiting-Guiting Natural Park was established to protect this habitat that is as remarkable for its outstandingly scenic landscape with twin towering peaks set amid closed canopy forests;

WHEREAS most of the lower altitude forests, however, have been logged while the issuance of tree-cutting permits and mining permits threatens to destroy more of the island's forestlands;

WHEREAS in protest of mining operations that may spell the death of their island paradise, Sibuyanons have organized themselves, lobbying government agencies to recall mining permits and reject pending applications, and massing up 8,000 residents in a march against a mining site in September 2006;

WHEREAS on the morning of October 3, 2007, these continuous protests culminated in the fatal shooting of staunch anti-mining advocate and Romblon town councilor Armin Marin during a rally of local residents against a nickel mining project in Sitio Olango in Barangay España, San Fernando;

WHEREAS according to eyewitness accounts, armed men in an owner-type jeep grabbed the 42-year old Marin, dragged him to a distance, then shot him in the mouth. The gunman was identified as Mario Chinalpan Kingo, 49, chief security of the Sibuyan Nickel Properties Development Corporation (SNPDC), a consortium formed by the foreign mining companies in the island, which include Altai Mining, Sun Pacific, All Acacia Resources, San Roque Mining, Pelican Resources as well as BHP Billiton of Australia, the third largest mining giant in the world;

WHEREAS the killing of Councilor Amin, a well respected local leader and father of five, highlights the violent side of the rapid expansion of mining firms in the island which work under the guise of small-scale operators;

WHEREAS in spite of strong protests from local communities, small-scale mining permits effective for two years were recently granted in favor of All Acacia Resources covering a total area of 200,000 sq.m. and Sun Pacific for 155,800 sq.m. These permits allow the companies to extract 50,000 metric tons of nickel ore per year, hence, a total of 200,000 metric tons for two operations;

WHEREAS there are currently three approved small-scale mining operations with foreign financiers, two pending Mineral Productions Agreement applications in four years, one pending Exploration Permit application in the municipalities of Cajidocan and Magdiwang, and two pending mining pier constructions in San Fernando;

WHEREAS on 24 August 2007, shortly before leaving the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, then Secretary Angelo Reyes approved five Special Cutting Permits to clear forestland for mining activities in Sibuyan Island, thereby giving clearance to cut down an estimated 69,709 trees;

WHEREAS the anti-mining environmental NGO Alyansa Tigil Mina, which is backed by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippine and several Protestant Churches, has questioned this "midnight approval" by Sec. Reyes which would cause deforestation in the buffer zone of a declared national park, even as it also

exposed that JKL Brothers Mineral Ore Quarrying Enterprises and its partner Ore Asia Development Corp. have been using heavy equipment to mine iron ore in, Barangay Mabini, San Fernando;

WHEREAS mining activities in Sibuyan Island have grown exponentially to the point that there are now thirteen (13) active mining sites surrounding the mountains and right inside the protected national park;

WHEREAS Sibuyan Island cannot possibly sustain the expanding operations of the existing mining firms and the 20-plus mining applications now pending before the Mines and Geosciences Bureau without doing irreparable damage to its fragile ecosystem that is a critical center of endemism and biodiversity;

WHEREAS Sibuyanons and green groups have called for the immediate pullout of all mining firms and the cancellation of all permits to explore and mine resources on the island and to secure justice for fallen anti-mining advocate Armin Marin;

WHEREAS Councilor Marin is the 23rd environmental activist to be killed under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration whose death environment groups say is the consequence of this government's "blind madness" to promote mining as the engine of economic growth at the expense of social and political rights and the right of people to sustainable development;

WHEREAS the attendant violations of human rights and the violence used to suppress the resistance of local communities to projects that they believe will never benefit them falls upon the shoulders of government to mitigate and prevent;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and the Committee on Justice and Human Rights to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the ecological impact of escalating mining operations in Sibuyan Island, dubbed the "Galapagos of Asia" because of its unique biodiversity, including the "midnight approval" by then outgoing DENR Sec. Angelo Reyes to cut down an estimated 69,709 trees to clear the way for mining and the killing of anti-mining advocate and Romblon Councilor Armin Marin on Oct. 3, 2007 during a local protest action.

Adopted,


M. A. MADRIGAL