



MEMORANDUM

FOR : **The Undersecretaries**
Chief of Staff and Supervising for Strategic Communications
Policy, Planning and International Affairs
Organizational Transformation and Human Resources

The Bureau Directors
Environmental Management Bureau
Biodiversity Management Bureau

The Regional Executive Directors
Region IV-A, IV-B

The Executive Director
National Mapping and Resource Information Authority

FROM : **The Undersecretary**
Special Concerns and Legislative Affairs

SUBJECT : **INVITATION AS RESOURCE PERSONS RE: THE
CONTINUATION OF HEARING ON RESOLUTIONS REGARDING
THE OIL SPILL FROM THE SINKING OF MT PRINCESS
EMPRESS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY AND
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

DATE : 22 MAY 2023

The Committee on Ecology joint with the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives invites the Department to the continuation of its hearing on **May 29, 2023, (Monday) 1:00 pm at the Belmonte Hall, South Wing Annex, House of Representatives** on resolutions regarding the sinking of MT Princess Empress as follows:

1. H.R. No. 829 - Resolution Calling for an Investigation in Aid of Legislation Regarding the Oil Spill from and sinking of MT Princess Empress, by Rep. Elpidio F. Barzaga, Jr.
2. H.R. No. 835 - Resolution Requesting the Committee on Transportation to Conduct an Investigation, in Aid of Legislation, on the Sufficiency of our Maritime Laws and Safety Standards, and Other Related Measures to Ensure Accountability of Sea Carriers Involved in Maritime Accidents, in the Context of the Recent Oil Spill Caused by a Capsized Oil Tanker Off Coast of Oriental Mindoro, by Rep. Alfonso V. Umali, Jr.
3. H.R. No. 842 - A Resolution Directing the Committee on Ecology, the Committee on Natural Resources, and the Committee on Tourism to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on the Oil Spill in Oriental Mindoro and Nearby Provinces for the Purposes of Determining the Extent of Damage to the Marine Resources, Health, Tourism, and Livelihood, and Recommending Appropriate Measures to Rehabilitate Coastal Areas, Provide Assistance to Affected Communities, and Mitigate Effects of the Disaster, by Rep. Teodorico T. Haresco, Jr.

4. H.R. No. 847 - Resolution Urging the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and Committee on Transportation to Immediately Conduct an Investigation, in Aid of Legislation, on the Surrounding Events Which Led to the Sinking of M/T Princess Empress on February 28, 2023, and Resulted in the Worst Oil Spill in the History of Philippines, by Rep. Khymer Adan T. Olaso
5. H.R. No. 848 - A Resolution Directing the Committee on Natural Resources to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, into the Cause of the Oriental Mindoro Oil Spill and the Urgent Containment and Removal Measures Already Being Conducted and yet to be Conducted to Prevent Further Damage to the Rich Natural Resources of the Verde Island Passage, by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda
6. H.R. No. 850 - Resolution Directing the Appropriate House Committee to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on the Impact to the Environment and Livelihood of Fisherfolks of the Reported Oil Spill in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, with the End in View of Implementing Urgent Interventions and Assistance to Help Affected Fishermen and Identifying Possible Accountability Among Those Involved in this Accident, by Rep. Wilbert T. Lee
7. H.R. No. 854 - Resolution Calling For an Investigation, in Aid of Legislation, on the Possible Violations of Maritime Safety Laws and Marine Environmental Laws Relative to the Sinking of MT Princess Empress Off the Coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro Resulting to a Massive Oil Spill that is Threatening the Marine Biodiversity of the Province, by Rep. Arnan C. Panaligan
8. H.R. No. 862 - Resolution Directing the Appropriate House of Representatives Committee to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on the Environmental, Health, and Tourism Impacts of the Oil Spill in Oriental Mindoro, with the End in View of Encouraging Oversight from all Government Agencies, by Rep. Antonio B. Legarda, Jr.
9. H.R. No. 869 - 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, by Reps. Arlene D. Brosas, France L. Castro, and Raoul Dannel A. Manuel

In this regard may we invite you to attend as resource persons to the public hearing. May we also request your input, views, and recommendations on the matter. Kindly submit it via email at denrlllo@denr.gov.ph. We hope to receive your confirmation and inputs on or before May 26, 2023, at 5 PM.

Attached herewith are the invitation, agenda, and the House Resolutions for your reference.


IGNATIUS LOYOLA A. RODRIGUEZ



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Nineteenth Congress

JOINT HEARING OF THE COMMITTEES ON ECOLOGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

22 May 2023

HON. MA. ANTONIA YULO-LOYZAGA

Secretary
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Dear **Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga**:

The Committee on Ecology, jointly with the Committee on Natural Resources, will continue its hearing on the resolutions regarding the oil spill from the sinking of MT Princess Empress on **29 May 2023 (Monday), 1:00 P.M., at Belmonte Hall, South Wing Annex, House of Representatives.** The joint hearing is a deliberation on House Resolutions 829 (Barzaga), 835 (Umali), 842 (Haresco), 847 (Olaso), 848 (Salceda), 850 (Lee), 854 (Panaligan), 862 (Legarda), and 869 (Brosas, Castro, Manuel). These measures are accessible at www.congress.gov.ph. Attached is the meeting agenda.

In this connection, may we invite you or your competent representative to join us in the aforesaid hearing to share your views and recommendations on the above-mentioned measures. We would also appreciate receiving your position paper at least two (2) days prior to the hearing.

Your attendance in person is earnestly requested, taking note of the following protocol:

- a) From each participant: name, office designation, email address, mobile number and scanned copy of a valid ID, e-mailed to the Secretariat not later than 5:00 P.M. of 24 May 2023. Please note that the Housepass System will not process any request for entry if even just one of the above-required data is lacking.
- b) The House provides complimentary antigen testing for essential resource persons, who are advised to arrive an hour earlier than the schedule. A negative antigen test result from a DOH-accredited laboratory 1-2 days before the hearing, or bringing of own FDA-approved/DOH-accredited sealed testing kit on the day of hearing, are also acceptable.

