

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 594
Filed May 20, 2008

Introduced by: Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro A. Casiño

RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL CULTURAL COMMUNITIES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE ALLEGED ABUSES COMMITTED BY THE AUSTRALIA-BACKED MINING FIRM OCEANIA GOLD PHILIPPINES INCORPORATED AGAINST TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN DIDIPIO, KASIBU, NUEVA VIZCAYA

WHEREAS, the Ifugao, Bugkalot and other tribes in Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, have been raising complaints on the abuses of Australia-backed company Oceania Gold Philippines, Inc. committed against their communities due to mining exploration and operation projects in their area;

WHEREAS, tribal residents of this upland town have expressed disgust over the rapid loss of their rice lands amid the ongoing land-clearing operations by Oceania Gold Philippines Inc.;

WHEREAS, barangay officials of Didipio fear a possible shortage of locally produced rice and other farm products as Oceania Gold continues to bulldoze lands despite controversies hounding its operations;

WHEREAS, Didipio is the site of OceaniaGold's proposed US\$117-million gold-copper project that is being opposed by the residents as well as the Catholic Church due to alleged human rights violations allegedly committed by the company;

WHEREAS, rice lands within the planned 425-hectare primary impact area, which the company bought access to, have now become barren tracts of land to make way for the mining project as Oceania Gold has allegedly been clearing lands, demolishing houses and ejecting residents in Didipio since December 2007 in an attempt to meet its February 2009 target to start production operations;

WHEREAS, village officials have also denounced the alleged haphazard destruction of their water sources, which drain into the Didipio River. The said river is among the headwaters of the Cagayan River, which provides irrigation to vast tracts of rice lands in Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Isabela and Cagayan provinces;

WHEREAS, Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to suspend the operations of Oceania Gold amid the latest incidents of violence in the area in connection with the company's ongoing demolition activities;

WHEREAS, Villena, who also chairs the Regional Development Council of Cagayan Valley, has opposed the Didipio project, saying it does not follow the Arroyo administration's goal of developing Northern Luzon as an agribusiness hub;

WHEREAS, local government officials such as Governor Luisa Cuaresma, Kasibu Mayor Romeo Tayaban and local indigenous peoples leaders of the Kasibu Inter-tribal Response Towards Ecological Development (KIREED), Defend Patrimony, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) and Save the Valley, Serve the People, are supporting the people's opposition to Oceania Gold's operations as well as future mining projects in the area;

WHEREAS, Kasibu Mayor Tayaban has sought a Congressional investigation on the urgent matter facing his municipality;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Committee on National Cultural Communities immediately conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the alleged abuses committed by the Australia-backed mining firm Oceania Gold Philippines Incorporated against tribal communities in Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya.

Adopted,

Teodoro A. Casiño
Bayan Muna Party List