

KEYNOTE SPEECH

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**CORE Convergence**  
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**Climate change outlook**

Climate change means the alteration of the world's climate that we humans are causing through fossil fuel burning, clearing forests and other practices that increase the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere.

The ecosystems, agriculture, livelihoods and settlements are very dependent on climate.

The problem now is that global temperatures have risen rapidly over the last few decades with strong evidence of increases in average global air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising average sea levels. The IPCC assessment reports concludes that global warming is unequivocal.

2015 was the hottest year ever and this year is expected to be even hotter. Our country, according to studies, have been experiencing the highest average increase in sea levels, at 60 cms, more than three folds of the global average of 19 cms since 1901.

Climate change will affect all countries, but people in the poorest countries and poor people in richer countries are more likely to suffer most. Many of them depend on climate-sensitive livelihoods, such as agriculture, and have little or no means to cope with climate change, owing to low savings, no property insurance and poor access to public services. Climate change is expected to reduce already low incomes and increase illness and death rates in many developing countries.

Climate change is a real and present threat to sustainable development.

**Climate and disaster risks prevail.**

The growing prevalence of climate and disaster risks throughout the country is a problem that could be addressed effectively by strengthening the capacities of LGUs, as we endeavor to preserve our development gains and to pursue sustainable development.

Time is fleeting and our environment is fast changing. The Philippine Government has been unrelenting in investing its resources for a meaningful and enduring improvement in the life and well being of the Filipino people.

Although our country has made significant headway in its socio-economic development pursuits, by and large our people remain vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. In the 2013 Climate Risk Index, the Philippines ranked first among ten most affected countries. In this year's Climate Change Vulnerability Index of Maplecroft, the Philippines ranked 8th among 32 countries extremely at risk of climate change impacts.

We continue to experience significant losses to disasters mostly triggered by hydrometeorological hazards. In the year 2013 when Super typhoon Haiyan struck us, we topped the roster of countries most affected by disasters in terms of human lives lost, with a total annual death toll of 8,382, and similarly in terms of annual economic loss as a percentage of GDP, recorded at 5%, or about 12.4 billion US dollars in disaster losses.

With these serious realities and the many recurring and lingering images of the tragic impacts of extreme weather events in our communities, the Philippines, in the eyes of the world, has inevitably become the face of climate vulnerability, and Manila as a most fitting starting point for mobilizing global climate action on the road to Paris COP21 and beyond.

### **Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation**

As our cities become more complex and densely populated with rapid urbanization, as our rural livelihoods remain vulnerable to weather extremes and variability, and as our ecosystems continue to decline, reducing disaster risk and adapting to climate change have become priority development strategies for building the country's resilience. The passage of landmark legislation on disaster and climate risk management -- the Climate Change Act of 2009, as amended by the People's Survival Fund of 2012, and the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 -- has institutionalized and mainstreamed disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in development policies, plans and programs, as well as in public funding.

Given these laws, which the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction considers legislation exemplars, together with many other laws that promote the protection of the environment, the country has as strong policy framework for risk governance. However, the full implementation of these laws entails at all levels a strong political will, cooperation and coordination among agencies and stakeholders concerned, resources as well as resourcefulness.

### **The post-2015 era of development challenges and goals**

Moreover, we must all be mindful that we are embarking on a post-2015 era of development pursuits. As you know, the Philippines is committed to implementing three post-2015 international development frameworks, i.e. the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda or Sustainable Development, and the Paris Climate Change Agreement that we look forward to next month.

## **Convergence of action on reducing climate and disaster risk**

Given the post-2015 development challenges and frameworks for action, the CCC, starting next year, will endeavor to facilitate the convergence and synergy of government action on strengthening the understanding of climate and disaster risk, especially at the local level. This shall entail the consolidation of all learning, methodologies, and tools, including for risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis, acquired through special projects and their promulgation to benefit more local government units and village communities. Through convergence, sharing of knowhow, and developing competencies at the local level, we shall ensure a holistic, science-and-risk-based local development planning, especially for the development of local climate change action plans, local disaster risk reduction and management plans, comprehensive land use plans, and comprehensive development plans, and facilitate a bottom-up development planning with high resolution local risk profiles and priority interventions and investments as solid bases.

CORE will promote effective convergence and delivery of capacity building services to LGUs through synergistic action across agendas at the national and sub national level.

## **Adaptation is critical**

It is critical that we strengthen our adaptation actions at national and local levels. Examples of these are preparing risk assessment, protecting ecosystems, improving agricultural methods, managing water resources, building settlements in safe zones, developing early warning systems, instituting better building designs, improving insurance coverage, and developing social safety nets.

Important sectors for adaptation and disaster risk reduction include agriculture and for security, water sector, health sector, awareness raising and education, environmental management, early warning systems, and development planning and practices.

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction when mainstreamed in local development plans offers cost-effective approaches to reduce the negative impacts of natural hazards and extreme weather events on communities.

Engaging rural people in decision-making, especially to understand autonomous adaptation and the interplay of informal and formal institutions, plays an important role in strengthening public decision-making.

Farmers and fisherfolk need to have a strong voice in adaptation processes, so they can articulate their concerns and priorities, as their views are grounded in their daily lives and

## **Focusing on risk drivers**

Climate change magnifies the intensity of hazards and the skewed and uneven distribution of risk. However, studies show that increases in the intensity and frequency of extreme events are not the main driver of climate-related risk. Risk is increasing due to the increasing exposure of people and their assets to climate-related hazards faster than communities are able to reduce their vulnerabilities.

### **Reducing and managing climate-related disaster risk**

Adaptation relies on the reduction and management of climate-related disaster risks.

Studies also reveal that many countries with high climate-related risks and low resilience also have very weak risk governance capacities. Such countries often have difficulties in addressing underlying risk drivers such as ecosystem decline, poverty and badly planned and managed urbanization.

The most cost-effective way for a country to reduce climate-related risks in the medium-term is through factoring risk reduction into development planning, land use, and building and environmental management.

The challenge of climate change adaptation is fundamentally a challenge of strengthening the capacities for risk governance so that cost-effective strategies for risk reduction and management can be factored into development planning and public investment decisions.

Unless development investments become climate risk-sensitive, it may increase risks and maladaptation.

### **Social justice in action**

Protecting and preserving our environment is a moral responsibility of all.

The impact of Nature's forces on vulnerable communities must be reduced to prevent disasters and worsen poverty.

Non-action on disaster risk is actually a "social sin," an injustice to the poor and most vulnerable.

Poverty breeds disaster vulnerability. Those who have least in life risk life most. Thus, as disasters become more prevalent, the higher is the right of the poor to social protection, and the higher is the duty of government to reduce disaster risk in pursuit of resilient development. Disaster risk reduction is social justice in action.