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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Ben Kritz

On Saturday, Jan. 10, the world will pass an annual climate threshold colloquially referred to as “Pollutocrat Day,” which marks the point in the year at which the wealthiest 1 percent of the world’s population has already exhausted its entire “carbon budget” for the year. The carbon budget is the amount of climate change-inducing carbon emissions that can be created while still keeping global warming limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2030.

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Nueva Vizcaya boosts climate resilience with expanded local action program
By: Leander C. Domingo

To strengthen local climate resilience, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) has expanded its Accelerated Climate Action and Transformation for Local Communities (ACT Local) Program to Nueva Vizcaya.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Govt starts identifying key climate change indicators for policymaking]
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The government has begun identifying key climate change indicators to guide policy and planning, officials said during a national dialogue.

The event, organized by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Unescap), marks the start of a three-year project to develop comprehensive, multidimensional statistics on climate change.

The initiative aims to support government agencies in monitoring and evaluating climate-related policies.

During the three-day dialogue, participants discussed priority climate strategies, including measures outlined in the Nationally Determined Contribution and the National Adaptation Plan.

Panelists highlighted challenges to effective climate action, such as gaps in financing, fragmented data systems, balancing food security with mitigation efforts, promoting economy-wide sustainable approaches and improving interagency coordination.

Unescap representatives emphasized the importance of producing disaggregated and user-focused climate statistics, noting that quality data is essential for informed decision-making.

By the conclusion of the dialogue, the group identified 50 priority indicators from a pool of 158 proposed by the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators (GSCCSI).

The PSA and Unescap will next work on refining these indicators, ensuring methodological soundness, data availability, and feasibility in collaboration with relevant agencies.

In December, the International Monetary Fund cautioned that without stronger adaptation measures, climate change could reduce the Philippines' annual GDP by as much as 2 percent over the long term.

ECO BUSINESS

What is China’s contribution to climate finance?
By: Cui Qiwen

The core questions raised at last year’s COP30 climate conference in Belém, Brazil, were how to raise funds to support actions that address climate change in developing nations? And, once this climate finance is raised, how to allocate it?

But the conference reached no new breakthrough agreement. Countries instead decided to establish a two-year “work programme” to discuss the climate finance issue, according to the Belém decision.

At COP29 in Azerbaijan’s capital Baku, countries agreed to triple financing for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change to a floor of US$300 billion per year by 2035. It was decided that developed nations would be “taking the lead” on supplying these funds.

Countries also agreed in Baku to develop a roadmap on how to reach a more aspirational US$1.3 trillion annually, also by 2035. The funds for this target would come from “all sources”, meaning not just developed country governments but also private sources, multilateral development banks and other avenues.

The subsequent Report on the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T was presented at COP30. It proposes that half – US$650 billion – comes from the private sector.

At a high-level COP30 meeting on the roadmap witnessed by Dialogue Earth, Simon Stiell, executive secretary of the UN climate process, described the goal as “achievable”. He encouraged innovation in financial products, along with more involvement of private capital.

China finds itself in a complex position. Under the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” established for UN climate negotiations, it is not obliged to contribute to the US$300 billion public finance pot due to its status as a developing country. But according to experts at COP30 who spoke to Dialogue Earth, overseas investments by Chinese companies are an important part of the route to the US$1.3 trillion figure. China’s clean tech economic boom has, in other words, marked it out from other developing countries.

In its climate transparency report published last year, China complained that “developed countries emphasise global climate investment and financing, while downplaying their obligations to provide climate finance support.” This illustrates that complex position. On the one hand, China highlights the obligation for developed nations to provide climate finance in the form of grants and concessional loans. Meanwhile, it is increasingly participating in climate finance via private investment channels.

So, what is China's role in the Roadmap to 1.3T? And given the huge shortfall recently identified in the UN Adaptation Gap Report, how does global climate funding need to change?

Dialogue Earth spoke to experts from China and elsewhere to find out.

