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✠ **Ramón C. Argüelles, DD, STL**
Archbishop of Lipa

Prot. No. 17/0035

His Excellency RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
President, Republic of the Philippines
Malacañang Palace, Manila

Your Excellency,

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

I believe from the depth of my heart in your sincerity in loving our country and protecting our people. For this, I respectfully assure you of my prayers even if together with the rest of my fellow bishops I differ with you with some of the means adapted.

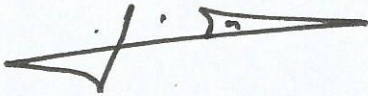
I write to you in the name of several men and women of different orientations who share the ideals of *Pari't Laykong Laudato Si* which I am the Spiritual Director of. We support your administration's program to prioritize the environment and social justice over and above profit. We in Batangas province and the neighbouring areas have been fighting irresponsible mining, the coal-fired power plants as well as the destruction of the World's Center of Centers of Marine Biodiversity. In our long struggle against those who deprive our people of clean water, fresh air, trees and rich biodiversity, we were gifted with the strong advocacy of Ms Gina Lopez whom you have appointed DENR Secretary. We thank God for her dedication to bring change for the better in the graft ridden department that has not honestly served our people particularly the poor. In his teaching contained in the document *Laudato Si* (*192) Pope Francis said, "Productive diversification offers the fullest possibilities to human ingenuity to create and innovate, while at the same time protecting the environment and creating more sources of employment. Such creativity would be a worthy expression of our most noble human qualities for we would be striving intelligently, boldly, and responsibly to promote a sustainable and equitable development within the context of a broader concept of quality of life".

We are supporting Secretary Gina Lopez who courageously implements your administration's policy to protect the amazing gift of the Creator to all Filipinos of all generations. We are behind you in insisting on a truly responsible mining, cleaning up the polluted Laguna Lake, providing livelihood to the poor in the mountains so that they in turn may protect nature.

In the name of millions of inhabitants of the Southern Tagalog region, may I humbly appeal to you to retain Ms Gina Lopez as DENR Secretary and support her efforts to protect our beautiful and rich natural resources. The majority of our people see hope for them and the generations to come in the determined efforts of Secretary Gina Lopez. We appeal to you to influence the Commission on Appointments to confirm her and thus demonstrate the sincere pro-poor, pro-environment and pro-country stand of the Duterte administration.

Grateful for the kind attention you can give this plea and assuring you of my prayers and high esteem, I remain

Sincerely yours in Jesus and Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Argüelles', written over a horizontal line.

Archbishop Ramón C. Argüelles, DD
January 30, 2017