

COMP to collaborate with new DENR chief in weeding out illegal miners

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As it favorably welcomed the appointment of new Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) has sounded off its full support to the agency “in weeding out illegal miners and curtailing irresponsible mining practices.”

Atty Michael Toledo, chairman of COMP, acknowledged that these unscrupulous elements in the mining industry have besmirched the entire sector’s reputation, hence, it is the group’s keen goal to work with government in finally getting rid of them.

“COMP is for all efforts to foster and promote responsible minerals development in the Philippines...Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga can count on our full support in weeding out illegal miners and curtailing irresponsible mining practices, which have tarnished the reputation of our industry for so long,” he stressed.

Toledo said the chamber “looks forward to working with her (Yulo-Loyzaga) in fulfilling President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.’s thrust of striking a balance between economic development and environmental protection under his administration.”

The COMP chairman stated they will be collaborating with the new DENR chief, primarily in her advocacies relating to “disaster risk reduction and response, sustainable development goals, and climate change protection.”

He further conveyed “our sector eagerly anticipates a meaningful engagement with Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga as well as the members of the government’s economic team led by Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno who has said that mining will be accelerated under the Marcos administration to help buttress the country’s post-pandemic recovery initiatives.”

One of the policy pronouncements already laid down by President Marcos for the mining industry is to impose value added tax (VAT) on the export of partially-processed ore, instead of pursuing tax hikes for the mining sector.

He emphasized though that the government has yet to study whether or not there will be new fiscal incentives to be extended to the mining sector; and what will be the scale of these investment perks if ever.

The President also declared his administration’s drive to promote “responsible mining” – given the disastrous impacts that the extraction of mineral resources may inflict on the environment if these are not done with utmost accountability by the mining companies.

Prior to the exit of the Duterte administration, the long-time ban on open pit mining had been lifted December last year, but that called for paramount responsibility on the part of the mining companies to strictly follow the rules and protocols relative to that scale of mining operations in the country.

The easing of mining policies had been viewed by COMP as a way to push for “the revitalization of mining” – and that even prompted the local government of South Cotabato to finally allow the resumption of the large-scale Tampakan copper gold project in the area.

Onward, COMP noted that it looks forward “to further growth under the new administration and are ready to contribute to economic growth, even as we continue to be fully mindful of our environment, social, and governance performance for the benefit of present and future generations of Filipinos.” (MMV)