The roadmap to 1.3T

In November, the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance, which has informed the Paris Agreement's financial deliberations since COP26, issued a new report on how to provide the necessary climate finance to developing countries, excluding China.

The report says these countries will need US$3.2 trillion annually by 2035, if they are to continue developing while simultaneously avoiding the catastrophic impacts of climate change. About 60 per cent of that – or US$1.9 trillion – can be provided by developing nations themselves, says the group. This leaves US$1.3 trillion to come from elsewhere.

The Roadmap to 1.3T report, co-published in November by the COP29 and COP30 presidency teams, divides that up as follows:

- US$300 billion in multilateral finance from development banks and climate funds
- US$80 billion in bilateral concessional finance from developed countries
- US$230 billion from new sources of low-cost finance, such as carbon markets, voluntary levies, debt swaps and private philanthropy
- US$40 billion from South-South cooperation between developing nations
- US$650 billion from cross-border private finance

Achieving this will not be easy. According to a November analysis by the World Resources Institute, the US$300 billion in multilateral finance is achievable, but the real gap lies with the proposed US$650 billion in private-sector money.

The Climate Policy Initiative, a think-tank headquartered in the US, has estimated that private, climate-related funding to developing nations excluding China stood at about US$15 billion in 2022. Foreign private investments into renewable energy in the least developed countries was only US$16 billion in that year, estimates UN Trade and Development. Raising that to US$650 billion in the near term will clearly be challenging.

China's contribution

Last year, China was relatively quiet about its contributions to climate funding. Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, told the Guardian in Belém that China would provide more money to vulnerable countries. But he also said: "We don't want to take the lead alone. We need comprehensive leadership."

China has long aided climate mitigation and adaptation in developing nations via South-South cooperation – when developing countries work together to help one or both develop.

At COP29, China’s vice premier Ding Xuexiang said: “Since 2016, China has provided and mobilised more than RMB 177 billion of project funds in support of other developing countries’ climate response.” But this total, which is about US$25 billion at today’s exchange rate, was not broken down by type of financing. The figure was given again in early November in China’s latest Paris Agreement action plan (officially known as its Nationally Determined Contribution).

“From China’s perspective, the new climate finance targets were already decided at COP in Baku,” says Kate Logan, director of the China Climate Hub and climate diplomacy for the Asia Society Policy Institute. “Last year… there are no major negotiation topics that would put China’s own financial contributions in the spotlight. Instead, China has [joined] other developing countries in calling for developed countries to take greater responsibility for their climate finance commitments.”

Rebecca Nadin, director of global risks and resilience at ODI Global, a global affairs think-tank, agrees. She says China is positioning itself as a significant provider of climate finance to the developing world, partly in response to criticism from within the G77 group of developing countries. China has always stressed that its contributions are voluntary and distinct from those the developed nations have a duty to make.

“China positions itself as a climate leader within the Global South but carefully maintains boundaries against developed-country burden-sharing expectations,” she adds.

China’s contributions are not being officially tracked

Research shows China’s climate funding may go far beyond the figures detailed above, however.

The country contributed US$3 billion a year in climate funding to developing nations between 2015 and 2021, via government bodies and policy banks, states a report published Last year by the think-tank E3G. However, things then started to change. For the first time, climate-related finance from commercial banks and companies overtook the amount provided via the government.

In September Last year, a report from Johns Hopkins University in the US highlighted the impressive record of China’s companies. Since 2011, they have signed up to investments of between US$227-250 billion in overseas green-manufacturing projects.

These include those that make batteries, solar and wind power components, electric vehicles and green hydrogen. The vast majority of that investment came between 2022 and 2024, with US$210 billion committed across 54 countries. Three-quarters of it went to the Global South or emerging economies.

However, there does not seem to be any official tracking of those figures. One of the report’s co-authors is Mathias Larsen, a senior policy fellow at the London School of Economics’ Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment.

He said in September that the Chinese government itself may not know the total. Although government bodies such as the Ministry of Commerce must approve investments, that is done at the project level. The government does not seem to be tracking or coordinating these huge overseas green investments, he added.

