

Chamber of Mines asserts Lopez unfit to head DENR

By Louise Maureen Simeon (philstar.com) | Updated March 9, 2017 - 4:37pm

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The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines said Environment Secretary Gina Lopez is painting the mining industry as an "environmental rapist." **King Rodriguez/Presidential Photo, File**

MANILA, Philippines — The country's mining industry stood firm in its decision to oppose the confirmation of Environment Secretary Gina Lopez, a first time for the sector, maintaining that she remains to be unfit and unqualified for the post.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) said it has made an exception and chose to not support the appointee of the president for the first time.

"We are dealing with someone who does not believe in the Constitution's mandate for the state to undertake the exploration, development, and utilization of natural resources, and as such, has put us, government's partners in minerals development, at a quandary," the chamber said.

READ: ['No sacred cows': Lopez vows to treat her family like everyone else](#)

During the confirmation hearing of Lopez Thursday, COMP Legal and Policy Vice President Ronald Recidoro said Lopez is painting the mining industry as an "environmental rapist" that just take what they want and leave nothing but suffering and destruction.

Referring to the law, he emphasized that Lopez has a duty to enforce the Mining Act and her non-implementation, particularly on the issuance, monitoring and regulation of contracts should be a ground for her non-confirmation.

"It appears that she does not know the law," Recidoro said.

Furthermore, the industry noted that the secretary-designate bypassed legal and administrative processes and disregarded the essence of contracts when she ordered the closure of 23 mines, suspension of five others and the cancellation of 75 government-private sector mining agreements.

"Her bias against mining leaves her unable to appreciate the mechanics of the Mining Act. Lopez is oblivious to the fact that the first ones to suffer from the closures will be the miners and the small businesses working with these mines. She has no real plan to address these impacts other than the promise of a 'green economy' that will take years to implement," Recidoro said.

DENR Sec. Gina Lopez supervises the setting up of a model depicting the mining operations in the country in preparation for her CA hearing pic.twitter.com/PUYhnUX2yc

— Marvin Sy (@hey_marv) [March 9, 2017](#)

2 rooms used. Supporters and oppositors to the appointment of DENR Sec. Gina Lopez are at the Senate for her 2nd confirmation hearing pic.twitter.com/yawYUmkuUd

— Marvin Sy (@hey_marv) [March 9, 2017](#)

The chamber also emphasized that Lopez's actions are exposing the government to massive financial liability from international arbitration, which would eventually be shouldered by the country's taxpayers.

"She is tarnishing the country's image as an investment destination for public-private partnership contracts. Canceling such contracts without due process and changing the rules in the middle of the game frightens away potential investors," COMP said.

The industry iterated that while it occupies only 0.2 percent of the country's land area, it has contributed significantly to the countryside development.

"We act as provider to our host communities that government services cannot reach. Yet, Lopez has not done anything to stop the operation of thousands of illegal miners who are the biggest destroyers of the environment," the chamber said.

Moreover, stakeholders maintained that mining is not the current issue, but whether or not Lopez is the right person to head the DENR.

"We deserve experienced and qualified leadership from the DENR to effectively harness the country's natural resources. Lopez simply does not have these qualities," the chamber claimed.

"Her bias against mining and her blatant disregard for government procedures and processes make her unfit and unqualified to be DENR secretary. Her extreme ideology and environmental fanaticism will only cause a mess that will hurt many and benefit no one," it added.

Aside from the chamber, members of the academe and some indigenous people and members of the mining communities also opposed Lopez's confirmation.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/03/09/1679489/chamber-mines-asserts-lopez-unfit-head-denr>