

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

'13 JUL 25 P3:18

SENATE
P. S. R. No. 111

RECEIVED BY: Jai

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID
OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED NEED TO IMMEDIATELY CURB THE
RAMPANT DEFORESTATION IN THE COUNTRY

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, Executive Order No. 277, amending Section 68 of Presidential Decree No. 705, Section 1 mandates that:

"Cutting, Gathering and/or collecting Timber, or Other Forest Products Without License. Any person who shall cut, gather, collect, removed timber or other forest products from any forest land, or timber from alienable or disposable public land, or from private land, without any authority, or possess timber or other forest products without the legal documents as required under existing forest laws and regulations, shall be punished with the penalties imposed under Articles 309 and 310 of the Revised Penal Code";

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 23 issued last 1 February 2011 declared a moratorium on the cutting and harvesting of timber in the natural and residual forests and created the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force;

WHEREAS, according to the 2 February 2011 article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the Philippines is among the ten areas in the world with the most at-risk forest areas posing a grave danger to endemic species;

WHEREAS, this finding is based on the research conducted by Conservation International (CI) which identified the World's Ten Most Threatened Forest Hotspots including Indo-Burma, New Caledonia, Sundaland, Atlantic Forest, Mountains of Southwest China, Cape Floristic Province, Coastal Forests of Eastern Africa, Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands, and Eastern Afromontane;

WHEREAS, the list was released to commemorate the International Year of Forests as the group underscored the need to protect the world's forests and make sure that their pivotal role on biodiversity conservation, climate stabilization and economic development is not undervalued;

WHEREAS, the ten most at-risk forested hotspots around the world have all lost 90% or more of their original habitat and each harbor at least 1500 endemic plant species; these forests potentially support the lives of close to one billion people who live in or around them, and directly or indirectly depend on the natural resources forest ecosystems provide;

WHEREAS, the Philippines is one of the most endangered areas; historically logged for timber products, today, the remaining forests are also being cleared for farming in order to accommodate the needs of the nation's high population growth rate and severe rural poverty;

WHEREAS, forests overall cover only 30 percent of our planet's area and yet they are home to 80 percent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity; they also sustain the livelihoods for 1.6 billion people, who directly depend on healthy forests for income;

WHEREAS, the role of forests in stabilizing the climate must also be increasingly recognized, as emissions resulting from deforestation represent approximately 15% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and forests serve as superior stores of carbon;

WHEREAS, according to Mr. Olivier Langrand, CI's international policy chief, forests are being destroyed at an alarming rate to give room to pastures, agricultural land, mineral exploitation and sprawling urban areas, but by doing so we are destroying our own capacity to survive;

WHEREAS, forests play an enormous economic role in the development of many countries as a source of timber, food, shelter and recreation, and have an even greater potential that needs to be realized in terms of water provision, erosion prevention and carbon sequestration;

WHEREAS, in addition to their significance to biodiversity and climate stabilization, forests have been increasingly important in providing fresh water on a global scale since three quarters of the world's accessible fresh water comes from forested watersheds, and two thirds of all major cities in developing countries depend on surrounding forests for their supply of clean water.;

WHEREAS, countries are encouraged to take a new look at the long-term value of managing and protecting their natural forests, which are globally important assets;

WHEREAS, despite the imposition of an indefinite log ban by the present administration, illegal logging continues to proliferate due to the continuing demand for wood products and the lack of personnel and logistics to enforce it;

WHEREAS, even with the assistance of environment activists, those tasked to enforce any ban need the cooperation of affected communities, whose members must tip off authorities about large-scale illegal logging;

WHEREAS, inadequate government support for reforestation and promotion of sustainable forestry also hinders the success of a log ban;

WHEREAS, many communities near natural forests and reservations are themselves dependent on small-scale agro-forestry; marginalized communities that engage in destructive forest clearing operations and forest activities, instead of being penalized for breaking laws they are not even aware of, are likely to be more receptive to the concept of sustainable forestry rather than a sweeping log ban;

WHEREAS, the government should be innovative in enforcing sustainable agro-forestry programs and ensure that these programs are properly implemented;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported need to immediately curb the rampant deforestation in the country.

Adopted,

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

/dpm