A new corporate-led model

The other co-author of that report is Xue Xiaokang, an affiliate researcher at Johns Hopkins University's Net-Zero Industrial Policy Lab. He tells Dialogue Earth that these private green investments are mainly motivated by profit: "We see three major motives: access to the host nation's market, access via the host nation to another country's market, and access to input materials.

"China's domestic subsidies [for renewable energy] and policy support are most likely of secondary importance in driving those overseas green investments."

The report also points out that about half of participants in the investment surge since 2022 are solar or battery makers. Xue points to two factors behind this. Solar and electric vehicle manufacturers have now matured and are operating at scale – they were ready to move overseas. Plus there is fierce competition between them domestically.

"We regard this as a new model for China's climate governance. In the past, China's overseas climate finance was delivered through government-led channels, such as policy banks. Now, that process is business-led," Xue Xiaokang summarises.

Mathias Larsen describes the surge as a business-led "Belt and Road 2.0", saying China is not simply selling affordable low-carbon products overseas. Chinese companies are, with support from their host nations, involved in green transitions, he says. "China's total dominance of green tech… is globalising."

Fikayo Akeredolu, who is undertaking a doctorate on Nigeria's energy transition at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, agrees: "China's leadership is industrial rather than ideological. It comes from scale, cost competitiveness, and long-term industrial policy rather than from setting the global rules of the transition. Other countries still influence standards, governance and finance.

"But on the technologies that matter most for rapid deployment, China is the key global player."

Next come two questions. For how long will large investment flows be maintained? And how to assess the contribution of those investments to climate targets?

Xue Xiaokang says the flow may have slowed in 2025, and in many cases project construction has only just started, so results are not visible yet. More research will be needed in the future to calculate how they have helped the climate targets of host nations.

Debt and adaptation

If low-carbon investments from Chinese firms are driving the energy transition in developing nations, what are the limitations or challenges of this market-driven model?

"Private capital will not fund everything," said Avinash Persaud, the special advisor on climate change to the president of the Inter-American Development Bank, during a COP30 side event. Adaptation infrastructure such as flood defences are unlikely to win private investment, for example.

Private investors prefer mitigation projects, mostly in renewable energy, as they are more likely to make a return on investment. That means less money for adaptation.

Lily Hartzell, senior policy advisor on E3G's public banking and development team, thinks appropriate financial instruments should be used for different project types. She believes grants are still vital for adaptation activities in low-income countries.

Another core challenge is debt.

Two-thirds of low-income countries are in debt distress or at risk of it, according to a sustainability report published by the UN in June. Yet in 2023, 59 least developed countries and small island developing states spent more on servicing debt than they received in climate finance. That is according to the International Institute for Environment and Development, a think-tank headquartered in London.

"Private sector loans carry higher rates of interest, are shorter term, and cannot be compared with concessional loans. If low-income nations rely on commercial loans for public investment, they are under more pressure to make repayments and more likely to fall into a debt crisis," says Fikayo Akeredolu.

"Loans themselves are not bad. They just need to be used very carefully," says Hartzell. "Currently, the most important thing is still to scale up available climate finance, since the funds flowing to developing countries are insufficient to meet their mitigation and adaptation needs."

Mathias Larsen, though, remains optimistic about the surge in Chinese overseas investment seen in 2022-2024.

"The crucial question is if and how the host country is able to make use of that opportunity." Some countries, Larsen says, have realised that importing cheaper products from China does not benefit local development or employment. "Therefore, they put in tariffs and local content requirements to ensure that some parts of the value chains are inside the countries." Direct investment by Chinese firms, though, may help achieve industrialisation, employment and development targets, he adds.

As Avinash Persaud told Dialogue Earth at COP30: “China has the capacity to sell the developing world all the solar and wind. Today, politics gets in the way of something that would perhaps be one of the most powerful economic development strategies for both countries.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

3 weather systems to dampen most of PH on Thursday
By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

Most areas of the country will still experience rains due to three prevailing weather systems, said the weather bureau on Thursday.

