

Press Release  
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## Imee: OFWs, banks, businesses face another obstacle if AMLA is not amended

Senator Imee Marcos has warned that Filipinos here and abroad will face difficulties in their financial transactions if an international monitor decides this month that the country has not done enough to curb money laundering.

Marcos, who chairs the Senate committee on economic affairs, said lawmakers must heed President Duterte's call over the weekend to amend the country's Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA) at once, as the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) completes its review of the Philippines this October after a one-year observation period.

"Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and the business and banking communities will bear the brunt of international sanctions, if the FATF calls out the country as a money laundering hotspot," Marcos said.

"International banks may decide to require more identity checks and paperwork or even impose higher transaction rates on Filipino remittances, causing delays in money transfers and making them more costly," Marcos explained.

"Living and educational expenses of OFW families amid the Covid-19 pandemic will be affected, while investor and lender confidence will weaken as a result. The country's foreign currency reserves could diminish," Marcos added.

According to the FATF, the Philippines is fully compliant with only eight of its 40 recommended amendments to the AMLA, while largely compliant with 20, partially with 11, and non-compliant with one.

Marcos has sought to amend the AMLA and integrate the FATF's recommendations through Senate Bill 1545, to avert the country's inclusion in the dreaded Grey List of countries considered high-risk for misuse of the international financial system.

The Marcos bill proposes to give the Anti-Money Laundering Council the power to use investigative and surveillance techniques, subpoena suspects, conduct search and seizure, freeze assets and order their forfeiture, as well as make the agency immune from court injunctions other than those from the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court.

Besides compliance with international standards in financial transactions, the Marcos bill also aims to curb terrorist financing in the country by adhering to United Nations Security Council resolutions listing individuals and entities suspected of terrorism.

The Philippine government has reported to the UN that remittance agencies, import/export companies, and non-profit organizations are being used to finance terrorist activity in the country.

"Indeed, amending the AMLA is a national economic and national security emergency," Marcos said.