



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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By: Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

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## DAILY GUARDIAN

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## ECO BUSINESS

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## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

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By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

At the midpoint of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a sobering reality emerges: the world is falling short of meeting most of these goals by 2030.

## **POLITIKO**

### **[Villafuerte: Blue Economy Bill Addresses Fisherfolk Concerns, Effect Of Climate Change](#)**

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National Unity Party president and Camarines Sur Rep. LRay Villafuerte highlighted the importance of the Blue Economy bill that was approved by the House of Representatives last month.

## **SUNSTAR**

### **[Endangered species increase](#)**

Climate change is worsening the planet's biodiversity crises, making environments more deadly for thousands of species and accelerating the precipitous decline in the number of plants and animals on Earth, according to an international organization that tracks species health.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **Lawmakers urged to OK bills on 'blue economy'**

By: Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

In the face of heightened global efforts to combat climate change, a lawmaker on Tuesday underscored the critical need for the 19th Congress to enact new legislation ensuring responsible management of the nation's seas and coasts.

Given the archipelagic nature and high vulnerability of economies like the Philippines to the severe impacts of climate change, Rep. LRay Villafuerte of Camarines Sur stressed the urgency for lawmakers to pass legislation that promotes sustainable development and safer use of the blue economy.

Villafuerte pointed to "the urgency for lawmakers to pass a measure on a more sustainable and safer development of our blue economy by way of an overhaul of the National Coast Watch Council [NCWC] that shall take charge of crafting and implementing a 'whole-of-government approach' to protecting and conserving our maritime zones in the face of the ravages of climate change, such as steadily rising global temperatures and sea levels."

HB 9662 was one of the bills passed on the third and final reading by the House last December.

The proposed legislation seeks to protect and conserve the Philippines' marine and coastal ecosystems, promoting the well-being, prosperity, and security of present and future generations.

Villafuerte urged swift congressional action on the blue economy bill, aligning with the commitments made by over 150 international leaders during the recent United Nations global climate summit in Dubai. The legislation aims to make the Philippines more resilient to climate impacts by concurrently safeguarding marine and coastal systems and fostering sustainable economic opportunities.

The bill outlines that the Philippines will exercise sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in various maritime zones, including internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and continent shelf. It proposes the reconstitution of the NCWC into the National Maritime Council (NMC), tasked with marine spatial planning, enhancing maritime domain awareness, and preserving ocean resources' value and sustainability.

The NMC's proposed composition includes the Executive Secretary as chairperson and members from various government departments.

Additionally, the bill suggests renaming the Coastal Watch Council Secretariat to the National Maritime Office, maintaining its responsibility of providing technical and administrative support to the Council.

President Marcos has included the blue economy bill in the list of 58 priority bills since last year, supported by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC).

Underscoring the importance of Philippine bodies of water, Villafuerte noted the vast marine territory spanning 2.2 million square kilometers and the extensive coastline, ranking second globally after Indonesia. He emphasized the bill's aim to foster a whole-of-nation approach for the stewardship of seas and coasts, involving the national government, local authorities, academia, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and the public.

The blue economy concept, according to Villafuerte, entails a practical ocean-based economic model leveraging green infrastructure, technologies, innovative financing, and proactive institutional arrangements. The proposed legislation addresses the twin goals of protecting oceans and coasts while contributing to sustainable development and reducing environmental risks.

The bill allocates an initial funding of P100 million for the Council, sourced from the Office of the President's Contingency Fund. Subsequent budgets will be included in the annual General Appropriations Acts of the succeeding years.

## DAILY GUARDIAN

### [DOF leads intensified climate action initiatives in 2023](#)

The Department of Finance (DOF), under the leadership of Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno, has led intensified climate action initiatives in 2023 amid escalating challenges of global warming.

In January, the DOF and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) had a ceremonial exchange of loan agreement following the signing of the EUR 150 million (about PHP 9.11 billion) policy-based loan for the Climate Change Action Program, Subprogram 1 (CCAP1) to help the Philippines heighten its efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The AFD and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are supporting the Philippines' ambitions to scale up its climate action with a combined policy-based loan amounting to EUR 390 million (about PHP 23.7 billion), including the EUR 150 million (about PHP 9.1 billion) mobilized by AFD in addition to the US\$ 250-million (about PHP 13.9 billion) loan extended by the ADB for the CCAP1.