The shear line affecting Southern Luzon will cause scattered rains and isolated thunderstorms across the Bicol Region, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan.

Moderate to heavy rains in those areas could result in flash floods or landslides, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan Valley, and Aurora will experience light rains, while Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will experience isolated light rains caused by the northeast monsoon or "amihan".

PAGASA said the rest of the country will experience isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to the easterlies.

Luzon will continue to experience moderate to strong winds and moderate to rough coastal waters.

Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate with slight to moderate seas.

Meanwhile, PAGASA said that as of 2 a.m., no low pressure area is being monitored for possible tropical cyclone formation.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

New Year's resolutions that can help climate action

Here's some good news as the holidays wrap up: Many New Year's resolutions people already make—eating healthier, saving money, getting organized—double as climate-friendly habits.

Whether you want to spend less, declutter or eat right, here are a few choices that could make a difference for you and the climate.

Bonus: They're all low-effort and low-cost.

If you want to save money, start at home. Electronics and appliances can continue drawing power even when they're turned off. You can cut phantom energy use by unplugging items you're not using, such as chargers and entertainment systems or using a power strip with an on-off switch.

Adjusting your thermostat a few degrees when you're not home can also reduce energy use and save money. The United States Department of Energy says that adjusting the thermostat by 7-10 degrees Fahrenheit (4-6 degrees Celsius) for eight hours a day can save up to 10 percent a year on heating and cooling.

Wash with cold water
Another simple tip: Washing your clothes on the cold setting and air-drying them when possible can help lower energy use and utility costs.

Heating water is the biggest energy draw in laundry, and clothes dryers are among the most energy-intensive household appliances, said Matthew Gonzales, vice chair of the National Hispanic Energy Council, which advocates for affordable energy for communities of color. This can also reduce wear and tear on clothing.

Gonzales said other simple swaps include switching to LED bulbs, sealing drafty windows, and replacing dirty air filters so heating and cooling systems run more efficiently.

He also suggested using natural light during the day, opening or closing curtains and windows strategically to manage heat, and turning off the lights when you don't need them. Households can see meaningful savings from small changes over time.

"Don't let perfect be the enemy of good enough," Gonzales said.

Cut down food waste
Cutting down food waste can also benefit your wallet, your diet, and the environment.

Food waste costs US consumers $728 every year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, and generates the annual planet-warming greenhouse gases equivalent to 42 coal-fired power plants.

One place to start is by using what you already have in your pantry before hitting the grocery store, said cookbook author Anne-Marie Bonneau.

“If you have fat and an onion and a couple of random vegetables—or even one random vegetable or some leftover cooked proteins or grains—you’ve got soup in the making,” Bonneau said. “If you’ve cleared out so much food that you don’t even have an onion and fat, it’s probably time to go shopping.”

She also recommends preserving food before it spoils, including fermenting vegetables, which, she says, is easier than it seems.

For example, you can make sauerkraut with just cabbage, salt, and a glass jar. You can also make sauces from seasonal vegetables like tomatoes and freeze them for use later in the year.

As a general rule, Bonneau added, eating fewer ultra-processed foods—such as sugary cereals, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, and TV dinners—can benefit both your health and the environment. Those foods are often heavily packaged in plastic, which can shed into food and contribute to pollution.

“You’ll improve your diet, you’ll reduce your waste, and your food will come in less contact with plastic,” she said.

Avoid clutter

Getting organized doesn’t have to mean buying storage bins or throwing things out. Often, it starts with using what you already have.

Spending even an hour organizing your space, spotting duplicates, and rediscovering forgotten items can reduce impulse spending by helping people understand what they actually use, said Katrina Caspelich, communications director for Remake, an advocacy group for human rights and climate justice in fashion.

She said a “one-in, one-out” rule—where you can only buy a new thing if it replaces an old thing—can be effective because it keeps wardrobes from growing and helps prevent clutter by encouraging more intentional purchases.

