ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTER, INC.
Carlos P. Sayang Compound, Mitra Road, Bgy. Sta. Monica,
Puerto Princesa City 5300 Palawan
Telefax (48) 726-1641; Email: elacpalawan@gmail.com

CAN PALAWAN BE SPARED?
A Public Call for Palawan's Future
[Date]

To:
The National Government
Provincial Government of Palawan
Palawan Council for Sustainable Development
Concerned Local Government Units (LGUs)
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Department of Energy
Mines and Geosciences Bureau
National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
Congress of the Philippines
Senate of the Philippines
and other concerned government institutions

Subject: Public Call for a Province-Wide Assessment and Participatory Dialogue on Palawan's Development Future

Dear Sir/Madam:

We respectfully transmit the **Can Palawan Be Spared? Public Call for Palawan's Future**, together with the signatures of citizens and organizations supporting its calls.

Palawan is currently facing several major development pressures, including expanding mining and mineral exploration, ongoing petroleum exploration, the national push for critical minerals and mineral processing, proposals for advanced industrial development, and consideration of Palawan in national nuclear-energy planning.

These developments may have different proponents, purposes and approval processes. We are not suggesting that they form part of a single coordinated plan. However, their cumulative direction raises an important question: **Is Palawan being gradually prepared for a scale and type of development that Palawenos have not yet collectively examined or agreed upon?**

Palawan is governed by a special development framework under Republic Act No. 7611, the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan Act, which calls for an integrated approach to development and environmental protection. We believe that this framework requires us to look beyond individual projects and consider what the province as a whole can sustainably accommodate.

We therefore respectfully call on the concerned government institutions to:

1. **Assess Palawan as a whole** through a province-wide cumulative-impact and ecological carrying-capacity assessment covering existing and reasonably foreseeable development.
2. **Identify what must be protected**, including areas where intensive development would be incompatible with ecological protection, existing law, food and water security, or Indigenous Peoples' rights.
3. **Apply the Strategic Environmental Plan and ECAN from the start**, so that Palawan's development framework guides decisions before major commitments are made.

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4. **Explain why Palawan** is being considered for major mineral, industrial, energy, or other resource-intensive developments, including disclosure of energy and water requirements, waste, risks, local benefits, and alternative locations.
5. **Ensure meaningful participation of Palawenos**, with accessible information, public dialogue, and full respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights and legally required consent processes.
6. **Examine other development pathways** suited to Palawan's ecological and productive strengths, including sustainable agriculture and fisheries, blue-economy enterprises, appropriate tourism, conservation-based livelihoods, circular economy, community enterprises and knowledge-based industries.
7. **Implement and uphold Provincial Ordinance No. 4636**, Palawan's mining moratorium, consistent with existing environmental laws, the SEP and ECAN framework, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

This is not a call to reject all development or investment. It calls for **transparent, science-based, and participatory decision-making before major and potentially irreversible commitments are made**.

We respectfully request that the concerned agencies consider these calls, disclose relevant plans and assessments, and join Palawenos in a meaningful public dialogue on the province's long-term development direction.

Palawan's future should not be determined project by project without first asking what the province can sustain—and what its people want it to become.

Respectfully,

Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC)
Convener, *Can Palawan Be Spared?*

With participating and endorsing organizations

On behalf of the signatories to the Can Palawan Be Spared? Public Call