The program aims to support the country in achieving its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitments and in its efforts to assist vulnerable sectors in the transition to a resilient, low-carbon economy.

In March, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board approved the Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change (APA) Project amounting to US\$ 39.2 million (about PHP 2.2 billion), financed by the GCF through a grant of US\$ 26.3 million (about PHP 1.5 billion) and Philippine government co-financing of US\$ 12.9 million (about PHP 718.8 million).

The Project builds on the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) led by the Department of Agriculture (DA) through activities that will help the country shift towards a climate-resilient agricultural system and increase climate resilience in rural areas.

The People's Survival Fund (PSF) Board, chaired by Secretary Diokno, approved grants totalling PHP 579 million in 2023 in order to help LGUs pursue their climate adaptation projects.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. officially presented the PSF Resolutions approving the historic amount of over PHP 541 million for newly approved climate adaptation projects to LGU beneficiaries in December.

The approval of the said new projects brought the total number of PSF-funded projects to 11 climate adaptation initiatives and 6 projects for the Project Development Grants (PDGs), amounting to a combined PHP 889.6 million. This increased the PSF's utilization rate to 89 percent.

In November, the World Bank (WB) approved a US\$ 500-million (about PHP 27.9 billion) development policy loan that the Philippine government can immediately draw upon in times of natural disasters and health crises, mitigating their impact on the economy.

In the same month, the Philippines, through the DOF, was formally inducted into the Board of the Vulnerable 20 Group of Finance Ministers (V20) – Group of Seven (G7) Global Shield Against Climate Risks.

Global Shield Against Climate Risks aims to make considerable progress towards providing and facilitating more and better pre-arranged protection against climate and disaster-related risks for vulnerable countries.

Furthermore, the government has actively implemented fiscal and economic policies to attract more sustainable investments in the country such as the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act, the Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP), the Sustainable Finance Roadmap, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, the Renewable Energy Act, and the Philippine Green Jobs Act.

With the Marcos, Jr. administration's ambitious Build Better More program, the government is heavily investing in 197 high-impact, sustainable, and climate-resilient infrastructure projects through a financing mix of domestic resources, official development assistance (ODA), and public-private partnerships (PPP).

Through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Sustainable Finance (ITSF) or "Green Force", the DOF is building a sustainable finance ecosystem to synergize public and private sector investments.

Upon launching the Sustainable Finance Framework last year, the Philippines successfully issued 4 sustainable global bond offerings amounting to US\$ 3.55 billion (about PHP 197.9 billion).

The government has utilized the proceeds from the bonds to finance projects that support employment generation, access to essential services, COVID-19 expenditure, sustainable management of living and natural resources, renewable energy, and climate change adaptation.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and other financial regulatory agencies are currently developing principles-based Sustainable Finance Taxonomy Guidelines (SFTG), which will serve as a tool to determine whether an economic activity is environmentally or socially sustainable. This directs private sector investments towards climate change adaptation and mitigation (CCAM) initiatives.

The DOF has also been aggressively pushing for the passage of several environmental fiscal measures.

The proposed imposition of excise tax on single-use plastics (SUPs) is expected to curb plastic usage and generate additional revenues for the country's development needs.

The proposed rationalization of the mining fiscal regime will capture the reasonable share of mining revenues without restricting mining investments.

Moreover, the DOF is exploring the implementation of a Motor Vehicle User's Charge applicable to all vehicle types as well as the consideration of a carbon tax and carbon pricing instruments.

The DOF is also conducting a study, in partnership with the World Bank, on the feasibility of complementary implementation of a carbon tax and an emissions trading system. The carbon tax will put a price on greenhouse gas emissions, while an emissions trading system will fix the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions.

Just recently, the DOF championed the Philippines' landmark initiatives for climate action and efficient mobilization of climate finance at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) from December 1 to 12, 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Secretary Diokno called for collective and decisive action from partner financing coalitions in catalyzing global public climate finance, thanking specifically the ADB for being a strong and reliable partner in the country's fight against climate change.

At COP 28, ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa announced the Bank's commitment to provide US\$10 billion (about PHP 557.3 billion) in climate finance support for the Philippines from 2024 to 2029.

