

Opening Remarks

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Introduction to workshop on 'Community and State Interests in Small-Scale Mining: Sharing Experiences from the Asia-Pacific Region' Manila, 7–12 June 2005.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) warmly welcome the participants and guests of the Learning Event on "Community and State Interests in Small-Scale Mining: Sharing Experiences from the Asia-Pacific Region" and its organizers, the Philippine Sustainable Development Network Foundation (PSDN), Australian State University (ANU), and the Communities and Small-Scale Mining (CASM) network.

We are beset by numerous problems facing the small-scale mining industry, that an occasion such as this is timely because this can be a vehicle to review the situation at hand, express to our national government sound recommendations to fill in the gaps created by ineffective policies, and at the same time, address the environmental, safety and health and social sciences regarding the industry.

The economic extravaganza ushered in by industry has created a growth of local mining communities, employment opportunities, other business and livelihood activities of such communities where a mining activity exists. These positive contributions are somehow overshadowed by a chorus of persistent and yet, unfounded mining issues and concerns that threaten the very foundation of small-scale mining as a reliable income generating activity, especially in the rural sector.

On 16 January 2004, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo-issued Executive Order No. 270 entitled "National Policy Agenda on Revitalising Mining in the Philippines" as amended by Executive Order No. 270-A dated 20 April 2004. The Order provided twelve (12) guiding principles and specifically mentioned that "small-scale mining shall be promoted as a formal sector of the minerals industry and as part of the development initiative for both downstream and upstream industries". In spite of the significant contributions of small-scale mining, Government recognizes the its operation in the present context, with the exception of the traditional small-scale mining like panning and sluicing, is unsustainable. It is an activity with significant impact to human health and safety to the environment.

This learning activity could provide a forum for participants from here in our country and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region to share knowledge and experiences between the interests of different stakeholders in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector, and to the specific interests coming from local communities and the government as well.

So it is in this light that this representation wishes one and all to actively participate and grasp whatever learning that this conference has to offer and use it wisely once you come back to your own fields of expertise.

For a better and well-managed small-scale mining industry!