The members of your team and support staff may access the hearing via Zoom, with details as follows:

- a. Link : <https://zoom.us/j/94437178207?pwd=Nm9MRk5YM05KeU9MeU94ZkVQRHJ5UT09>
- b. Meeting ID : 944 3717 8207
- c. Passcode : 695406
- d. To facilitate admission to the zoom meeting room, kindly submit the attendee's name, agency represented, designation, email address, and phone number, by **24 May 2023**. When entering the meeting room, kindly **rename** yourself using the format: **Agency or Organization - Name**.

Confirmation of attendance or any query may be coursed through hrep.ecology@gmail.com or to **MS. MARLYN PANGANIBAN** at **09171206917**.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

HON. MARLYN B. ALONTE
Chairperson

For the Chairperson:

ATTY. DILBERT N. QUETULIO
Committee Secretary



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

JOINT HEARING OF
The COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY and COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

29 May 2023, 1:00 P.M.

In Person: Belmonte Hall, House of Representatives
Zoom Meeting ID: 944 3717 8207 * Passcode: 695406

A G E N D A

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL
- II. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GUESTS/RESOURCE PERSONS
- III. OPENING REMARKS OF COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY CHAIRPERSON MARLYN B. ALONTE
- IV. OPENING REMARKS OF COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES CHAIRPERSON ELPIDIO F. BARZAGA, JR.
- V. DELIBERATION ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:
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 3. **H.R. No. 842** - A Resolution Directing the Committee on Ecology, the Committee on Natural Resources, and the Committee on Tourism to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on the Oil Spill in Oriental Mindoro and Nearby Provinces for the Purposes of Determining the Extent of Damage to the Marine Resources, Health, Tourism, and Livelihood, and Recommending Appropriate Measures to Rehabilitate Coastal Areas, Provide Assistance to Affected Communities, and Mitigate Effects of the Disaster, *by Rep. Teodorico T. Haresco, Jr.*
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Sinking of M/T Princess Empress on February 28, 2023 and Resulted in the Worst Oil Spill in the History of Philippines, *by Rep. Khymer Adan T. Olaso*

5. **H.R. No. 848** - A Resolution Directing the Committee on Natural Resources to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, into the Cause of the Oriental Mindoro Oil Spill and the Urgent Containment and Removal Measures Already Being Conducted and yet to be Conducted to Prevent Further Damage to the Rich Natural Resources of the Verde Island Passage, *by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda*
6. **H.R. No. 850** - Resolution Directing the Appropriate House Committee to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, on the Impact to the Environment and Livelihood of Fisherfolks of the Reported Oil Spill in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, with the End in View of Implementing Urgent Interventions and Assistance to Help Affected Fishermen and Identifying Possible Accountability Among Those Involved in this Accident, *by Rep. Wilbert T. Lee*
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I. OTHER MATTERS

II. ADJOURNMENT



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Nineteenth Congress

JOINT HEARING OF THE COMMITTEES ON ECOLOGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

22 May 2023

HON. MA. ANTONIA YULO-LOYZAGA

Secretary
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Dear **Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga**:

The Committee on Ecology, jointly with the Committee on Natural Resources, will continue its hearing on the resolutions regarding the oil spill from the sinking of MT Princess Empress on **29 May 2023 (Monday), 1:00 P.M. at Belmonte Hall, South Wing Annex, House of Representatives**. The joint hearing is a deliberation on House Resolutions 829 (Barzaga), 835 (Umali), 842 (Haresco), 847 (Olaso), 848 (Salceda), 850 (Lee), 854 (Panaligan), 862 (Legarda), and 869 (Brosas, Castro, Manuel). These measures are accessible at www.congress.gov.ph. Attached is the meeting agenda.

In this connection, may we invite you or your competent representative to join us in the aforesaid hearing to share your views and recommendations on the above-mentioned measures. We would also appreciate receiving your position paper at least two (2) days prior to the hearing.

Your attendance in person is earnestly requested, taking note of the following protocol:

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Confirmation of attendance or any query may be coursed through hrep.ecology@gmail.com or to **MS. MARLYN PANGANIBAN** at **09171206917**.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

HON. MARLYN B. ALONTE

Chairperson

For the Chairperson:

ATTY. DILBERT N. QUETULIO
Committee Secretary



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

JOINT HEARING OF
The COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY and COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

29 May 2023, 1:00 P.M.

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I. OTHER MATTERS

II. ADJOURNMENT

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RES. NO. 829



Introduced by Hon. Elpidio F. Barzaga, Jr.

**RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION
REGARDING THE OIL SPILL FROM AND SINKING OF MT PRINCESS EMPRESS**

WHEREAS, on 28 February 2022, MT Princess Empress capsized in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro that spilled 800,000 liters of industrialized fuel affecting ten municipalities in Oriental Mindoro and may possibly affect coastal areas in Palawan, Antique, and Romblon.

WHEREAS, additionally, the oil spill might affect 20,000 hectares of coral reef, 9,900 hectares of mangroves, and 6,000 hectares of seagrass and could "possibly coat the marine habitats and animals...which can clog the gills of fish and marine invertebrates...damage the feathers of bird and fur of marine mammals.

WHEREAS, the vessel MT Princess Empress is an oil products tanker which is only one-year old considering that it was built in 2022.

WHEREAS, Oceana, an international environment group, "called on the state to immediately implement mechanisms and actions to stop further damage on the marine environment, fisheries resources and livelihood in the affected Verde Island Passage which is the 'center of the center of marine biodiversity in the world'" and to "start the investigation and testing on the extent of contamination...immediate assistance of the local fisherfolk dependent on the affected body of water."

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved to conduct an investigation in aid of legislation, regarding the oil spill and the sinking of the one-year old MT Princess Empress which has already caused severe damage in Oriental Mindoro and it could possibly reach other coastal islands including Palawan, Antique and Romblon.

March 6, 2023.

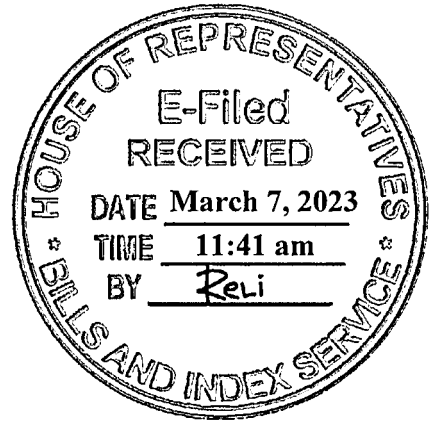
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "EW", positioned above the printed name of the representative.