Aside from its support in mobilizing climate finance, the ADB is helping the Philippines develop its Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan (NDC IP), which will be instrumental in facilitating a sound and robust climate finance ecosystem in the country.

Secretary Diokno also pushed for the urgent preparation of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) to sustain and enhance both the quality and quantity of climate finance.

He recommended setting up a five-year timeframe to ensure coherence in the overall climate action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To close the climate finance gap, Secretary Diokno advocated for the use of gender-responsive nature-based solutions, saying that the Philippines has made significant strides in integrating elements of gender-responsive climate action into its efforts.

He cited the PSF as a prime model for gender-responsiveness as it is managed by a multi-sectoral Board wherein women and girls are amply represented through the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW).

Moreover, its criteria for approval take into account the responsiveness of a project to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities to climate change.

The DOF is also co-implementing the Accelerating Green and Climate Finance in the Philippines for Nature-Based Solutions Project, which aims to increase the climate resilience of the Philippine population and economy by mobilizing private sector investments into gender-responsive nature-based solutions for climate-resilient technology, innovations, practices, and approaches. It was launched in 2022 with financial support from the Government of Canada.

The DOF also advocated for the digitalization of the payments system which can help unlock greater efficiency and more options for beneficiaries of social protection programs, citing the success of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) that brought swift relief to affected sectors of the country through digital cash transfers.

Development partners that utilized the 4Ps' digital payment platform testified to the significant reduction in their administrative and transaction costs.

The Marcos, Jr. administration has put emphasis on pushing for more digitalized transactions in all government agencies, especially frontline offices like LGUs to provide seamless and accurate service to the Filipino people.

This is in line with the President's 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda on enhancing the digital economy and is laid out in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

Finally, Secretary Diokno called for mobilizing blended finance to scale up climate action, saying that innovative sources of financing are needed to augment the increasing financing costs associated with climate action.

The Philippine delegation to the COP 28 was led by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

COP28 is the 28th annual meeting of parties to the UNFCCC. The Parties are composed of the 198 countries that signed up to the original UN climate agreement in 1992.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [When climate change is child's play, the future looks greener](#)

Five-year old Jerin loves tending to the young chili pepper and aubergine plants in her school's garden. The 30 children in her class, aged from three to five, at a government school in the central Bangladesh village of Brahmangaon in Gazipur district are learning to grow plants and observe insects in an education programme to familiarise pupils with nature and climate change issues through music and play.

Recent UN reports have highlighted the perils of a warming planet for children, who are expected to see an almost fourfold increase in extreme weather events over their lifetime.

The impacts include diseases and health harm from heatwaves and air pollution, malnutrition due to crop failures, and climate change-driven disasters that are already displacing and disrupting the education of millions of children each year, according to UNICEF, the UN children's agency.

"The climate crisis is a children's rights crisis, and engaging children is therefore very important," said Reis Lopez Rello, a UNICEF advisor on the issue.

Within the UN climate process, young people have been accorded a more prominent place over the years, presenting their climate action demands ahead of the COP summits each year and participating in government delegations and advocacy.

At COP28 in Dubai, a decision was adopted to formalise the role of a youth climate champion to work with host nations on promoting the inclusion of young people in the talks.

Activists and development groups, meanwhile, are increasingly working with governments and schools on the ground to raise awareness of climate and nature issues by including them in the curriculum from the early years of childhood.

International development organisation BRAC, for example, has recently introduced "green play labs" in more than 50 government schools in Bangladesh, as well as in other countries such as Uganda and Tanzania.

"If children in their early years learn to connect with nature through play or gardening, they may grow a deeper sense of responsibility towards the planet and its climate when they grow up," said Areefa Zafar, an education expert with BRAC University.

Children at public schools come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and one of the objectives of BRAC's green play labs initiative is to provide a fair and equal chance for them to reach their developmental milestones.

Families bring seeds for planting in the school grounds, and parents make play equipment like wooden swings or dolls from recycled or up-cycled material, giving children from poorer homes better access to green spaces and play equipment.

They include Fatema, the 4-year-old daughter of Taslima Akhter whose husband, a landless peasant in an area increasingly hit by heatwaves and irregular rainfall, left for Saudi Arabia in search of work.

