Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1353

Introduced by
LAS PINAS Representative CAMILLE A. VILLAR

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the 1987 Philippine Constitution commands all in a landmark declaration, “[t]he 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”

1 The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article II, Section 16 (Declaration of Principles and State Policies)
Whereas, the environment occupies pride of place in the fundamental law of the land and that the citizens must ensure that it is truly honored;

Whereas, the Philippines has been observing the Arbor Day—a tree planting day each year to promote a healthier ecosystem for more than half a century:

- Since 1947, Arbor Day in the Philippines has been institutionalized to be observed throughout the nation by planting trees and ornamental plants and other forms of relevant activities. Its practice was instituted through Proclamation No. 30.
- It was subsequently revised by Proclamation No. 41, issued in the same year.
- In 1955, the commemoration was extended from a day to a week and moved to the last full week of July.
- Over two decades later, its commemoration was moved to the second week of June.
- In 2003, the commemorations were reduced from a week to a day and was moved to June 25 per Proclamation No. 396. The same proclamation directed "the active participation of all government agencies, including government-owned and controlled corporations, private sector, schools, civil society groups and the citizenry in tree planting activity".
- It was subsequently revised by Proclamation 643 in 2004.

Whereas, in 2012, Republic Act 10176 was enacted in a bid "to combat the loss of our natural resources and rejuvenate our environment by undertaking nationwide tree planting activities and providing effective measures for their maintenance and sustainability,’ and the said statute mandated that "all able-bodied citizens of the Philippines, who are at least 12 years of age, shall be required to plant one tree every year";

Whereas, based on the most recent Food and Agriculture (FAO) Assessment Report, using the 2015 land cover data, the total forest cover of the Philippines is 7,014,156 hectares or 23.4% of the country’s total area of 30,000,000 hectares;

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2 Philippine Daily Inquirer, Letter to the Editor, by Mr. Ed Garcia, one of the framers of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, "PH Laws ensure protection of Ecosystem", February 13, 2018
3 Food and Agriculture Office, United Nations, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 Report for the Philippines
Whereas, World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) said that records from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) show about 47,000 hectares of forest cover are lost every year from rampant illegal logging and lack of security in areas declared as protected wildlife sanctuaries⁴;

Whereas, WWF-Philippines cited that this is an alarmingly huge figure that not only affects wildlife in those areas, but also affects the quality of air that humans breathe, lessens the protection that humans get from natural disasters, and dampens the natural prevention of emerging diseases;

Whereas, the following are observations of the WWF Philippines anent the continuing ecological malady in the country:

- The Philippines has one of the fastest deforestation rates in the world, and yet our forests house two thirds of the planet’s biodiversity, which supports a wide spectrum of flora and fauna. If we continue to allow our forests to be denuded, we will lose our forests in the next two decades and we open ourselves up to risks of emerging diseases,

- The continuing deforestation in the country could put the Philippines at risk from the emergence of new infectious diseases, as it loses one of its main protective barriers from possible outbreaks;

- Citing various studies from the United Nations and other non-government organizations, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) noted that emerging infectious diseases in tropical countries, like the Philippines, are aggravated, if not caused, by changes in land and forest cover, particularly deforestation and forest fragmentation.

- It pointed out that without forests, more and more diseases that could potentially be harmful or fatal to humans will emerge.

Whereas, the New York Times in a report very recently on Typhoon Rollie cited that “mass deforestation, including the destruction of mangroves along the coastlines, has torn away natural barriers to wind and water” and that the same

⁴ Manila Times, March 28, 2020, "PH risks new diseases without forest"; Also, Manila Bulletin, April 2, 2020
newspaper article noted that “the Asian Development Bank says that more than 23,000 people in the Philippines died from natural hazards from 1997 to 2016”\(^5\);

Whereas, the same NYT report indicated that “climate change is exacerbating the Philippines’ weakness to natural disasters, making it one of the most vulnerable countries on the planet, scientists say”\(^6\);

Whereas, the Philippines has a comprehensive set of environmental laws that must be implemented to protect the citizens and the country’s resources;

Whereas, we, the people and the nation as a whole, must act contemporaneously, fast, and vigorously to prevent the occurrence of further environmental damages in the Philippines: Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives as it hereby resolved, To express the sense of the House of Representatives for the full, immediate and massive implementation of the citizens’ Tree Planting Program, the complete observance of the Arbor Day and the broad carrying-out of the Reforestation Program and the various Climate Change approaches and efforts of the government in the light of the alarmingly huge deforestation rate and the many ills of ecological degradation in the country have lessened the protection of Filipinos from natural disasters.

Adopted,

\[\text{Signed}\]

CAMILLE A. VILLAR

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\(^6\) Ibid, NYT.