HON. ELPIDIO F. BARZAGA, JR.
Representative
Lone District of the City of Dasmariñas, Cavite

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Resolution No. 835



Introduced as Urgent by:
HON. ALFONSO V. UMALI JR.

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF OUR MARITIME LAWS AND SAFETY STANDARDS, AND OTHER RELATED MEASURES TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SEA CARRIERS INVOLVED IN MARITIME ACCIDENTS, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RECENT OIL SPILL CAUSED BY A CAPSIZED OIL TANKER OFF COAST OF ORIENTAL MINDORO

WHEREAS, the Article II, Section 5 of the Philippine Constitution categorically states that “the protection of life, liberty and property, and the promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of a democracy”;

WHEREAS, maritime transport plays an indispensable role in ensuring an integrated and coordinated transport network for an archipelagic country like the Philippines;

WHEREAS, no less than the President, His Excellency Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. declared that it is high time to make the Philippine Maritime Industry our top priority;

WHEREAS, history reveals that from time to time, maritime accidents happen either due to human fault, negligence, unseaworthiness, or due to inclement weather conditions, which result to different kinds of damages, loss of property, and even loss of lives;

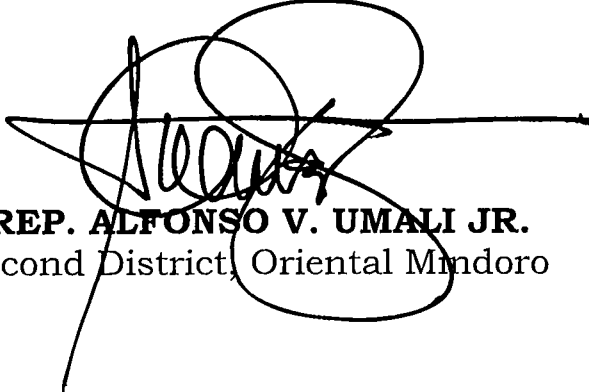
WHEREAS, several accounts and statements of victims of prior sea accidents still call for justice and accountability as they have not received any indemnification from the sea carriers involved in mishap;

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, an oil tanker vessel, MT Princess Empress, carrying Eight Hundred Thousand (800,000) liters of Industrial Oil was capsized off coast of Oriental Mindoro. As a consequence, the oil spilled in the waters putting at risk numerous marine protected areas and affecting the livelihood thousands of families and fisherfolks and the health of the general citizenry of Oriental Mindoro;

WHEREAS, to ensure protection, public safety and accountability, an investigation and scrutiny of our existing maritime laws, safety standards, and accountability measures relating to such incident is indispensable;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives to request its Committee on Transportation to investigate the sufficiency of our Maritime Laws and Safety Standards and other related measures to ensure accountability of sea carriers involved in maritime accidents.

Adopted.



REP. ALFONSO V. UMALI JR.
Second District, Oriental Mindoro



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Resolution No. 842



INTRODUCED BY REP. TEODORICO "NONONG" T. HARESCO, JR.

A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY, THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE OIL SPILL IN ORIENTAL MINDORO AND NEARBY PROVINCES FOR THE PURPOSES OF DETERMINING THE EXTENT OF DAMAGE TO THE MARINE RESOURCES, HEALTH, TOURISM, AND LIVELIHOOD, AND RECOMMENDING APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO REHABILITATE COASTAL AREAS, PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, AND MITIGATE EFFECTS OF THE DISASTER

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, MT Princess Empress, a vessel carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil was capsized in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro due to engine overheating, causing a distressing incident of oil spill in the vicinity¹;

WHEREAS, recognizing the devastating effects of the oil spill incident, the province of Oriental Mindoro has declared a state of calamity in 76 coastal barangays across nine of its municipalities, which include Naujan, Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay, and Bulalacao, as of March 6, 2023²;

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), more than 3,100 hectares of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the province of Oriental Mindoro alone could be in danger of being damaged by the oil spill³;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has reported on March 4, 2023 that the oil spill has also reached the shores of Caluya, Antique, roughly a hundred kilometers away from Naujan, Oriental Mindoro⁴;

¹ <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/regions/862501/oil-tanker-off-mindoro-oriental-totally-sinks/story/>

² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/oriental-mindoro-declares-state-calamity-coastal-barangays-oil-spill-march-6-2023/>

³ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1738139/oil-spill-puts-oriental-mindoro-town-under-calamity-state>

⁴ <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/3/4/Oil-spill-in-Oriental-Mindoro-spreads-to-Antique.html>

WHEREAS, according to the latest report from the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), the DENR forecasts that the projected spill will continue due southwest in the direction of northern Palawan and will reach Cuyo Islands in a week's time⁵;

WHEREAS, while the possibility of the oil spill reaching Boracay in the town of Malay, Aklan depends on the drift of the winds in the area, the local government of Malay has declared a state of heightened or blue alert on March 6, 2023 to preemptively implement protection measures against the spreading oil spill from the sunken MT Princess Empress⁶;

WHEREAS, the Department of Tourism (DOT) has already expressed concern over the oil spill incident and its grave impact on the tourism industry, including disruptions in the livelihood of the affected communities, tourism-dependent businesses, and recreational activities⁷;

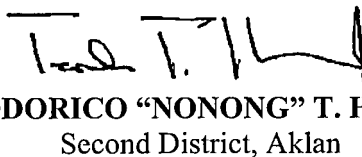
WHEREAS, in a statement on March 4, 2023, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. has declared the government's commitment to provide assistance to Filipinos affected by the oil spill incident⁸;

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the government to protect our marine resources, and the health and welfare of the public, particularly the communities who are heavily affected by the recent oil spill in Oriental Mindoro and its neighboring provinces;

WHEREAS, it is imperative that we urgently provide assistance to Filipinos in need and address the oil spill problem to ensure that our citizens and natural resources are safe, resilient, and free from harm;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, to direct the Committee on Ecology, the Committee on Natural Resources, and the Committee on Tourism to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro and nearby provinces for the purposes of determining the extent of damage to the marine resources, health, tourism, and livelihood, and recommending appropriate measures to rehabilitate coastal areas, provide assistance to affected communities and mitigate effects of the disaster.