Fatema has planted Indian lilac in the Brahmanaon school garden and loves reciting her favourite rhymes about frogs croaking in the rainy season under the shrubs and trees.

"While I struggle to meet the family expenses, I feel happy to see my kid enjoying her time at school as a proud steward of plants," Akhter told Context.

#### Healing through nature

Carlie Trott, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Cincinnati, said the best ways to engage children in climate action are fun, collaborative activities that help them feel they can make a difference.

"My research shows that participatory methods can be effective in promoting children's enjoyment while strengthening their sense of agency," she explained.

BRAC's green play-based education initiative also caters to children caught up in humanitarian crises, such as Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in camps in Bangladesh, or Congolese refugee children in Uganda.

The play lab facilities provide spaces for those children to come together to speak about their experiences, recite poems in their own languages, and draw pictures to express themselves.

Kuri Chisim, who leads work on adolescents at the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, said children's art initially tends to evoke fear and anguish but gradually incorporates brighter subjects like flowers and animals.

Shanti Rani Das, a mental health counsellor trained by BRAC who supports rural families, said children can heal from mental health issues and trauma by forming bonds in a safe space and connecting with nature.

Victims or change-makers?

Despite growing evidence of the importance of education about climate and nature, there is a lack of national and global strategies to boost knowledge and green skills through primary, secondary and tertiary education, said Rello from UNICEF.

In Bangladesh, school textbooks already include environment and climate-related information, but that is not enough to prepare children for the growing crisis they face, experts and activists told Context.

Aruba Faruque, a 17-year-old activist who participated in COP28 representing the voices of Bangladeshi children and adolescents, has been running a campaign asking the government to provide effective climate-related education.

“Our schools teach children facts and theories that help them pass exams, but what we need is multi-dimensional, action-oriented learning taught by well-trained teachers,” she said.

That means offering children opportunities to develop green skills and more activities outside the classroom such as cleaning up trash on beaches and riverbanks and learning how the solar photovoltaic systems in their homes work, she added.

Faruque and her peers have organised “climate olympiad” competitions on climate-related knowledge at high schools, as well as debates, film screenings and discussions with children and teachers about the climate crisis.

Efforts like this will help equip children and young people for the type of work needed to push forward a green transition - but far more is needed, experts said.

Rello, from UNICEF, called for larger investment in climate literacy education and green skills training.

A UNICEF report this year showed that only 2.4 per cent of finance provided by key climate funds globally - averaging less than US\$71 million a year since 2006 - went into “child-responsive activities” like ensuring children have access to clean water or making their schools fit to withstand storms, with very little going to education.

Even when children are considered in climate projects, they are seen as vulnerable victims rather than people who can drive change, the report pointed out.

Yet teen activists like Faruque and younger children like Jerin and Fatema believe they are playing their part.

“You cannot imagine the passion that children bring to the cause of climate action - which cannot and should not be quelled,” Faruque said.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [\[Opinion\] Building disaster resilience at grassroots amid climate change, natural disasters](#)

After a series of dazzling New Year fireworks displays amazed millions of cable television viewers worldwide, news of a magnitude 7.6 earthquake on the western seaboard of Japan, some 190 miles from Tokyo, brought people back to the reality that natural disasters are integral to human existence. An initial tsunami warning was scaled down to an advisory. According to initial casualty reports, at least a dozen dead had been recovered. Major damage to roads and buildings hampered the work of rescue crews that had been dispatched to badly damaged areas.

Last Dec. 2, 2023, an earthquake with a magnitude of at least 7.4 struck off Surigao del Sur and Davao Oriental. Barely two weeks earlier, a magnitude 6.8 earthquake was felt in Mindanao; its epicenter was traced near Sarangani island in Davao Occidental.

These recent events underscore the importance of disaster preparedness and disaster resilience.

On April 30, 2023, President Marcos signed Executive Order No. 24 forming the Disaster Response and Crisis Management Task Force that would “oversee and coordinate the planning, and monitoring and evaluation of disaster preparedness and response plans.” Climate change, as exemplified by the onset of El Niño in the first quarter of 2024, presents continuing risks of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and storms, with severe impact on agriculture and infrastructure.

