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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 537

RECEIVED BY 

Introduced by **SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ESCALATING OIL SPILL FROM THE SUNKEN TANKER MT PRINCESS EMPRESS THAT IS CAUSING SURMOUNTING DAMAGES TO THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM AND BIODIVERSITY, AMONG ITS OTHER ADVERSE EFFECTS

WHEREAS, Article XIV, Section 19 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, Section 2 of Republic Act (RA) No. 9275 provides that it shall be the policy of the State "a) To streamline processes and procedures in the prevention, control and abatement of pollution of the country's water resources; b) To promote environmental strategies, use of appropriate economic instruments and of control mechanisms for the protection of water resources; x x x g) To provide for a comprehensive management program for water pollution focusing on pollution prevention; x x x";

WHEREAS, Section 2 of RA 9483 or the "Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007" provides that that "The State, in the protection of its marine wealth in its archipelagic waters, territorial sea and exclusive economic zone, adopts internationally accepted measures which impose strict liability for Oil Pollution Damage and ensure prompt and adequate compensation for persons who suffer such damage.";

WHEREAS, based on news report, the tank ship MT Princess Empress, while traversing the route from Limay, Bataan to Iloilo and carrying a cargo load of around 800,000 liters of industrial fuel, encountered rough sea conditions and engine trouble

that resulted to the ship's sinking off the coast of Naujan in the Province of Oriental Mindoro in the early morning of Feb. 28;

WHEREAS, due to the sinking of MT Princess Empress, the 800,000 liters of fuel it was carrying started to spill out to the sea and the damage it is causing to the marine biodiversity, ecosystem, and fisheries has been surmounting day by day;

WHEREAS, it was reported that according to the experts from the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), the oil spill from MT Princess Empress could possibly affect over 36,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass across Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan and Antique¹;

WHEREAS, the oil spill also threatens the marine biodiversity of the Verde Island Passage, which is considered by the scientist as the center of the world's marine biodiversity²;

WHEREAS, there were already findings of dead fishes, marine life and sea birds;

WHEREAS, the oil spill has likewise affected the tourist destinations in Oriental Mindoro, such as the Bihiya Beach, 3 Cottage, Long Beach K. I, Aguada Beach Resort, Oloroso Beach Resort, Munting Buhangin Tagumpay Beach Resort, and Buhay na Tubig White Beach Resort in Oriental Mindoro, and even threatens to affect Boracay, the country's premiere tourist destination³;

WHEREAS, apart from the environmental damage to the marine ecosystem, biodiversity, fisheries and tourism, the livelihood and health of the people in the area are already adversely affected by the said oil spill;

WHEREAS, a news report (dated 6 March 2023) stated that based on the monitoring report of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO), nine (9) out of the thirteen (13) towns in Oriental Mindoro have been affected by the oil spill from the sunken MT Princess Empress, while around 10,362 families or 48,885 people were affected so far⁴;

¹ Culled from: <https://www.bworldonline.com/the-nation/2023/03/06/508987/mindoro-oil-spill-could-reach-palawan-waters-says-up-msi/>

² Culled from: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/climate-and-environment/2023/03/01/2248532/oil-spill-sunken-tanker-could-threaten-verde-island-passages-biodiversity-group>

³ Culled from: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/climate-and-environment/2023/03/01/2248532/oil-spill-sunken-tanker-could-threaten-verde-island-passages-biodiversity-group>

⁴ Culled from: <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2023/03/06/2249553/9-mindoro-towns-affected-oil-spill>

WHEREAS, it was reported that government agencies, such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Philippine Coast Guard and the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) have made their assessments of the oil spill incident, but no concrete action to contain the oil spill has been initiated so far;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent call by the local government units concerned, the people affected and the environmentalists for the government to act swiftly to contain the oil spill from MT Princess Empress and avoid further damage to the environment, livelihood and health of the people, and the tourism industry;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate of the Philippines, to direct the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the escalating oil spill from the sunken tanker Mt Princess Empress that is causing surmounting damages to the marine ecosystem and biodiversity, among its other adverse effects.

Adopted,


CYNTHIA A. VILLAR