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PS RESOLUTION NO. 92

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Lacson

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE REPORTED DESTRUCTIVE MINING OPERATIONS AND ILLEGAL EXCAVATIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF ZAMBALES, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF DETERMINING THE EXTENT OF DAMAGE CAUSED AND THE INDIVIDUALS TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE THEREFOR, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING REMEDIAL LEGISLATIONS TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION LAWS AND ADDRESS THE POSSIBLE BREACH TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

Whereas, Section 16, Article II of the 1987 Constitution provides 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, the Province of Zambales, particularly the Municipalities of Masinloc, Candelaria and Santa Cruz, has abundant deposits of high-grade mineral resources, and its mining industry has accounted for a significant proportion of the economic activity and livelihood of the communities;

Whereas, in 2011, former Zambales Governor Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr. issued several small-scale mining permits (SSMPs) and other permits to a mining firm which allegedly allowed the illegal hauling, transporting and shipping of minerals from the province. Consequently, the Office of the Ombudsman in 2015 found probable cause to indict Governor Ebdane for graft, usurpation of government functions and mineral theft in connection with the issuance of SSMPs;

Whereas, in early 2012, Concerned Citizens of Santa Cruz, a coalition of residents from affected mining areas, reported that the nickel ore mining has already manifested adverse effects and posed continuing threats to the environment and well-being of the affected communities;

Whereas, in July 2014, nickel mining operations of four (4) mining firms were suspended by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau for practicing unsystematic strip mining methods that led to inefficient recovery of minerals and caused adverse environmental impact such as siltation in bodies of water and generation of dust;

Whereas, Super Typhoon Lando which hit the Province on 19 October 2015 with torrential rains, left an unprecedented damage in the Province allegedly as a result of these clandestine mining activities. Reportedly, an overwhelming volume of mud-flood from the mountain where the large-scale mining companies operate cascaded into the lowlands and left a trail of destruction. It likewise caused the heavy siltation of river systems and waterways that will eventually destroy the ecosystems contained therein;

Whereas, in addition to the environmental disaster exacerbated by the mining operations, incumbent Zambales Governor Amor P. Deloso alleged that these mining companies were allowed to excavate massively for over two years which practically flattened the mountains and damaged a large area of the Municipality of Santa Cruz' forested highlands. Worse, Governor Deloso alleged that the soil and rocks taken from these areas were shipped, dumped and used to reclaim almost 3,500 hectares of the disputed islands in the West Philippine Sea, which caused massive, unspeakable damage to the marine environment therein.

Whereas, the alarming allegations of Governor Deloso had been circulating on social media as early as 8 November 2015 where an online article quoted an inside source from the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency who claimed that mining firms were smuggling soil and rocks "to build a chain of Chinese islands in the West Philippine Sea";

Whereas, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources formed a task force led by Undersecretary Art Valdez on 2 August 2016 to probe the reported quarrying in the Province of Zambales purportedly for the reclamation work in the West Philippine Sea;

Whereas, there is a need to account for the personalities behind this highly anomalous, illegal and treacherous acts that tend not only to destroy our environment, but also make a mockery of our laws to the prejudice of the Filipino people and constitute a possible breach of our national security;

Whereas, an assessment should also be undertaken across the areas affected by the mining firms' wanton act of destruction to determine the extent of the damage and appropriate actions needed to rehabilitate the same, and to likewise address the allegations of possible breach to our national security in light of mineral quarrying and smuggling in the Province of Zambales for China's reclamation; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**,

AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct as it hereby directs the appropriate Senate Committees to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alleged exploitative mining operations and excavations that cause detrimental effects to our environment in violation of our right to a sound and balanced ecology, and simultaneously pose serious threats to our national security to the prejudice of our sovereignty and territorial integrity, with the end in view of adopting remedial measures to strengthen our environmental protection and conservation laws and address the possible breach of our national security.

Adopted,


PANFILO M. LACSON
Senator