According to a January 2021 paper published by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies, the structure for formulating and implementing disaster policies is predominantly top-down. Under Republic Act 10121, the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act of 2010, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) is supported by similar bodies at the regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay levels. It is imperative to mobilize community action with the least delay to minimize risk and damage to life and property.

Assuring a high level of risk preparedness is government’s responsibility. This is best achieved if there is community resilience, as manifested by well-trained, well-prepared, and well-funded barangay-based organizations that are capable of responding to emergency situations. A Harvard Humanitarian Initiative report published in October 2020 proposed several key action steps.

First, there is need to strengthen cohesion among many local groups or organizations. Second, there must be less dependence on international non-governmental

organizations. When these big global groups are removed from the scene, the local network would lose nearly 40 percent of its relationships, which indicates low resilience. Third, the disaster preparedness network in the country consists primarily of one-way relationships with less than one percent being reciprocal or bidirectional relationships between two organizations. Hence there is predominantly more information-seeking and support solicitation, instead of cross-collaboration or joint initiatives. Finally, almost half of reported relationships among cooperating international and local organizations have been active for three years or less. Clearly, such relationships would need to thrive much longer to be deemed sustainable.

Disaster resilience needs to be strengthened at the grassroots level. Community-based organizations must build quick-response capability and long-term sustainability.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [PH among countries lagging in UN development targets](#)

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

At the midpoint of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a sobering reality emerges: the world is falling short of meeting most of these goals by 2030.

In 2015, United Nations (UN) member states, including the Philippines, adopted the SDGs as a universal target to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030, everyone would live in peace and prosperity.

“Leave no one behind,” said the UN in a special edition of the SDG report.

“That defining principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a shared promise by every country to work together to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet,” the UN said.

“But halfway to 2030, that promise is in peril,” it said.

“The Sustainable Development Goals are disappearing in the rear-view mirror, as is the hope and rights of current and future generations,” the UN said.

“A fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing, and action – to put the world on a better path. And it is needed now,” it added.

In the case of the Philippines, 2023 has witnessed a slower pace of advancement or even a step backward compared to the progress made in the previous year.

Sounding the alarm

“Halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, the SDG Progress Report; Special Edition shows we are leaving more than half the world behind,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

“Progress on more than 50 percent of targets of the SDGs is weak and insufficient; on 30 percent, it has stalled or gone into reverse. These include key targets on poverty, hunger and climate,” he said.

“Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda could become an epitaph for a world that might have been,” he added.

To better understand the 2030 Agenda, think of it as a big plan that the whole world agreed on to make our planet a better place by the year 2030. It's like a roadmap with 17 main goals, known as SDGs, which cover things like ending poverty, protecting the environment, making sure everyone has good health and education, and more.

These 17 main goals are global to-do lists, which are composed of 140 different goals or tasks. However, as the world reaches halfway to 2030, the UN said there are some problems in making progress in achieving these tasks.

“The latest global-level data and assessments from custodian agencies paint a concerning picture: of the approximately 140 targets that can be evaluated, half of them show moderate or severe deviations from the desired trajectory,” the UN stressed.

“Furthermore, more than 30 percent of these targets have experienced no progress or, even worse, regression below the 2015 baseline,” it explained.

Results of the evaluation underscore the pressing need for heightened efforts to steer the SDGs back on track and make strides toward a sustainable future for all.

“The task ahead is daunting, but it is not impossible,” said Li Junhua, UN undersecretary-general for economic and social affairs.

“With just seven years left to deliver transformational change, political leaders and public institutions will need to rally all stakeholders around the SDGs and strengthen collaboration, while building trust and accountability,” Junhua added.

“Steps like regulatory innovations that align private sector governance models with sustainable development objectives could spark significant change if applied soon enough.”

## Country ranking

Countries that are actively working to implement and achieve SDGs — often referred to as “SDG implementers” or “SDG adopters” — are ranked annually based on their progress in achieving the goals.

The Index Score, or overall score, is used to measure the total progress of each country in achieving all 17 SDGs. The score can be interpreted as a percentage of SDG achievement. A score of 100 indicates that all SDGs have been achieved.

A higher SDG Index Score generally indicates better progress in achieving the SDGs, while a lower score suggests that a country may be facing challenges in meeting its sustainable development targets.

