

Land concessions to China not only limited to Spratlys

Saturday 29 March 2008, by [Akbayan](#), [HONTIVEROS Risa](#) (Date first published: 10 March 2008).

Deputy minority leader and AKBAYAN Representative Risa Hontiveros revealed today that the GMA administration's land concessions to China is not only limited to disputed areas in the Spratly Islands Group but also include vast forest areas that are already part of Philippine territory.

"The mathematics is staggering. Under the RP-China Spratlys Agreement, the GMA administration is conceding 148, 886 square kilometers of our territory to China, 24,000 of which is undisputedly part of Philippine territory. However, under 18 agribusiness deals with China signed by the government in 2007, one million hectares of forest lands that are part of Philippine territory will be leased to China for fifty years," AKBAYAN Rep. Hontiveros said. "The signing of these agribusiness deals is an unprecedented violation of the Philippine Constitution, our laws, and our integrity as a nation."

The deals were signed in 2007 immediately after the ASEAN Summit in Cebu. President GMA and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao discussed and witnessed the signing of the deals.

"It turned out that in the so-called cheap loans from China that the GMA administration has grandiosely flaunted in the past and that are now investigated for graft and corruption, our national territory was used as collateral," AKBAYAN Rep. Hontiveros said.

(Download the case filed before the Supreme Court against these agribusiness deals and copies of the agreements [here](#).)

Despite repeated denials from the GMA administration, the solon said that the loans that the government entered into with China were undoubtedly obtained in exchange for these concessions.

"In short, the kickbacks from the ZTE deal and the CyberEd Program are blood money," Rep. Hontiveros said.

On February 19, 2008, AKBAYAN, the Initiatives for Dialogue And Empowerment Through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS, Inc.), and several peasant groups and individual activists filed a case before the Supreme Court to declare the three of the agribusiness deals unconstitutional and illegal.

The deals include the removal of technical barriers to trade; Chinese investment and lease of more than 1 million hectares of land in the Philippines for the cultivation of hybrid corn, hybrid rice, and hybrid sorghum to be exported to China with zero tariff treatment; the development of an initial 40,000 hectares of agribusiness lands for cassava and sugar for ethanol production for China's domestic consumption; Aquaculture and all-around marine fishing; and private contracts for the utilization of land to produce bio-ethanol and to establish bio-fuel plants.

The solon said that the deals are patently unconstitutional

"They violate the national patrimony provision of the Constitution. Under Section 2, Article XII of the Philippine Constitution, the exploration, use, and development of our natural resources can only be

done under the full control and supervision of the Philippine State. Filipinos must own or control by majority ownership private entities that wish to enter into co-production or joint ventures that use our natural resources," Rep. Hontiveros said.

The deals also violate the agrarian reform law. "The redistribution of lands for agrarian reform is threatened by these deals as well," Rep. Hontiveros said. (end)