



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City



MESSAGE – BAMPIS SUMMIT

I am one with the organizers of the BAMPIS Mining Summit in seeking vigilance against the dangers posed by mining.

The communities of Benguet, Abra, Mountain Province and Ilocos Sur know too well the ill effects of mining. The wounds from the pollution produced by the operations of Lepanto Mining in Benguet are still fresh in the minds of the residents.

Even now, mining companies are knocking on the doors of these provinces, promising economic boom. But what price are we willing to pay for such promises?

I do not blindly object to mining. I recognize that we need to get valuable minerals from the earth to sustain lifestyles and technologies that are used in our modern world. What I object to is the destructive way by which mining companies conduct their businesses.

Thus far, I have no knowledge of a large-scale mining activity in the Philippines which has been other than destructive. Mining leaves a scar on the earth, with wounds running deep beneath the earth's surface.

To aggravate this, lately there have been aggressive media campaigns by mining companies highlighting their so-called corporate social responsibility activities. These CSR activities consist mostly of forestation or tree-planting. I see this as a means of distracting the public as to the harmful effects of mining. I also see these so-called CSR activities as an admission that mining companies cannot restore what they have taken from the earth.

While I appreciate the value of trees, I cannot fathom how trees can replace minerals. At best, those trees will turn into coal, or oil, or diamonds after several generations of being subjected to geological pressure. I do not think any of us will be around to benefit from those byproducts of the earth.

Mining extracts minerals and metals, not trees. What mining companies extract from the earth cannot be replaced until after millions of years under ideal conditions, conditions that likely do not exist anymore or which never will be replicated.

Likewise, there are effects on the environments such as runoff of tailings for certain kinds of minerals. And because mining happens underground, substructures need to be cleared, leaving the ground without support. This can result in cave-ins or sink holes.

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And for all of these effects, the only clear trade-off that mining companies can guarantee is a reforestation program of areas that may not even lack forests. Clearly there is an error in this equation.

I am a principal author of one of the Mining Bills filed to replace the Mining Act of 1995. The consolidation and deliberations of the new mining bills are still being conducted at the committee level but I hope that this will be passed in the 15th Congress.

I concede that there is a way to make mining sustainable. I believe such sustainability starts when mining companies respect the needs of communities and truly appreciate how their operations affect the residents around mining areas.

To gain that respect, the people of Benguet, Abra, Mountain Province and Ilocos Sur must be forever vigilant against destructive mining operations. This summit is therefore timely and very much needed by the residents of these provinces.

The summit's theme, *Bantay, Baybay ken Karayan Saluadan! Makadadael a Panagminas Lapdan! Militarisasyon, Pasardengen!* seeks to address a number of concerns. But that is how it should be, for mining spans a myriad of interests, several of them conflicting. From out of that cacophony of interests we must achieve a balance that results in the protection and preservation of the rights of affected communities.

I urge the participants in this summit to expend their energies towards achieving such a balance. I am confident that in that way, we will avoid the mishaps of the past, and attain a more promising future. May each and everyone's mind and spirit be guided by reason throughout this summit.

Thank you and a pleasant day to you all.

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