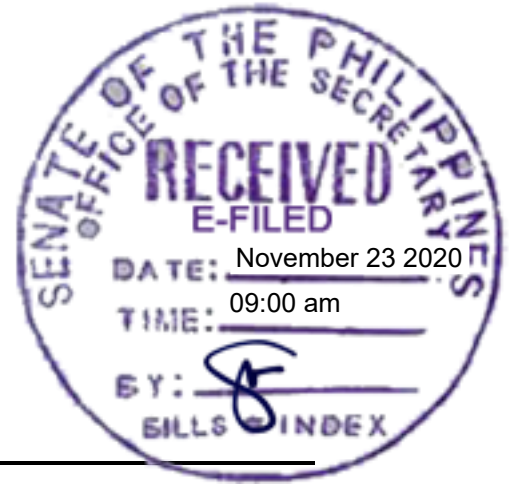


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 579

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO DETERMINE THE
UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE RECENT RECORD-HIGH FLOODING IN
CAGAYAN AND OTHER AREAS IN LUZON IN THE AFTERMATH OF
TYPHOON ‘ULYSSES’ WITH THE END VIEW OF IDENTIFYING AND
IMPROVING ANY GAPS IN THE GOVERNMENT’S DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS AND RISK RESPONSE

1 WHEREAS, in the evening of 11 November 2020, Typhoon ‘*Ulysses*’ made its
2 first landfall in Quezon Province and made its way across Central Luzon. Packing
3 maximum sustained winds of 150 kilometers per hour in addition to intense and
4 torrential rainfall, Typhoon ‘*Ulysses*’ caused flash floods and landslides along its path
5 of destruction;¹

6 WHEREAS, residents of Metro Manila, particularly Marikina City, were caught
7 flat-footed as the torrential downpour caused the Marikina River to swell to a record
8 level of 22-meters, eclipsing the mark set by Tropical Storm ‘*Ondoy*’ in 2009, causing
9 waters to rise in areas that were not largely seen as flood-prone;²

10 WHEREAS, although not directly hit by Typhoon ‘*Ulysses*’, the province of
11 Cagayan experienced heavy flooding as well due to constant rain brought by the tail
12 end of a cold front. In the morning of 13 November 2020, the reservoir water level of
13 Magat Dam had reportedly reached 192.64 meters above sea level (masl), almost

¹ Arceo, A. (11 November 2020). *Typhoon Ulysses makes landfall twice in Quezon*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/weather/typhoon-ulysses-pagasa-forecast-november-11-2020-11pm>

² Servallos, N. J. & Cabrera, R. (13 November 2020). *Worse Than Ondoy: Typhoon Ulysses Triggers Massive Flooding In MM, Rizal, Other Areas; Residents Caught By Surprise*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.onenews.ph/worse-than-ondoy-typhoon-ulysses-triggers-massive-flooding-in-mm-rizal-other-areas-residents-caught-by-surprise>

1 reaching the dam's spilling level of 193.00 masl. Reports noted that seven of the dam's
2 gates were already opened at 18 meters;³

3 WHEREAS, in an early morning interview on 14 November 2020, Cagayan
4 Governor Manuel Mamba noted that the province is a natural catch basin of rain water
5 from Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera Administrative Region which meant that they
6 experienced flooding on an annual basis. However, he also stressed that the level of
7 flooding from Typhoon 'Ulysses' was altogether "unusual" and that this was the worst
8 flooding to hit the province in 40 years;⁴

9 WHEREAS, Governor Mamba, in a later statement, also pointed out that the
10 degradation of the forests in the Cordillera and Sierra Madre due to decades of illegal
11 logging activities caused the massive flooding which had affected over 170,000
12 individuals in 26 municipalities across the province. He pointed out the need to have
13 a holistic and inter-regional approach to addressing environmental problems;⁵

14 WHEREAS, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and
15 Management Council (NDRRMC) spokesperson Mark Cashean Timbal, based on
16 reports by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) in the region, the successive landfall of
17 seven typhoons in the country contributed to the massive flooding experienced in
18 Cagayan province. He added that the series of typhoons resulted in the rise of water
19 levels of the Magat Dam and Cagayan River, which resulted in the placing of the
20 Cagayan Valley Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
21 (CVRDRRMC) on red alert. He further clarified that the Magat Dam did not release
22 any water until 9 November and that notices were issued before it was done;⁶

23 WHEREAS, according to think tank Infracore PH, dam operators should be
24 held accountable as dams, including Magat, only rushed to open the gates at the height
25 of Typhoon 'Ulysses', thereby causing the unprecedented flooding in Cagayan.

