



# CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

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

31 January 2013

SENATOR SERGIO R. OSMEÑA III  
Senate of the Philippines  
15<sup>th</sup> Congress

Dear Senator Osmeña,

Greetings from the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA)!

We write with urgent concern regarding the Tailings Pond 3 (TP3) Failure of Philex Mining Corporation. Five major tailings discharges were reported from August 1 to September 13, 2012 when Philex TP3 collapsed in August 2012, resulting to at least 6 million metric tons of mine tailings into the Balog Creek down to Agno River and San Roque Dam.

The collapse and failure of this tailings pond wrought serious devastation and destruction to indigenous peoples of Itogon and Tuba in Benguet province, the peasant and goldpanning communities of San Nicolas and San Manuel in Pangasinan. The Agno River is both a life and livelihood source of these communities. It is also one of the five major rivers of the Cordillera region which drains into Lingayen Gulf. The Agno has been historically polluted with the mine tailings of Philex since its operations in 1958, and it was only in 1967 that its Tailings Dam 1 operated. Its Tailings Pond 2 collapsed in 1992, resulting to the release of 80 million metric tons of tailings. Indeed, the failure of Philex's tailings dams is one of the biggest mining disasters in the country.

With the Philex mining disasters being historic, our organization and the affected communities have been protesting the operations of Philex and other large mining companies in the Cordillera region due to the irreversible, irreparable damage done to our ancestral domain and ecosystem and violation to our collective rights as indigenous peoples. There are also complaints regarding the unsound plight of its mineworkers. In September 2012, as a part of our sustained protest, CPA was part of a fact finding mission with CBCP-NASSA on the TP3 failure, and in October 2012, we organized and led an environmental and social investigation mission (EIM) on the TP3 failure.

With this historic problem and historic people's opposition, it is urgent and significant to hold a senate investigation. In aid of legislation, we hope that this investigation will also review the Philippine mining industry and the laws and policies related to it, and to surface the complete truth and information surrounding the Philex TP3 failure, so the public may know. We will also be glad to share the findings of our EIM.

Thank you Senator and we hope for your urgent attention and action to this concern.

Respectfully,

  
MS. ABIGAIL B. ANONGOS  
CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE  
Secretary General

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