Adopted,



REP. TEODORICO "NONONG" T. HARESCO, JR.
Second District, Aklan

⁵ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/07/news/regions/mindoro-oil-spill-to-reach-palawan/1881550>

⁶ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/visayas/malay-aklan-heightened-alert-oil-spill-march-6-2023/>

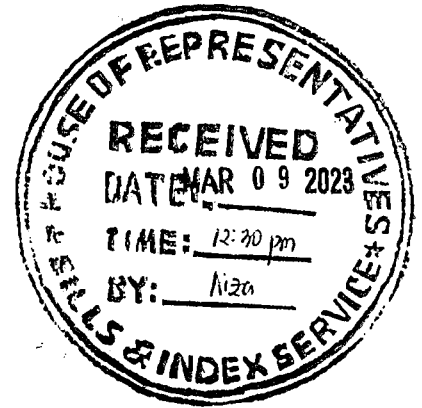
⁷ <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/3/6/Oriental-Mindoro-oil-spill-reaches-tourist-spots-DOT-.html>

⁸ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/04/news/marcos-vows-assistance-to-oil-spill-affected-mindoro-towns/1881253>

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 848



Introduced by Representative JOEY SARTE SALCEDA

A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE CAUSE OF THE ORIENTAL MINDORO OIL SPILL AND THE URGENT CONTAINMENT AND REMOVAL MEASURES ALREADY BEING CONDUCTED AND YET TO BE CONDUCTED TO PREVENT FURTHER DAMAGE TO THE RICH NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE VERDE ISLAND PASSAGE

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 or the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007 declares as state policy that "[t]he 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 it is the owner of the ship at the time of the incident that shall be liable for the pollution damage caused by the ship.

WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 9275, otherwise known as the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, declares as state policy that "[t]he 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, Section 28 of the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 states that any vessel from which oil or other harmful substances are discharged in violation of Section 4 of Presidential Decree No. 979, otherwise known as Marine Pollution Decree of 1976, shall be liable for penalty of fine of not less than five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) but not

more than three million pesos (P3,000,000.00) per day for each day of violation or imprisonment of not less than six (6) years but not more than ten (10) years, or both, at the discretion of the court. Additionally, the owner or operator of a vessel or facility which discharged the oil or other harmful substances will be liable to pay for any clean-up costs.

WHEREAS, on 28 February 2023, oil tanker MT Princess Empress, owned by RDC Reield Marine Services Inc., capsized off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. The oil tanker carries 800,000 liters of industrial oil en route to Iloilo from Bataan. On 01 March 2023, the oil tanker fully sank, and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) confirmed that in addition to a diesel oil spill spanning 6 km long and 4 km wide, the presence of a much thicker and darker oil spill at about 7.4 nautical miles southwest off Balingawan Point, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro was spotted.¹ Dr. Irene Rodriguez of the UP Marine Sciences Institute stated that the oil spill might be worse than the 2006 Guimaras oil spill.²

WHEREAS, according to UP Marine Science Institute, 36,000 hectares of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrasses face impending destruction should the sunken ship be not removed from the waters. It is feared that within a week's time, the oil spill will reach the Cuyo Islands in Northern Palawan.³ Oil spill causes fish kill, decay of marine ecosystems such as mangroves and corals, and poisoning of sea birds. Vapors from the fuel oil causes health implications to humans too, as of 08 March 2023, claims by residents of dizziness and nausea has been reported in Pola, Oriental Mindoro.⁴

WHEREAS, as of 08 March 2023, it was reported that the oil spill has reached Palawan and UP Marine Sciences Institute's Dr. Rodriguez stated that it will continue to spread northeast due to the prevailing wind condition brought by northeast monsoon or locally known as amihan.⁵

WHEREAS, the affected areas of the oil spill is within the Verde Island Passage Marine Corridor (VIPMC), the VIPMC covers an area of 1.4 Million hectares, covering the coasts of Batangas, Marinduque, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, and Romblon, with over 2 Million people living within the VIPMC depending on its resources for food and livelihood.⁶

¹ Philippine News Agency, "Oil spill recovery begins after tanker sinks off Oriental Mindoro" accessed at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1196390>.

² The Manila Times, "Oil spill could trigger fish shortage - expert", accessed at <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/08/news/national/oil-spill-could-trigger-fish-shortage-expert/1881663>

³ The Manila Times, "Mindoro oil spill to reach Palawan", accessed at <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/07/news/regions/mindoro-oil-spill-to-reach-palawan/1881550>.

⁴ BBC, "Philippines oil spill: Residents report nausea and dizziness in affected villages", accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64871285>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Department of Environment and Natural Resources (2009), "The Verde Framework", accessed at https://bmb.gov.ph/bmb/Action_Plan/VIP_Framework%2013sept.pdf

WHEREAS, Dr. Kent Carpenter and Dr. Victor Springer published a scientific study in which they coined the Verde Island Passage as the “Center of the Center” of Marine Shore Fish Biodiversity.⁷

WHEREAS, the study found that the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean waters also converge and probably exchange properties within Verde Island Passage bringing nutrients that sustain the more than 300 species of corals that host nearly 60% of the world’s known shorefish species.⁸

WHEREAS, several House Bills passed to protect the Verde Island Passage, which have not been enacted into law, such as HB No. 00916⁹, HB No. 02729¹⁰, and HB No. 06089¹¹.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the House of Representatives of the Philippines, to direct the Committee on Ecology to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the cause of the oil spill that started off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro and the urgent containment and removal measures already being conducted and yet to be conducted to prevent further damage to the rich natural resources of the Verde Island Passage.

Adopted,



JOEY SARTE SALCEDA

⁷ Carpenter, et al. (2005), *The Center of the Center of Marine Shore Fish Biodiversity: the Philippine Islands*, Environmental Biology of Fishes (2005): 72: 467-480.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ An Act Declaring the Verde Island Passage Marine Corridor as a Maritime Protected Area and Ecotourism Zone, Creating For The Purposes the Verde Island Passage Management Board, Defining its Powers and Functions, Providing Funds Therefor, And For Other Purposes.

