

“Land use issues in Mindanao at the forefront of AKBAYAN Legislator”

“Who could ever forget Ondoy’s onslaught in Metro Manila and parts of Luzon? Similarly, the flooding in Cagayan de Oro City and the rest of Mindanao just recently where a simple rain unexpectedly rose into damaging flood waters affecting hundreds of us here” said Rep. Arlene “Kaka” Bag-ao of AKBAYAN. *“Alarmingly, we now feel the consequences of our unfettered utilization of our land resources not to mention the effects of climate change. We have been witnesses and victims of the most damaging typhoons and flood ever to have hit our region”* she further said.

The AKBAYAN solon expressed this in a Mindanao-wide land use consultation today in Demiren Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City where more than sixty (60) land use advocates from all over the region gathered to tackle pressing issues on land and its multiple and often conflicting uses. The consultation was organized by Campaign for Land Use Policy, Now! (CLUP Now!), formerly known as People’s ALARM. CLUP Now! is a national network of 28 Peoples’ Organizations (POs) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) advocating for the passage of a National Land Use Law for nearly twenty years. The group is supporting HB 478 the version filed by AKBAYAN Reps. Bag-ao and Walden Bello.

“Clearly, the absence of a land use framework and sectoral laws conflicting with each other result in increasing cases of conflicting claims on land use. Such are our case in Don Carlos, Bukidnon where the ancestral lands of the Manobo indigenous communities were distributed by the DAR to non-IP groups resulting in conflicting situation between IPs and farmers,” said Datu Marcial Tahuyan of the Lumida group.

Similar disputes arise between urban poor settlers and landowner/developer, indigenous peoples’ groups and logging concessionaires/ mining companies and even within the marginalized groups as conflicting and unclear provisions of land-related policies sow confusion and disturbance. Worse, in many instances, the lack of a national land use policy work against the marginalized communities, as they threaten their livelihood and security and therefore their very existence.

Land use is also a priority measure of the Aquino government. To address abovementioned conflicts, the bill aims to harmonize the existing laws on land use. The salient features of the bill include the principles of 1) rational and holistic appreciation on land use; 2) considers concerns of the basic sectors; 3) participatory and democratic with its bottom-up approach in land use planning; 4) patriotic; and 5) gender and culture sensitive.

The activity commenced with a covenant signing wherein signatures of the participants will be enjoined with the signatures of the participants from Luzon and Visayas for the lobbying work for HB 478 in the Congress. ###

Campaign for Land Use Policy Now! (CLUP Now!)

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