



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain
and for Self Determination*

November 17, 2008

MINING UPDATE

Mines Unsafety Celebration in Bakun Galvanizes Community Stand against Royalco

GAMBANG, Bakun (November 17)—The community of Gambang in Bakun, Benguet resolved to further strengthen their organization and collective opposition to against large and large and destructive mining in their hometown, particularly to Australian mining company Royalco which has violated the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the community. Gambang hosted the Mines Unsafety Celebration on November 15, with Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo as Keynote Speaker, at Bagtangan Elementary School. It was attended by some 500 delegates.



Royalco has commenced mining exploration without acquiring the affected communities' FPIC. The Mines Unsafety Celebration was hosted by BAKUN AYWANAN (protect and nurture Bakun), and organized by the Benguet Mining Alert and Action Network (BMAAN) with the CPA.

Bayan Muna, together with partylists Anakpawis and Gabriela Women's Party passed House Resolution Number 742 in August 21, 2008 Urging the National Committee on Cultural Communities to Conduct an Inquiry, in Aid of Legislation, into the Alleged Irregularities Committed by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Issuance of a Certificate of Compliance and Exploration Permit to the Australian Mining Firm Royalco Philippines Inc., despite Opposition of Tribal Residents of Brgy. Gambang Bakun, Benguet to the said company's on going mining exploration activities.

The community invited the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and its Regional Council, who shared lessons and gains from the successful opposition to large and destructive mines particularly in communities of Itogon, Benguet (Benguet Corporation and Philex Mines), Kalinga (Batong Buhay Mines), Apayao (ongoing struggle against Anglo American subsidiary Cordillera Exploration and Copperfields), Mountain Province (Benguet Corporation, Marcopper), and

Mankayan, Benguet and Cervantes, Ilocos Sur on Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. Cervantes Vice Mayor Robert Harnois expressed solidarity to the people of Bakun and shared how Lepanto's minewaste destroyed vast ricefields in downstream Cervantes. Other local government officials present are Gambang Brgy. Captain Paquito Alvaro; Gonzalo Paterno, Secretary to Bakun Mayor Marcelo Contada. Also in solidarity at the event is former Bakun Mayor Bartolome Sacla. Representatives of the Lepanto Employees Union (LEU) shared the unjust policies of Lepanto to its workers, and the very unsafe conditions of workers in the minesite, above or underground.

Both the challenging keynote address from Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, the sharing of experiences from the different Cordillera provinces galvanized the community's resolve to fight large and destructive mining and not to allow Royalco one step further into Bakun after its FPIC violation. The community is now looking forward to the congressional inquiry, and will continue to launch mobilizations and dialogues with concerned offices, such as the NCIP. The activity was sealed with the signing of the Bakun and Benguet Declarations.

The Bakun case is similar to what had happened in Baay Licuan, Abra, which Canadian mining company Olympus drilled without acquiring the FPIC of the Binongan indigenous peoples, whose ancestral domain is the area covered by Olympus' application. Sustained community mobilization, petitions, dialogues, and the unwavering unity of the Binongan communities frustrated Olympus, even at the face of militarization, harassment of local leaders and deception tactics of the company. # ***Cordillera Peoples Alliance Public Information Commission***

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