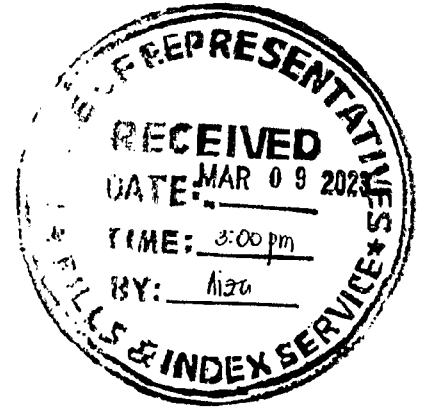
¹⁰ An Act Declaring the Verde Island Passage as Marine Protected Area and an Eco-Tourism Zone.

¹¹ An Act Declaring the Verde Island Passage in The Provinces of Batangas, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, and Romblon, as an Ecotourism Zone, Appropriating Funds Therefor, And for Other Purposes.

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 850



Introduced by Representative Wilbert T. Lee

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPACT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOOD OF FISHERFOLKS OF THE REPORTED OIL SPILL IN NAUJAN, ORIENTAL MINDORO, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF IMPLEMENTING URGENT INTERVENTIONS AND ASSISTANCE TO HELP AFFECTED FISHERMEN AND IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS ACCIDENT

1 **WHEREAS**, Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution states that "[t]he State shall
2 protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with
3 the rhythm and harmony of nature";

4
5 **WHEREAS**, Article XIII, Section 7, of the same states that "[t]he State shall protect
6 the rights of subsistence fishermen, especially of local communities, to the preferential use of
7 the communal marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. It shall provide support
8 to such fishermen through appropriate technology and research, adequate financial, production,
9 and marketing assistance, and other services. The State shall also protect, develop, and
10 conserve such resources. The protection shall extend to offshore fishing grounds of subsistence
11 fishermen against foreign intrusion. Fish workers shall receive a just share from their labor in
12 the utilization of marine and fishing resources";

13
14 **WHEREAS**, Presidential Decree No. 600, Section 2 states: "It is hereby declared a
15 national policy to prevent and control the pollution of seas by the dumping of wastes and other
16 matter which create hazards to human health, harm living resources, and marine life; damage
17 amenities; or interfere with the legitimate uses of the sea within the territorial jurisdiction of
18 the Philippines;

19
20 **WHEREAS**, MT Princess Empress, a motor tanker owned by RDC Reield Marine
21 Services (RDC) carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil, sailed from Limay, Bataan en route to
22 Iloilo with 20 crew members on board;¹

23
¹ Rappler (7 March 2022) MT Princess Empress insured for \$1 billion, says MARINA official. Accessed last 8 March 2023 from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/marina-official-says-mt-princess-empress-insured/>

1 **WHEREAS**, on 28 February 2023, MT Princess Empress capsized off the coast of
2 Naujan, Oriental Mindoro and submerged two days after experiencing engine trouble;

3
4 **WHEREAS**, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said that the MT
5 Princess Empress is thought to be lying at about 1,200 feet or 400 meters below sea level in
6 which a remotely operated vehicle will be deployed to determine the exact location of the
7 sunken tanker² and threatens to harm at least 21 marine protected areas in the province;³

8
9 **WHEREAS**, the sinking released emulsified black and thick industrial oil, which
10 affects the marine ecosystem as it contaminates the resources and destroy their habitat, posed
11 health hazards to residents and disrupts their livelihood;

12
13 **WHEREAS**, marine scientists warned that it could affect around 20,000 hectares of
14 coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of seagrass in municipalities across Oriental and Occidental
15 Mindoro, Palawan, and Antique;⁴

16
17 **WHEREAS**, the province of Oriental Mindoro declared a state of calamity in 76
18 coastal barangays across nine municipalities (Naujan, Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud,
19 Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay and Bulalacao), in the wake of the oil spill from MT Princess
20 Empress which sank off Naujan town;

21
22 **WHEREAS**, the municipality of Caluya, province of Antique likewise declared a state
23 of calamity after about 8 kilometers of its shoreline covering the villages Semirara, Tinogboc
24 and Sibolo were affected by the spill;⁵

25
26 **WHEREAS**, the issuance of fishing and swimming restrictions on the coastal of
27 Oriental Mindoro not only disrupt the livelihood of fishermen, but also other sectors relying
28 on coastal activities such as tricycle drivers, vendors, and tourism workers;⁶

29
30 **WHEREAS**, the communities in the said province and nearby coastal areas are
31 seriously threatened by the oil spill with environmental risks, health hazards and impact to their
32 livelihood ;

33
34 **WHEREAS**, the prohibition on fishing forced Oriental Mindoro's 18,000 fishermen to
35 halt their fishing activities, resulting to loss of income and means to afford their basic needs;

36
37 **WHEREAS**, in a media interview, Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA)
38 spokesperson Sharon Aledo said the MT Princess Empress owner RDC Reield Marine Services

² Cabico, Gaea Katreena. 2023. *Oriental Mindoro oil spill leaves fishers short on cash and food*. March 8. Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/03/08/2250158/oriental-mindoro-oil-spill-leaves-fishers-short-cash-and-food>.

³ Sadongdong, Martin. 2023. *PCG tells 4 Mindoro towns to stop fishing activities as oil spill spreads*. March 3. Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://mb.com.ph/2023/03/03/pcg-tells-4-mindoro-towns-to-stop-fishing-activities-as-oil-spill-spreads/>.

⁴ Valente, Catherine S., Red Mendoza, Moises Cruz, and Bella Cariaso. 2023. *Mindoro oil spill could spread to 2 provinces*. March 5. Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/03/05/news/regions/mindoro-oil-spill-could-spread-to-2-provinces/1881345>.

⁵ Inquirer. 2023. *Mindoro fishers bear brunt of oil spill*. March 8. Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/492401/mindoro-fishers-bear-brunt-of-oil-spill>.