The most recent rankings from the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) revealed that Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Austria stand at the forefront in terms of their accomplishments and advancements in implementing SDGs.

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, these five nations have already achieved substantial progress, with SDG Index Scores of 86.76 percent, 85.98 percent, 85.68 percent, 83.36 percent, and 82.28.

In the latest assessment by the UN SDSN, the Philippines secured the 98th spot among 166 countries in 2022, slipping three places compared to its 95th position among 163 countries in 2021.

Despite this slight drop in rankings, the country's Index Score improved, increasing from 66.64 percent in 2021 to 67.14 percent in 2022.

Data from the 2023 Sustainable Development Report further revealed that 34.7 percent of SDG targets for the Philippines have either been achieved or are on the right track. Approximately 37.5 percent have made limited progress, while 27.8 percent of the targets have shown a deteriorating status.

SDG implementation: Where do we stand?

Out of the 17 SDGs, the Philippines was able to achieve only one so far: SDG 12, which encourages more sustainable consumption and production patterns through various measures, including specific policies and international agreements on the management of materials that are toxic to the environment.

The UN SDSN said the country is on track or is currently maintaining SDG achievement, which covered efforts in reducing solid and electronic waste and minimizing sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen emissions.

For SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), data showed that although the Philippines was already on track or maintaining SDG achievement, challenges — both major and significant — remain, specifically in achieving these targets:

Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

Target 6.3: By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

Target 6.4: By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

The data also showed that the country continues to face challenges in achieving SDG 13 (climate action) after efforts to combat climate change and its impacts were seen stagnating.

The country is also facing significant challenges in some other SDGs, such as:

SDG 1: No poverty

SDG 2: Zero hunger

SDG 4: Quality education

SDG 5: Gender equality

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 17: Partnership for the goals

READ: PH SDG score: Good in curbing poverty, teenage smoking

The Philippines faces major challenges in achieving six significant SDGs:

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

SDG 14: Life below water

SDG 15: Life on land

SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions

Positive influence

Aside from their overall score and ranking, UN member states are also ranked by their spillover scores.

“Countries are ranked by their spillover score. Each country’s actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries’ abilities to achieve the SDGs,” the UN SDSN explained.

“The Spillover Index assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security,” it added.

A higher score indicates that a country causes more positive than negative spillover effects.

In 2022, the Philippines held the 59th position among 166 countries, with a spillover score of 96.98. This represents a drop from its previous ranking of 55th among 163 countries, where it had a higher spillover score of 97.21.

The UN SDSN noted that the country had achieved several SDG indicators under the three dimensions of development (environmental and social impacts embodied into trade, economy and finance, and security).

#### Key areas for urgent action

“The SDGs are the universally agreed road map to bridge economic and geopolitical divides, restore trust, and rebuild solidarity,” Guterres said.

“Failure to make progress means inequalities will continue to deepen, increasing the risk of a fragmented, two-speed world. No country can afford to see the 2030 Agenda fail,” he added.

Junhua, meanwhile, emphasized that the 2030 Agenda remains the clearest blueprint of humanity’s highest aspirations.

“When historians write about the twenty-first century, they will judge leaders and policymakers by whether they have succeeded in transforming this blueprint into reality,” said Junhua.

“Back in September 2015, when global leaders met to adopt the SDGs, they declared that ‘the future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands’,” Junhua said.

“At this midpoint, these words are truer than ever. It’s now up to us to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved — in full and on time,” he added.

The UN identified five key areas for urgent action amid the “sobering picture” painted by the results of the comprehensive assessment of global progress in achieving the SDGs:

1. Heads of State and Government should recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained, and transformative action — both nationally and internationally — to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Governments should advance concrete, integrated, and targeted policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and end the war on nature, with a focus on advancing the rights of women and girls and empowering the most vulnerable.
3. Governments should strengthen national and subnational capacity, accountability and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The international community should recommit at the SDG Summit to deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to mobilize the resources and investment needed for developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those in special situations and experiencing vulnerability.
5. Member States should facilitate the continued strengthening of the United Nations development system and boost the capacity of the multilateral system to tackle emerging challenges and address Sustainable Development Goals-related gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture that have emerged since 2015.

