

SECRETARY EMMANUEL DE GUZMAN
Climate Change Commission

Keynote Address

Delivered by Ms. Montserrat T. Romulo

Building Green 2018 Conference
21 September 2018
Function Room 1, SMX Convention Center

Climate Change Outlook

The Philippines is no stranger to the impacts of climate change. Our status as a developing nation makes us even more vulnerable to extreme weather events, which in recent years have only come more frequently and intensely. Few Filipinos would forget 2013, when Haiyan, the strongest typhoon to ever make landfall, devastated the country, causing 184 million dollars in damage, sending hundreds of thousands rushing to evacuation centers, and claiming at least 6,300 lives.

Just last week, we were once again tested as Typhoon Mangkhut hit the Northern Luzon. Almost ten billion pesos worth of damage was done to the agricultural sector¹ alone. To date, 74 people have been confirmed dead.

Our vulnerability serves as the backdrop for the need not only for comprehensive policy making, but also for tangible action to address the imminent threat of climate change.

Post-2015 global development frameworks

For the sustainable development path ahead, the guideposts are up and lit. Three post-2015 global development frameworks are in place to guide both government and the private sector in addressing sustainable development challenges in the context of climate change: The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

These are our guides in moving our development agenda forward in a balanced and systematic fashion – such that we do not only adapt to the impacts of climate change, but come out even stronger and more resilient.

The Paris Agreement, in particular, aims to stop global temperature rise at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels – the consensus global warming threshold. This global temperature goal is what defines the global ambition and the individual climate actions of nations.

¹<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/09/18/1852560/ompong-agricultural-damage-p93b-cagayan-valley-cordillera>

Clearly, apathy, indifference, and business-as-usual will not stem the alarming trajectory of our climate challenges. We need to change the way we think, the way we go about our daily lives, the way we interact with the world and those around us. Everybody must do his share in bringing about the societal change we seek.

Challenges within the buildings and housing sector

And you are among the most strategic sectors in pursuing this change. Buildings account for almost a quarter of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide, and use more than one-third of the global final energy consumption, according to the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction.

By 2050, energy demand in buildings could increase by 50% and floor area is expected to double. Rapid growth both in population and in the purchasing power of developing countries will make sure of this.

By shifting to more energy-efficient and climate-friendly alternatives, the building sector can play a major role in reducing the threat of climate change and building the resilience of our cities and communities.

Hope abounds as we see a growing, positive consensus on green building standards such as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA). But barriers remain. Segmentation remains high within the building sector, and stakeholder interests sometimes compete with each other, preventing accelerated action in pursuit of climate goals. The housing need of the country remains enormous at around 6.8 million units for 2017 to 2022, with a housing backlog of 2 million as of December 2016. Institutional constraints to addressing this-- legal and regulatory aspects for the primary housing market, and irregularities in the land and financial markets as well as an unclear incentive structure, for example—still remain.

Green, Green, Green Project

We've heard it before, the refrain when faced with such a plethora of entrenched, seemingly insurmountable challenges: Change cannot happen overnight. Well, of course it can't. But apathy makes the nights longer. There is no alternative but to act with urgency, with everyone pulling maximum weight, doing everything they can. Otherwise, we doom ourselves to the ravages of climate change.

From our end, for starter's there's the 'Green, Green, Green' Project. It's the government's public open space development program launched in 2017 by the Department of Budget and Management. With a budget of almost 2.6 billion pesos, its stated goals are:

- To enrich open spaces and create sustainable and livable urban environment through turfing, landscaping, and green space architecture;
- To establish forest parks, arboretum and botanical gardens;

- To transform streetscape, such as installation of eco-friendly street furniture and fixtures, and shading;
- To augment connectivity and accessibility, such as construction of eco-friendly bike lanes and walkways; and
- To enhance green infrastructure through tree planting, construction of bioswales and pervious surfaces.

More climate actions underway

This is just one of several major climate actions underway.

We are taking progressive stride to manage climate actions of the government and other sectors. Our goal: A climate resilient Philippines.

In partnership with the Department of Science and Technology, the Climate Change Commission is now facilitating the establishment of a National Integrated Risk Information System or NIRIS to address the fragmentation and shortage of risk information in the country. A singular platform for risk information will let national and local government agencies access risk data which consequently will inform them in formulating climate and disaster risk-related plans and policies. It will strengthen multi-hazard early warning system and impact-based forecasting in the country. It will also benefit the private sector through providing risk information to inform climate-resilient investment planning.

Low carbon development strategies are already being mainstreamed. National Economic Development Authority's Philippine Development Plan highlighted energy efficiency and the conservation program under the plan's infrastructure component. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has also conducted a GHG emission inventory identification for all thermal power plants as part of the process of Environmental Impact Assessment.

The Department of Energy is transitioning to more sustainable pathways for energy. It's been issuing renewable portfolio standards for on-grid energy; conducting public consultations on the green energy option and the renewable energy market; doing campaigns such as E-Power Mo, their advocacies with other agencies on the energy management program as well as their drive to push for legislation.

A National Policy Framework on Energy is now being drafted for approval of the Climate Change Commission. It will then be transmitted to the Office of the President, relevant national government agencies and to Congress. You'll be among the first to know once it's made public.

Pursuant to the Green Jobs Act of 2016, the Climate Change Commission is also fast-tracking the development of standards and certification system for providing incentives to enterprises that generate and sustain green jobs – jobs that nurture the environment, promote social protection, and decarbonize the economy.

Moreover, we are strengthening our Communities for Resilience Program, the main platform of the Climate Change Commission for capacity building and training for the academe and the local government professionals. We're especially focused on enhancing local development and investment plans, including local climate change action plans, local disaster risk reduction and management plans, comprehensive land use plans, and comprehensive development plans, and on preparing quality project proposals for People's Survival Fund grant funding.

Closing

With the increasing prevalence of climate change and disaster risk in our cities and local communities, clearly, the poor and the marginalized, those who have less in life, are bound to suffer most.

To our architects, engineers, and all building professionals, your role is clear. You are at the vanguard of our strategies to mitigate climate change. It is our collective responsibility to future generations to ensure that the buildings within which they live and dream are built in harmony with the Earth.

If we come together as one nation and bring our minds and hearts together, surely we could achieve this shared purpose.

Expect that we in the CCC will redouble our efforts and continue to find more ways in attaining a safer, cleaner, healthier and greener tomorrow for our people.

With this, thank you and may we all have a productive day ahead.