⁶ Cabico, Gaea Katreena. 2023. *Oriental Mindoro fishing ban also hurts other sectors relying on coastal activities*. March 7. Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/03/07/>

1 (RDC), is covered by a \$1 billion Protection and Indemnity Insurance for "every incident"
2 including an oil spill;⁸

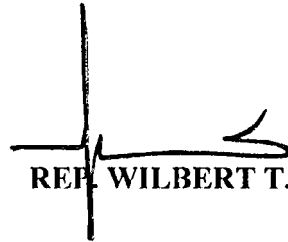
3

4 **WHEREAS**, a sizeable portion of the Philippine economy relies on the marine
5 resources of the country and it is imperative upon the House of Representatives to determine
6 the extent of the damage to marine resources, hold those responsible for both the short-term
7 and long-term consequences of the oil spill and its environmental repercussions accountable.
8 Likewise, Congress must ensure that immediate aid and temporary employment are
9 expeditiously provided to all communities affected especially to the fishermen;

10

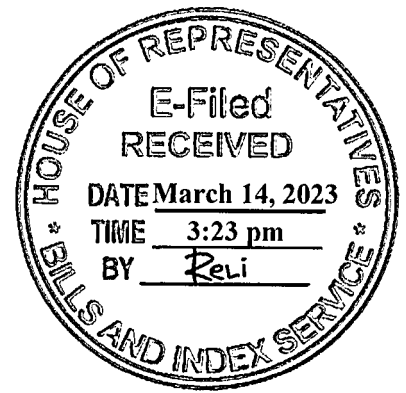
11 **NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, to direct the appropriate House
12 Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the impact to the environment and
13 livelihood of fisherfolks of the reported oil spill in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, with the end in
14 view of implementing urgent interventions and assistance to help affected fishermen and
15 identifying possible accountability among those involved in this accident.

Adopted,


REP. WILBERT T. LEE

⁸ Supranotes no. 1

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



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
House Resolution No. 862

Introduced by Hon. Antonio B. Legarda Jr.

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, AND TOURISM IMPACTS OF THE OIL SPILL IN ORIENTAL MINDORO, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENCOURAGING OVERSIGHT FROM ALL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

WHEREAS, on 28 February 2023, the MT Princess Empress, carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil, capsized and sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, resulting in widespread pollution and blackened waters, which disrupted the source of income of our fisherfolks and posed several health risks to families living nearby;

WHEREAS, as of 7 March 2023, the municipalities of Pola, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay, and Bulalacao, totalling 77 coastal villages, were affected by the oil spill and were placed under a state of calamity;

WHEREAS, the municipality of Caluya, Antique was also placed in a state of calamity as the oil spill reached the shorelines of Sitio Sabang in Barangay Tinogboc; Taong, Banua Proper and Sitio Balibago all in Barangay Semirara; and Sitio Liwagao in Barangay Sibolo;

WHEREAS, the oil spill might affect about 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves, and 6,000 hectares of seagrass in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique and Palawan according to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute;

WHEREAS, news reports state that an estimate of around 13,000 families in Oriental Mindoro, and 7,100 families in Caluya, Antique have been affected by the oil spill;

WHEREAS, the Department of Tourism (DOT) reported that the oil spill affected marine protected areas in Pola, Oriental Mindoro, specifically - the King Fisher Reserve, St. John the Baptist Marine Sanctuary, Song of the Sea Fish Sanctuary, Stella Mariz Fish Sanctuary, Bacawan Fish Sanctuary, St. Peter the Rock Fish Sanctuary, and the San Isidro Labrador Fish Sanctuary;

WHEREAS, the DOT also reported that beach resorts in Oriental Mindoro, specifically - Bihya Beach, 3 Cottage, Long Beach, Aguada Beach Resort, Oloroso Beach Resort, Munting Buhangin Tagumpay Beach Resort, and Buhay na Tubig White Beach Resort, were also affected by the oil spill;

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) created Task Force Naujan Oil Spill, led by Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Marilou Erni as Task Force Commander;

WHEREAS, the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) also created a task force headed by UPV oil spill expert Prof. Resurreccion Sadaba, PhD, to respond to the oil spill;

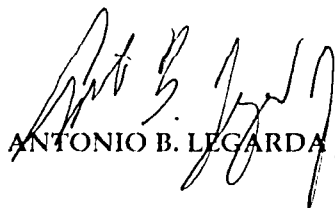
WHEREAS, there is a need to determine if Republic Act No. 9483, or the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007, which places the liability for oil spills on the owner and insurer with provisions for what damages are covered and circumstances that exempt them, would need revision;

WHEREAS, coastal communities need to be apprised of health hazards, any means to safely contribute to the containment efforts, as well as the required acts for preserving evidence and documenting damage estimates in order to avail of any reimbursement for clean-up assistance, payments for damage suffered and livelihood support as appropriate and necessary.

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives, in the strongest sense, urges the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Maritime Industry Authority (MIA), Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC), and other responsible government agencies, to conduct a whole-of-government approach in the immediate resolution to the adverse effects of the oil spill;

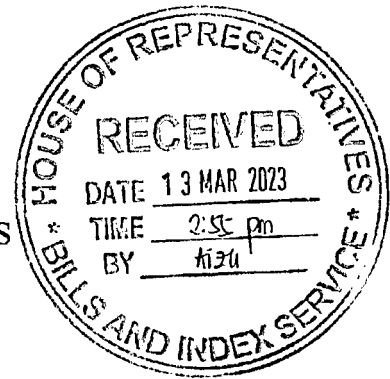
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives, to direct the appropriate House of Representatives committees to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the environmental, health, and tourism impacts of the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro, on the sufficiency of the Oil Pollution Compensation Act of 2007, on the measures from government and other sectors necessary to reduce damage to ecosystems and fishing grounds and restore livelihoods or support new ones, and on the transparency requirements that can apprise the public of liability, documentation of damage suffered, local actions and means to reduce damage, with the end view of encouraging oversight from all government agencies.

Approved,


ANTONIO B. LEGARDA JR.