## POLITIKO

### [Villafuerte: Blue Economy Bill Addresses Fisherfolk Concerns, Effect Of Climate Change](#)

By: Billy Begas

National Unity Party president and Camarines Sur Rep. LRay Villafuerte highlighted the importance of the Blue Economy bill that was approved by the House of Representatives last month.

Villafuerte said the measure seeks to ensure a more responsible stewardship of the country's seas and coasts. It will overhaul the National Coast Watch Council (NCWC), which will be responsible for formulating and implementing a whole-of-government approach to protecting and conserving the country's maritime zones.

The lawmaker has called for swift congressional action on the measure as over 150 leaders from different countries gathered in a two-week United Nations (UN) global climate summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to December 13. The summit aims to harmonize tougher climate action to meet the ambitious target for the world to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"We in the Congress can express our solidarity with this new global resolve to make the world far more resilient to catastrophic climate impacts, for the benefit of our present and future generations, by acting on this proposed legislation meant to advance the twin goals of best protecting and conserving our marine and coastal systems while creating sufficient economic opportunities for their sustainable and safe use now and in the future," Villafuerte said.

Under the measure, Villafuerte said the NCWC, which was formed 12 years ago, would formulate an integrated strategy in promoting the blue economy and ecosystem-based management of coastal and marine resources.

NCWC, which was created under Executive Order (EO) 57 issued by then President Benigno Aquino III, will be renamed the National Maritime Council (NMC).

Villafuerte is among the principal authors of HB 9662.

## SUNSTAR

### Endangered species increase

Climate change is worsening the planet's biodiversity crises, making environments more deadly for thousands of species and accelerating the precipitous decline in the number of plants and animals on Earth, according to an international organization that tracks species health.

Species of salmon and turtles are among those facing a decline as the planet warms.

Atlantic salmon isn't yet threatened with extinction, but its population dropped by nearly a quarter from 2006 to 2020, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which tracks biodiversity around the globe, said on Monday. It's now considered near threatened. They live in fewer places and face human-created hazards like dams and water pollution. Climate change is making it harder for the fish to find food and easier for alien species to compete, according to the group. Although there are some signs of hope: their numbers ticked up in Maine this past year.

The news was announced at the United Nations climate conference in the United Arab Emirates on Monday. Leaders of the IUCN updated their Red List of Threatened Species, a tracker of biodiversity around the globe. It was mainly bad news. The list includes information on 157,000 species, about 7,000 more than last year's update.

The IUCN said just over 44,000 species are threatened with extinction. That's roughly 2,000 more than last year.

"Species around the world are under huge pressure. So no matter where you look, the numbers of threatened species are rising," said Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the Red List unit at the IUCN.

Climate change is worsening conditions for about 6,700 species threatened with extinction.

The Central South Pacific and East Pacific green turtle is at greater risk because of climate change, for example. Fewer turtles hatch as higher seas inundate nests. Warming waters can harm its food supply of seagrasses.

The update includes the first broad assessment of the health of freshwater fish species. One-quarter of species — just over 3,000 — face an extinction risk. As climate change raises sea levels, salt water is traveling further up rivers, for example. And these species already face tremendous threats from pollution and overfishing, the IUCN said.

Frogs, salamanders and other amphibians are suffering the most. About 41% of these species are under threat.

“They are climate captives because of higher temperatures, drought — whatever happens amphibians cannot move out of harm's way and are directly impacted by climate change,” said Vivek Menon, deputy chair of the IUCN's species survival commission.

There was a bit of good news. Two antelope species are fairing better, although they still have a long way to go before their long-term survival is stabilized. For example, the scimitar-horned oryx, a light-colored animal with curved horns, had previously been categorized as extinct in the wild but is now endangered. It faced a lot of threats: poaching, drought and car accidents all played a role in largely eliminating the species by the turn of the century. But recent efforts to reintroduce the species in Chad have helped and there are now at least 140 adults and more than twice as many calves on a large nature reserve.

IUCN's director general Grethel Aguilar said it's clear humans need to act to protect biodiversity and when conservation is done right, it works. To combat the threat posed by climate change, she said fossil fuels need to be phased out, a contentious focus of this year's COP28 negotiations.

“Nature is here to help us, so let us help it back,” she said.

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