

October 16, 2025

Raphael P.M. Lotilla
Secretary
Department of Energy and Natural Resources
DENR Bldg. Visayas Avenue, Diliman,
1104 Quezon City,
Metro Manila, Philippines.

Dear Raphael P.M. Lotilla,

I am writing on behalf of Climate Rights International, an international NGO that conducts research and advocacy on the human rights dimensions of the climate crisis. For the past several months, we have been carrying out research for a report that we plan to publish on the human, environmental, and climate impacts associated with nickel mining in the Philippines' Caraga Region.

Based on roughly sixty interviews with community members, our research finds that nickel mining in Dinagat Islands and Surigao del Sur is threatening the rights of local people, harming the local environment, and exacerbating the impacts of the climate crisis. People told Climate Rights International that nickel mining and related pollution is destroying fishing and farming livelihoods, contributing to food insecurity, polluting water and air, and increasing health problems. Perversely, mining for nickel, needed for the renewable energy transition, is making local communities – who bear extremely little responsibility for the climate crisis – more vulnerable to climate impacts, including extreme weather events. The Philippines is the most dangerous country in Asia in which to be a land and environmental defender, and Climate Rights International has also documented how those who oppose mining can face threats, criminalization, and attacks.

We want to ensure that our report accurately reflects the views, policies, and practices of relevant authorities and companies, and we hope that you or your representatives will respond to the following questions, outlined below. Any responses will be reflected in our reporting as appropriate, and we may publish your responses at our discretion and when appropriate, either in full or in part.

Questions:

1. Individuals from Dinagat Island and Surigao del Sur interviewed by Climate Rights International expressed concern about the impacts of nickel mining operations on fresh and saltwater resources, as well as increased siltation of rice and agricultural fields. What steps is the Department of Energy and Natural Resources (DENR) taking to ensure that nickel mining operations are not causing serious environmental pollution?
2. It is our understanding that DENR and its bureaus monitor air, water, and soil quality. If so, how does it do so?

- a. Please provide information about DENR's water quality testing, including how frequently water samples are taken, where those samples are collected, and what pollutants it tests for.
 - b. Please provide information about DENR's air quality monitoring, including how frequently air samples are taken, where those samples are collected, and what pollutants it tests for.
 - c. Please provide information about DENR's soil quality monitoring, if any, including how frequently air samples are taken, where those samples are collected, and what pollutants it tests for.
 - d. If DENR relies on mining companies to do such testing, please explain what the companies are required to do and how DENR enforces those requirements.
3. How does DENR or any of its bureaus make the results of any pollution monitoring public? Please explain how community members are able to access that information.
 4. Does DENR or any of its bureaus have policies or procedures to specially monitor environmental quality near mining sites. Please explain.
 5. Please provide information about whether or how DENR or its bureaus monitor the management of tailings and other mining waste, including what steps DENR takes to ensure that tailings ponds are able to withstand extreme weather events.
 6. What steps does DENR take when it receives an allegation of environmental pollution or negative impacts of its operations on local communities?
 - a. If DENR finds that a mining company has caused environmental pollution or negative impacts on local communities, what action does it take?
 - b. Has DENR ever suspended a mining license due to environmental pollution or negative impacts on local communities? If so, how often has it done so in the past ten years? How long did each such suspension last and what was the company required to do to be permitted to resume mining?
 7. We received allegations that mining companies do not accurately report tree cutting to DENR to avoid the costs involved with officially report tree cutting. What steps does DENR ensure that mining companies obtain the required Special Tree Cutting Permit before cutting trees?
 8. Community members allege that improper disposal of cut trees by mining companies, including the use of cut logs in settling ponds, is exacerbating the severity of flooding in the area. What steps does DENR take to monitor tree cutting and disposal by mining companies?
 9. Please provide a copy of the investigation that DENR conducted into the role of the mining industry in exacerbating flooding in the wake of Tropical Storm Banyang in February 2018.
 10. According to members of some Local Government Units, DENR often fails to provide responses when the LGU requests basic information about mining operations, assessments of mining companies, and tax information. What is DENR's policy with respect to addressing inquiries from LGUs?
 11. Does DENR have climate adaptation plans, including plans to adapt to extreme weather events? If so, please elaborate.

Please provide your responses in writing. Your responses can only be considered for inclusion in our report if we receive them by October 24, 2025. Please reply in English. In addition, please include any other materials, statistics, and/or information you think may be relevant.

My colleagues will be in Manila November 3-6 to release the report and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your representatives. Please let me know if you will be available to meet with Climate Rights International during that time period.

Sincerely,

Brad Adams
Executive Director, Climate Rights International