

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **3531**



INTRODUCED BY REP. NANCY A. CATAMCO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Protection and conservation of the environment is, needless to say, of utmost importance to a country which prides itself as an archipelago abundant with pristine natural resources. During this period of unrestrained environmental degradation and rampant violations of environmental laws, it is rather unfortunate that there is no sufficient and palpable implementation of numerous environmental laws. Even with the constitutional mandate of protecting and advancing the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature, governmental effort is still severely missing.

According to the Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21), which is our own national agenda for sustainable development, one of its five goal elements is Ecological Integrity. It states that "the path towards enhancing the integrity of the country's ecological domain will have to involve *heightened and sustained implementation* of environmental laws, as well as the continued pursuit of resource conservation, and environmental restoration/enhancement programs."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) may be adequately empowered to conserve, manage, and develop the country's environment and natural resources, it still lacks the driving force in pursuing sustainable development. Requests for assistance may have been issued and Memoranda of Agreement may have been entered into with regard to campaigns against illegal activities, but most of them have not gained permanency or genuine effectivity.

Moreover, countless lives of foresters, environment and natural resources officers, and even private individuals in areas with mining or illegal logging activities have been sacrificed. It is apparent that what emboldens those who transgress environmental laws or cause senseless deaths is the lack of teeth in the enforcement of laws.

It is therefore high time to enhance the enforcement capabilities of the DENR by providing it with adequate and permanent deputies from the country's primary law enforcement agency. For the most effective implementation of environmental laws, it is consequently crucial that a special police unit focusing its resources entirely in the protection and conservation of our environment.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly and urgently requested.



NANCY A. CATAMCO

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE
PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 35 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

The State shall promote and protect the global environment and prevent to the greatest extent practicable, injury and/or damage to it in order to attain sustainable development of the country.

Towards this end, there is hereby established the Philippine National Police – Environmental Protection Unit (PNP-EPU), which shall commit itself to the protection of the environment through effective enforcement of all Philippine environmental laws and shall serve as a effective deterrent to the destruction of the environment.

SEC. 2. Section 35 of Republic Act 6975 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 35. Support Units - The PNP shall be supported by administrative and operational support units. The administrative support units shall consist of the Crime Laboratory, Logistic Unit, Communications Unit, Computer Center, Finance Center and Civil Security Unit. The operational support units shall be composed of the Maritime Police Unit, Police Intelligence Unit, Police Security Unit, Criminal Investigation Unit, Special Action Force, Narcotics units, Aviation Security Unit, Traffic Management Unit, the Medical and Dental Centers, the Civil Relations Unit

and **THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT**. To enhance police operational efficiency and effectiveness, the Chief of the PNP may constitute such other support units as may be necessary subject to the approval of the Commission: Provided, That no support unit headed by a chief superintendent or a higher rank can be created unless provided by law."

SEC. 3. Section 35 (b) of the same act is hereby amended to read as follows:

"(b) OPERATIONAL SUPPORT UNITS.

(11) ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT. – HEADED BY A DIRECTOR WITH THE RANK OF CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT, THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT SHALL PERFORM ALL POLICE FUNCTIONS OVER ALL PHILIPPINE TERRESTRIAL, FLUVIAL, AND AERIAL DOMAINS IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF ALL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, AND WHOSE OFFICERS SHALL COORDINATE WITH AND BE DEPUTIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING LAWS."

SEC. 5. *Mandate.* – The PNP-EPU is hereby mandated to provide support to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the enforcement of all Philippine environmental laws and regulations. The PNP-EPU is further charged with protecting the health, safety, and individual rights of the public through the enforcement of Environmental Conservation and related laws and public education.

SEC. 4. *Establishment.* – A PNP-EPU office shall be established in every city, province, and local government unit with an area proclaimed, designated or set aside, pursuant to a law, presidential decree, presidential proclamation or executive order as national park, game refuge, bird and wildlife sanctuary, wilderness area, strict nature reserve, watershed, mangrove reserve, fish sanctuary, natural and historical landmark, protected and managed landscape/seascape as well as identified virgin forests before and after the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 6 *Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in coordination with the Philippine National Police, the Department of Justice, and the Commission on Human Rights shall promulgate rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations* – The Secretary of the DILG and the Secretary of the DENR, and other concerned agencies shall immediately include in their respective Department's programs the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive issuances, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect immediately after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,