

DEAR PRESIDENT NOYNOY AQUINO,

On November 24, 2012 one hundred twenty five (125) farmers, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples from the town of Casiguran, Aurora began marching to Manila in order to assert their firm opposition against the Aurora Pacific Ecozone and Freeport (APECO).

APECO was established by R.A.10083 over 12,923 hectares of productive agricultural lands and natural forests in Casiguran. The affected area is home to at least three thousand farmer, fisherfolk, and indigenous families – people who have been building their lives on these lands for decades, and have walked on their last hopes to defend their home.

Mr. President, WALANG DAANG MATUWID SA APECO.

THE TRUTHS ARE:

The APECO Law was passed without consultation with the people of Casiguran.

The APECO Law was passed without approval of the local government unit of Casiguran—a violation of the Local Government Code (RA 7160) and the APECO Law itself.

APECO displaces fisherfolk without provision for relocation and livelihood—a violation of the Fisheries Code (RA 8550).

APECO intrudes into ancestral lands of the Agta Dumagats without their "Free, Prior and Informed Consent"—a violation of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (RA 8371).

APECO's proposed infrastructure and industries will destroy at least 300 hectares of productive, irrigated rice lands thereby endangering food security in Aurora and the pristine waters of Casiguran Bay—a violation of the CARPer Law (RA 9700).

APECO disregards the rights of affected tillers of 105 hectares of land covered by the CARP (RA 6657).

Ten hectares of mangroves have already been cleared to give way to APECO – a clear violation of environment policies in PD 705 and DENR DMC 2008-03.

APECO paid more than **P650,000** per hectare for the coconut land of Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer **Benjamin Miña**, while it paid only P45,000 per hectare for the rice lands of those who have already lost their homes—a violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA 3019).

Since 2008, more than **P518-million of the people's money has already been released to APECO**, while a number of projects which have supported APECO's operations, such as the **Casiguran Mariculture Park**, remain non-operational or of dubious value. This raises the question of how sound and worthwhile are these ventures into which we are investing all of our taxpayers' monies.

Industries Development Corporation (IDC), the first registered investor in APECO asked for exemption from DENR DMC 2008-03 prohibiting commercial cutting of natural forests in Aurora in order to implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Province of Aurora and IDC, signed by Governor Angara-Castillo, Senator Edgardo Angara, Congressman Sonny Angara and Mr. Ong. In 2010, Mr. Ong was one of the 5 Board members of APECO.

APECO has paid **P120** million to **IDC** supposedly for the purchase of its logging rights—a blatant violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA 3019).

WALANG DAANG MATUWID SA APECO.

The APECO Law was passed without the benefit of a full feasibility study and of the required inputs from the affected communities. The bill, which merely lapsed into law, was sponsored by Senator Edgardo Angara in the Senate and Congressman Sonny Angara in the House of Representatives, with the endorsement of Governor Bellaflor Angara-Castillo. Congressman Angara and Governor Angara-Castillo presently sit in the APECO Board, while Senator Angara admitted in 2010 he acts as CEO of APECO.

Mr. President, they are so powerful and we are powerless against them. *Hindi pinapakinggan ang boses ng mga maliliit.* The APECO is a virtual "republic" with more prerogatives and powers than any government corporation (GOCC) in the country today.

Who will benefit from the APECO? Illegal loggers, internet gambling operators, smugglers, land speculators? And who will get hurt? Farmers, small landowners, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, the environment, the national government coffers.

Tanong ni Lola Luz Gonzales, edad 79 at magsasaka, "**Bakit kami papaalisin ng APECO sa lupa na pinagyaman namin?"** Sabi ni Victor Abajon, isang katutubo, ang buhay bago APECO ay <u>"mahusay, matahimik at malaya."</u>

Mr. President, please stop funding the serial plunder of Casiguran. Please listen to the voiceless people of Aurora.

Maraming salamat, Ginoong Pangulo. Asahan ninyo na kasama kami sa pagtataguyod sa daang matuwid.

Signed,

Name	Signature	Residence

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