³ Rappler.com. (13 November 2020). *IN PHOTOS: Floods submerge Cagayan houses after heavy rain*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/moveph/photos-cold-front-floods-parts-cagayan-november-2020>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Abad, M. (14 November 2020). *Massive flooding a 'summation of our wrongs to the environment' - Cagayan governor*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/massive-flooding-environmental-degradation-cagayan-governor>

⁶ Nepomuceno, P. (14 November 2020). *7 consecutive typhoons caused Cagayan flooding*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1121856>

1 Infracatch PH convenor Terry Ridon noted that Magat did not make sufficient water
2 drawdown 2 to 3 days prior to the typhoon as mandated by its protocol;⁷

3 WHEREAS, Cagayan residents have expressed a similar sentiment with the
4 Magat dam as Governor Mamba revealed that calls for a lawsuit against the dam
5 operators were once again revived in the wake of the flooding. He noted that the people
6 are fed up with the dam because they were assuming all the risks but none of the
7 benefits as the irrigation water from the dam all flows through Isabela and not
8 Cagayan;⁸

9 WHEREAS, in an interview on 15 November 2020, Wilfredo Gloria, the
10 National Irrigation Administration's (NIA) Department Manager for Magat River
11 Irrigation System (MARIIS) Dam and Reservoir defended the management of Magat
12 dam stating that there was nothing else the government could have done to stop it. He
13 also said that NIA had followed all the protocols in terms of dam discharge and flood
14 warning even days prior to the landfall of Typhoon 'Ulysses';⁹

15 WHEREAS, in a statement, President Duterte seemingly cleared the NIA of any
16 liability and instead placed the blame on climate change for the severe weather
17 disturbances in the country which caused massive flooding.¹⁰ He later ordered
18 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu to
19 probe small-scale illegal mining and illegal logging activities in the forests and
20 mountains of Cagayan in a bid to intensify forest protection efforts;¹¹

21 WHEREAS, in terms of preventing the overflow of the Cagayan River, the
22 DENR has proposed dredging its mouth, deepening it to allow for a greater volume of
23 water to flow through. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Alfonso Cusi also

⁷ Buan, L. (14 November 2020). *Why dam operators should be held accountable for Cagayan, Isabela floods*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/why-dam-operators-accountable-cagayan-isabela-floods-november-2020>

⁸ GMA News. (14 November 2020). *Cagayan residents want to sue Magat Dam for yearly floods -governor*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/764103/cagayan-residents-want-to-sue-magat-dam-for-yearly-floods-governor/story/>

⁹ Mirafior, M. B. (15 November 2020). *NIA on Magat Dam water release: 'There's nothing else that could be done'*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://mb.com.ph/2020/11/15/nia-on-magat-dam-water-release-theres-nothing-else-that-could-be-done/>

¹⁰ Galvez, D. (15 November 2020). *Duterte blames climate change for typhoons, flooding*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1360898/duterte-blames-climate-change-for-typhoons-flooding>

¹¹ CNN Philippines Staff. (16 November 2020). *DENR ordered to probe illegal mining, logging in Cagayan Valley*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/11/16/Cagayan-Valley-illegal-mining-logging-Cagayan-River-dredging.html>

1 proposed the building of an “upstream dam” ahead of the Magat dam as a potential
2 long-term solution;¹²

3 WHEREAS, in the wake of this disaster, the harmful effects of climate change
4 and environmental degradation have once again come to the surface. Proper dam
5 management protocols and effective mechanisms for data gathering and information
6 dissemination are also critical components of disaster mitigation. The national
7 government needs a comprehensive and people-centered environmental conservation
8 and disaster risk reduction management plan incorporated into its national
9 development policy in order to better prepare its citizens for future disasters to come;

10 WHEREAS, there is no lone cause for the record-level flooding experienced by
11 Cagayan. There should be a thorough investigation into these issues that have surfaced
12 in the wake of Cagayan’s worst flooding in recent memory in order to craft policies and
13 develop innovative solutions that are data-driven and responsive to the needs of the
14 people;

15 WHEREAS, there is likewise need to resolve the issue on responsibility for the
16 mismanagement of the water levels in the Magat Dam to prevent similar incidents
17 from happening again;

18 WHEREAS, there is also need to determine the effectiveness of the DENR
19 programs to prevent illegal logging in Sierra Madre;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
21 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to determine
22 the underlying causes of the recent record-high flooding in Cagayan and other areas
23 in Luzon in the aftermath of Typhoon ‘Ulysses’ with the end view of identifying and
24 improving any gaps in the government’s disaster preparedness and risk response.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA

¹² Medenilla, S. P. (15 November 2020). *DENR to dredge Cagayan River, amid probes of dam protocol breach, illegal logging*. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/11/15/denr-to-dredge-cagayan-river-amid-probes-of-dam-protocol-breach-illegal-logging/>