

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. **869**



Introduced by Honorable Representatives
ARLENE D. BROSAS (Gabriela Women's Party),
FRANCE L. CASTRO (ACT Teachers Partylist),
and **RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL** (Kabataan Partylist)

A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES RESOURCES TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE EFFECTS OF THE OIL SPILL CAUSED BY THE MT PRINCESS EMPRESS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE VERDE ISLAND PASSAGE, LIVELIHOOD OF FISHERFOLKS, AND THE LOCAL PRODUCTION OF FISH

WHEREAS, Section 16, Article 2 of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines states that "The State shall protect and promote 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 No. 9483, otherwise known as the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007, declares as state policy 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, Section 6 of Republic Act No. 9483 states that "The owner of the ship at the time of an incident, or where the incident consists of a series of occurrences, at the time of the first such occurrence, shall be liable for any Pollution Damage caused by the ship as a result of the incident";

WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, declares that "The State shall pursue a policy of economic growth in a manner consistent with the protection, preservation and revival of the quality of our fresh, brackish, and marine waters";

WHEREAS, on February 28, MT Princess Empress, a vessel that was traveling from Bataan province to Iloilo provinces and was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil, developed an engine problem and sank off in the waters of Oriental Mindoro that triggered an oil spill;

WHEREAS, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the vessel sank 400 meters into the ocean, a depth too deep for divers to reach. To illustrate this depth exceeds the height of Grand Hyatt Manila, the tallest building in the Philippines;

WHEREAS, oil from the vessel reached a radius of 40 kilometers, encroaching on 21 protected areas including a fish sanctuary. Several coral reefs and mangrove habitats are threatened to be damaged by the oil spill. Also, at least three towns were affected, namely Naujan, Pola, and Pinamalayan;

WHEREAS, the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute has released a bulletin indicating that approximately 36,000 hectares of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass will be damaged in Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, and Antique. This affected marine area is bigger than the size of the entire Quezon City;

WHEREAS, the town of Pola has been badly affected by the oil spill since the vessel sank near the area. A state of calamity has been imposed in the town. It is estimated that more than 590 hectares of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Pola alone are at risk of damage because of the spill;

WHEREAS, according to DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, a total of 19,000 residents of Oriental Mindoro have been affected by the oil spill from the tanker Princess Empress;

WHEREAS, a report stated that the oil spill had reached Palawan on March 8, 2023, and that it will spread northeast due to the prevailing wind condition brought by the Northeast Monsoon also known as Amihan;

WHEREAS, the oil spill-affected areas are within the Verde Island Passage Marine Corridor (VIPMC), which spans 1.4 million hectares and covers Batangas, Marinduque, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, and Romblon. Over 2 million people live along the passage and depend on its resources to survive;

WHEREAS, approximately 30,042 families or 137,230 people from 121 barangays within the MIMAROPA and Western Visayas regions are affected by the oil spill from the tanker Princess Empress as of March 11, according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development;

WHEREAS, the DSWD has distributed food and non-food items and launched a cash-for-work program for the affected families;

WHEREAS, residents in Oriental Mindoro are reported to experience dizziness, headaches, sore throat, and chest pains. In addition, there have been reports of sickness among cleanup workers deployed in Pola;

WHEREAS, a fishing ban was implemented until the spill was cleaned up, affecting the livelihoods of more than 18,000 fisherfolks in 60 villages;

WHEREAS, the oil spill will adversely affect Mindoro Oriental's fishing industry, possibly resulting in lower fish catches and production;

WHEREAS, the fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) has called on the government to provide an immediate economic subsidy and livelihood support to the affected families;

WHEREAS, PAMALAKAYA reported that the oil spill might impact bullet tuna, skipjack tuna, and seaweed farms in Palawan and Antique. Moreover, they noted that nearly P79 million worth of seaweeds were affected in Antique, which sustains over 10,000 fisherfolks' livelihood;

WHEREAS, during the Senate inquiry on March 14, it was discovered that MT Princess Empress had no updated permit to operate;

WHEREAS, a Rappler.com report published on March 13, 2023 alleged that SL Harbor Bulk Terminal Corp., a subsidiary of San Miguel Shipping and Lighterage Corp., chartered RDC Reield Marine Services to ship industrial fuel oil from Limay, Bataan to Iloilo last February 28;

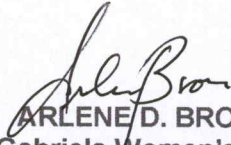
WHEREAS, the national government must provide immediate compensation for the fisherfolk and families affected by the oil spill, and must exhaust all means to stop the further spread of the industrial fuel oil;

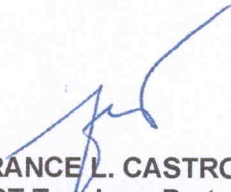
WHEREAS, the country's dependence on fossil fuels must also be re-examined in light of the disastrous oil spill, especially as natural gas and other energy projects are targeted around the fragile Verde Island Passage;

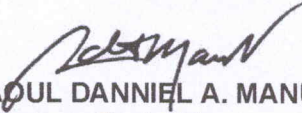
WHEREAS, the national government must also pursue sanctions against RDC Reield Marine Services, the owner of the MT Princess Empress, and explore penalties against the charterer of the vessel;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the House of Representatives through the Committee on Natural Resources and Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resource immediately conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the effects of the oil spill caused by the MT Princess Empress on the environment, livelihood of fisherfolks, and the local production of fish.

Adopted,


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FRANCE L. CASTRO
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RADUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL
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