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila



NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
House Resolution No. **854**

Introduced by Oriental Mindoro First Districts Representatives Aman C. Panaligan

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF MARITIME SAFETY LAWS AND MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS RELATIVE TO THE SINKING OF MT PRINCESS EMPRESS OFF THE COAST OF NAUJAN, ORIENTAL MINDORO RESULTING TO A MASSIVE OIL SPILL THAT IS THREATENING THE MARINE BIODIVERSITY OF THE PROVINCE

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, an environmental catastrophe occurred in the waters of the Province of Oriental Mindoro when MT Princess Empress carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil, sank off the coast of the town of Naujan facing Pola Bay that resulted to a massive oil spill in the waters of Oriental Mindoro;

WHEREAS, Oriental Mindoro, an island province that is blessed with blue coastal waters, rich fishing grounds teeming with marine life and pristine beaches, is now in grave danger because of the environmental degradation brought about by the oil spill resulting from the sinking of MT Princess Empress.; the main industries of Oriental Mindoro, notably the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors, have been severely affected; the oil spill has affected the livelihood of 30,042 families or 137,230 individuals living in the coastal areas;

WHEREAS, the area affected by the oil spill are not ordinary sea lanes but waters that are teeming with rich marine biodiversity since the waters of Mindoro Island are connected to the Verde Island Passage (VIP) that is considered as the center of the center of marine biodiversity; thus, the stakes in this environmental disaster are enormous,

WHEREAS, according to the Marine Science Institute of the University of the Philippines, more than 36,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass may be at risk due to the oil spill broken down into 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves and 6,000 hectares of seagrass;

WHEREAS, the oil spill poses serious hazards to the health and safety of the people living near the coastal areas contaminated by this pollution;

WHEREAS, the latest reports indicate that the oil spill has reached the waters near Taytay, Cuyo and Coron Islands in the northern part of Palawan and some areas of Panay; every day that oil spills from the sunken tanker means that wider areas of our fragile marine ecosystem will be devastated if left uncontrolled or unmanaged; The famous white beaches of Boracay in the Western Visayas may also be in danger depending on changes in the flow of the current;

WHEREAS, the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro is now threatening to reach the VIP based on the latest bulletin of the Marine Science Institute of the University of the Philippines (MSI-UP) due to the weakening Amihan; the VIP has the highest concentration of coastal fish, corals, crustaceans, mollusk, sea grass and mangroves and serves as home to endangered and threatened species including the critically endangered hawk bill turtle, whale sharks, manta rays, dugongs, humphead wrasses, giant growlers and clams;

WHEREAS, the oil spill crisis is no longer a local concern but of national interest considering its adverse impact on food security due to the expected decrease in the country's fisheries output; the Philippine Statistics Authority cites that Palawan and Oriental Mindoro contributed 86.7 percent and 2.57 percent which translates to 59,895.53 metric tons to regional fisheries production, respectively, in the second quarter last year;

WHEREAS, the owner of MT Princess Empress, RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC) has the primary obligation and liability in this environmental disaster; therefore, RDC should be compelled to carry out the immediate clean-up and rehabilitation of the waters and coastal areas ravaged by oil pollution;

WHEREAS, to ensure the protection of the right of the affected residents to a healthful ecology and the protection of the environment, an investigation of the possible violation of our existing maritime laws dealing with safety standards and marine environmental laws in connection with the sinking of MT Princess Empress and its consequent impact on the marine diversity of Oriental Mindoro is deemed timely;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF MARITIME SAFETY LAWS AND MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS RELATIVE TO THE SINKING OF MT PRINCESS EMPRESS OFF THE COAST OF NAUJAN, ORIENTAL MINDORO RESULTING TO A MASSIVE OIL SPILL THAT IS THREATENING THE MARINE BIODIVERSITY OF THE PROVINCE.

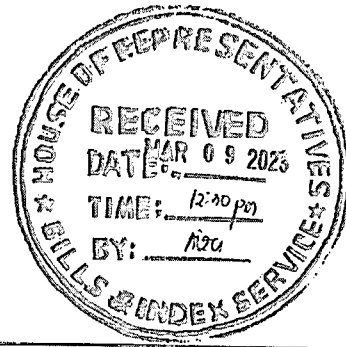
March 13, 2023


REP. ARNAN C. PANALIGAN
First District, Oriental Mindoro

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

RESOLUTION NO. **867**



SPONSORED BY:
REPRESENTATIVE KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO
1st District, Zamboanga City

RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AND INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SURROUNDING EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE SINKING OF *M/T PRINCESS EMPRESS* ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 AND RESULTED IN THE WORST OIL SPILL IN THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, *M/T Princess Empress*, owned by RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC), while en route to Iloilo from SL Gas Harbor Terminal in Limay, Bataan, and carrying with it 800,000 liters of industrial oil allegedly experienced engine trouble and capsized in the waters off Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro;¹

WHEREAS, the sinking resulted in the spillage of emulsified black and thick industrial oil which posed health hazards to affected residents and severely disrupted the livelihood of more than 15,000 fishermen, resorts, and other business establishments, the resolution stated²;

WHEREAS, a total of 77 coastal villages in the Municipalities of Pola, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay and Bulalacao were affected by the oil spill according to the resolution which was passed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Oriental Mindoro³;

WHEREAS, according to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI), the oil spill might affect about 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves and 6,000 hectares of seagrass in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique and Palawan, depending on its trajectory⁴;

WHEREAS, the environmental damage, displacement of more than 15 thousand families and the resultant loss of livelihood to fishermen as a result of this tragedy is unquantifiable;

WHEREAS, its grave impact on the tourism industry, including disruptions in the livelihood of the affected communities, tourism-dependent businesses, and recreational activities is also immeasurable;⁵

WHEREAS, *M/T Princess Empress* is covered by a \$1 billion Protection and Indemnity Insurance for "every incident" including an oil spill;⁶

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/marina-official-says-mt-princess-empress-insured>

² <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1739197/oil-spill-puts-8-more-towns-in-oriental-mindoro-in-calamity-state>

³ *Ibid.*

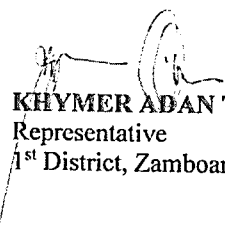
⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/marina-official-says-mt-princess-empress-insured/>

WHEREAS, M/T Princess Empress is an Oil Products Tanker which was built only in 2022 and putting the blame on the “engine trouble” that resulted in its capsizing raises more questions than answers on why this biggest environmental tragedy happened;

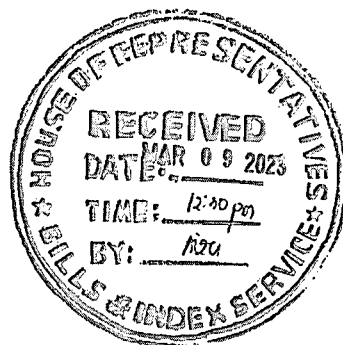
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED TO URGE THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AND INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SURROUNDING EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE SINKING OF *M/T PRINCESS EMPRESS* ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 AND RESULTED IN THE WORST OIL SPILL IN THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINES.


KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO
Representative
1st District, Zamboanga City

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

RESOLUTION NO. 867



SPONSORED BY:
REPRESENTATIVE KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO
1st District, Zamboanga City

RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AND INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SURROUNDING EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE SINKING OF *M/T PRINCESS EMPRESS* ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 AND RESULTED IN THE WORST OIL SPILL IN THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2023, *M/T Princess Empress*, owned by RDC Reield Marine Services (RDC), while en route to Iloilo from SL Gas Harbor Terminal in Limay, Bataan, and carrying with it 800,000 liters of industrial oil allegedly experienced engine trouble and capsized in the waters off Naujan town in Oriental Mindoro;¹

WHEREAS, the sinking resulted in the spillage of emulsified black and thick industrial oil which posed health hazards to affected residents and severely disrupted the livelihood of more than 15,000 fishermen, resorts, and other business establishments, the resolution stated²;

WHEREAS, a total of 77 coastal villages in the Municipalities of Pola, Naujan, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay and Bulalacao were affected by the oil spill according to the resolution which was passed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Oriental Mindoro³;

WHEREAS, according to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI), the oil spill might affect about 20,000 hectares of coral reefs, 9,900 hectares of mangroves and 6,000 hectares of seagrass in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Antique and Palawan, depending on its trajectory⁴;

WHEREAS, the environmental damage, displacement of more than 15 thousand families and the resultant loss of livelihood to fishermen as a result of this tragedy is unquantifiable;

WHEREAS, its grave impact on the tourism industry, including disruptions in the livelihood of the affected communities, tourism-dependent businesses, and recreational activities is also immeasurable;⁵

WHEREAS, *M/T Princess Empress* is covered by a \$1 billion Protection and Indemnity Insurance for "every incident" including an oil spill;⁶

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/marina-official-says-mt-princess-empress-insured>

² <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1739197/oil-spill-puts-8-more-towns-in-oriental-mindoro-in-calamity-state>

³ Ibid.

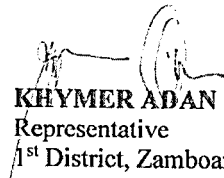
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/luzon/marina-official-says-mt-princess-empress-insured/>

WHEREAS, M/T Princess Empress is an Oil Products Tanker which was built only in 2022 and putting the blame on the “engine trouble” that resulted in its capsizing raises more questions than answers on why this biggest environmental tragedy happened;

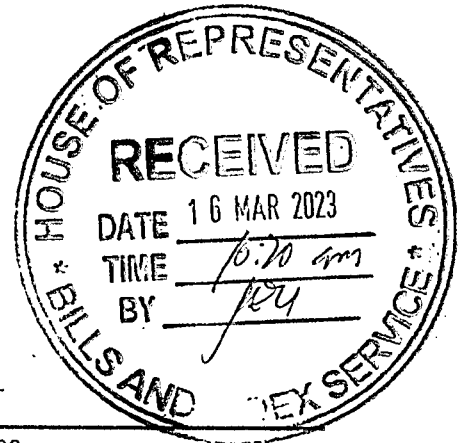
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED TO URGE THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AND INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SURROUNDING EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE SINKING OF *M/T PRINCESS EMPRESS* ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 AND RESULTED IN THE WORST OIL SPILL IN THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINES.


KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO
Representative
1st District, Zamboanga City

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,


ARLENE D. BROSAS
Gabriela Women's Party

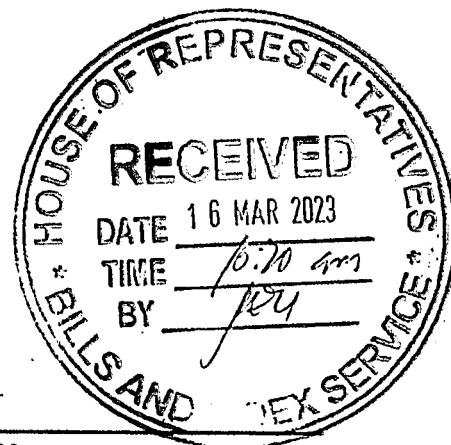

FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Partylist


RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL
Kabataan Partylist

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

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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;

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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;

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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;

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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;

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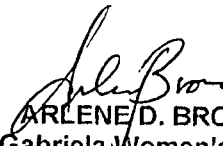
WHEREAS, the national government must provide immediate compensation for the fisherfolk and families affected by the oil spill, and must exhaust all means to stop the further spread of the industrial fuel oil;


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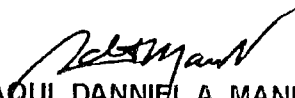
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Adopted,


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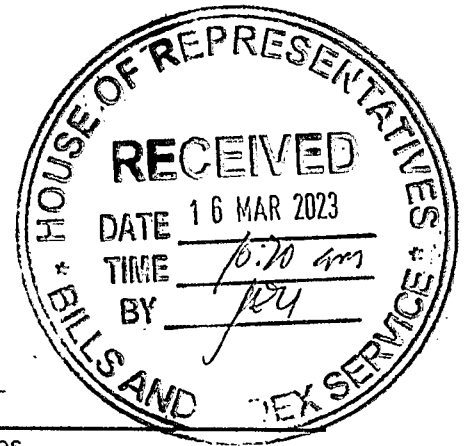

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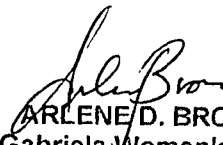
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