

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

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SENATE  
P. S. R. No. 502

RECEIVED BY: 

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,  
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE WORSENING FLOOD CONDITION IN  
ILOILO DUE TO UNCHECKED AND/OR ILLEGAL LOGGING AND  
AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION TO SUBDIVISIONS AND COMMERCIAL  
AREAS

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 states that, 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, according to the 24 June 2008 news article published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, experts allegedly blame the worst flooding experienced in Western Visayas mainly on deforestation and the conversion of agricultural lands to subdivisions and commercial areas;

WHEREAS, Jerry Bionat, executive officer of the Iloilo Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC), allegedly said that logging activities should be investigated because rampaging flood waters that destroyed and submerged several villages carried logs;

WHEREAS, Mayor Isabelo Maquino of Sta. Barbara town, told a meeting of the PDCC that such logs slammed into and destroyed or damaged bridges;

WHEREAS, water resource engineer Andrew Margarico said that while the intensity of the rainfall was a factor in the extent and magnitude of the flooding, deforestation was one of the probable main causes of the calamity;

WHEREAS, scientist and environmentalist Jurgenne Primavera said the flooding showed the alarming situation of forest cover, which shrunk to less than a million hectares out of a total land area of 30 million hectares;

WHEREAS, Margarico, a consultant with the Engineering Development Corporation of the Philippines, also blamed the rapid and extensive conversion of agricultural lands into residential areas like subdivisions since agricultural lands also absorbed water just like the trees in upland areas;

WHEREAS, it was alleged that the experts urge the government to review infrastructure and development projects to check if these would have adverse environmental effects, including the blocking of natural waterways; they cited the ongoing P8-billion Iloilo flood control project set to be completed in 2010, which would span four kilometers and aim to divert water from the Aganan and Tigum rivers to a channel leading to open sea;

WHEREAS, Margarico said dredged soil from the project site might have blocked natural waterways, although regional director Rolando Asis of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said the project did not block the waterways nor did it contribute to the massive flooding since according to Asis, it is the abnormal amount of rainfall that caused the flooding;

WHEREAS, Bionat, however, allegedly admitted that the damage and number of affected persons could have been lessened if agencies and local government units were prepared and had anticipated the magnitude of the calamity;

WHEREAS Bionat recommended the strengthening of disaster management councils, organization of rescue groups and massive information campaign on disaster preparedness and response;

WHEREAS, aside from Bionat's recommendation, Primavera suggests that the roots of the problems must be addressed, raising the urgent need for massive replanting especially of native trees to restore watersheds and forest cover;

WHEREAS, it is not only in Iloilo that the problem of flooding occurs due to illegal logging and land conversion to subdivisions;

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the government heeds the opinions of these scientists and greatly reconsider its policy on mining and the conversion of agricultural land to commercial areas;

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 worsening flood condition in Iloilo due to unchecked and/or illegal logging and agricultural land conversion to subdivisions and commercial areas.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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