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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 110

RECEIVED BY: *ju*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID
OF LEGISLATION, ON THE DANGEROUS LEVELS OF MERCURY IN THE AIR,
PARTICULARLY IN CAMARINES NORTE, PALAWAN, AND BENGUET

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 provides: "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, Article 2, Section 15 of the same provides: "The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them";

WHEREAS, various news agencies reported that according to the report released by the Basel Action Network (BAN) last 23 February 2011, the air in some communities near mining areas in three provinces has been poisoned by mercury, one of the earth's most toxic chemical elements;

WHEREAS, the study found out that levels of mercury vapor in some mining communities in Benguet, Camarines Norte and Palawan were higher by 30 times than levels that are considered safe;

WHEREAS, the study showed that mercury vapor was detected in small concentrations even in areas with no known or alleged use of mercury;

WHEREAS, while the United States Environmental Protection Agency ranks 900 npcm of mercury vapor as safe and levels above 10,000 npcm a cause for evacuation of communities, BAN's study produced alarming findings, particularly in three areas:

- Barangay Malaguit in Paracale, Camarines Norte has an average reading for mercury vapor in the air of was 14,275.3 npcm and peaks to 30,000 npcm, while its residential area had an average reading of 266.7 npcm of mercury vapor and a maximum reading of 5,516.2 npcm;
- Sitio Pulang-Lupa in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, has as much as 1,488.8 npcm of mercury vapor in the air because it was near an abandoned mercury mine;
- In the miners' barracks of mining firm Benguet Corp. in Camp 5 in Itogon, Benguet produced a reading of a maximum 30,000 npcm of mercury vapor in the air and an average of 3,751.8 npcm;

WHEREAS, the study pointed out that although mercury concentrations increase dramatically during operations when mercury was used, dangerous levels of the toxic substance have been detected even when the operations have terminated;

WHEREAS, it was also noted that even if mercury in the air is a natural occurrence, the study found that the highest mercury vapor concentrations were found in sites where mercury was being used or stored;

WHEREAS, legislation should make sure that environmental safety precautions that are already in place through various laws are enforced in light of these recent findings for they show the need for stricter enforcement of the law and supplemental regulations to make sure that the country's air is not poisoned due to negligence and unsafe practices;

WHEREAS, Congress should also take into account other poisonous substances in the air that pose risk to health and nature may be endemic to a specific area or region such as mining areas so that environmental protection laws can be carefully crafted to make sure that hazardous substances particularly originating from that area can be prevented from mingling with air and water reservoirs;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the dangerous levels of mercury in the air, particularly in Camarines Norte, Palawan, and Benguet.

Adopted,

air

MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAAGO

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