Unsubscribing from brand emails and sale alerts can also help. “Most impulse purchases start with a notification, not a need,” Caspelich said, adding that waiting 24 hours before buying something new often turns a “must-have” into a pass.

For a more structured reset, you might try a no-buy challenge, pausing new purchases for 30 or 90 days while rewearing, repairing, swapping with friends, or, if you can't commit to buying nothing, shopping secondhand instead of new.

"The key is flexibility," she said. "Framing it as an experiment rather than a strict rule makes it feel empowering instead of restrictive."

No new clothes challenge

Remake estimates that someone who takes part in a 90-day no new clothes challenge can save about 3,900 liters (1,030 gallons) of water, avoid roughly 300 kilograms (about 661 pounds) of carbon dioxide emissions, and keep around 9 kilograms (about 20 pounds) of clothing waste out of landfills while saving an average of nearly $300 by pausing new purchases.

Americans generated about 17 million tons of textile waste in 2018, most of it clothing, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

For anyone overwhelmed by the advice, the takeaway is simple: You don't have to do everything, and you don't have to do it perfectly. Starting with one habit you'll actually keep can make a difference for your budget, your routine, and the climate.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Opinion] Climate, energy and the moral license for development
By: Ben Kritz

On Saturday, Jan. 10, the world will pass an annual climate threshold colloquially referred to as "Pollutocrat Day," which marks the point in the year at which the wealthiest 1 percent of the world's population has already exhausted its entire "carbon budget" for the year. The carbon budget is the amount of climate change-inducing carbon emissions that can be created while still keeping global warming limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2030.

It was estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at 400 billion metric tons total from the start of 2020, and that figure can be divided up in various illustrative ways, globally, by country, or per capita and by time periods. Right now, the total average per capita is about 50 metric tons, or about 1.7 metric tons per person per year.

In other words, the richest 1 percent of the world, whether measured individually or collectively, have exhausted their entire annual carbon budget in just 10 days. The lower income half of the world's population, on the other hand, which includes the average Filipino, will take about three years to create the same volume of carbon emissions.

All of this might be dismissed as an interesting thought exercise, but it illustrates a profound global inequality, one that is unfortunately perpetuated by the climate mitigation narratives of civil society and climate advocacy groups that mean well but do not think very deeply about the problem. The developed world is in a position to debate ways to reduce what we might call "luxury emissions" — jet travel, data centers, cleaner fuel for cruise and cargo ships — while the Philippines is still concerned with "subsistence emissions," which include things like basic electricity accessibility, food production and transportation. Yet the Philippines, along with other developing countries, is still subjected to First-World narratives and expectations on climate mitigation.

Survival emissions

If we look at the imperative for emissions reduction and climate action on an equitable scale, the Philippines can be described as having a "carbon deficit" relative to its developmental needs. Energy is the linchpin of development here, as it is in most places, thus in order to make the biggest dent in poverty reduction and overall economic standards, the Philippines must focus on building its energy security — that daunting balance of accessibility, reliability, affordability and sustainability.

Ideally, that is something that should be approached with simultaneous equal focus and effort on all four objectives, but again, the Philippines is at a disadvantage; 1.6 million Filipino households still do not have round-the-clock access to electricity, or in many cases, any electricity at all, and tens of millions more do not have sufficiently reliable service. A household's first refrigerator or a village’s first streetlights have a greater moral weight than any “luxury emissions” in the developed world; they cannot be treated the same.

Forget ‘net zero’

That is not to dismiss the notion of sustainability and “clean energy” entirely; far from it. Climate change has a negative impact on the stability and reliability of the energy system in various ways, and the reliance on non-native sources of fuel will continue to present a significant risk to overall energy security for as long as that state of affairs exists. But the “net-zero” narrative pushed by nongovernmental organizations that treats the energy transition as one simple step needs a serious reality check. Transition means exactly that, an evolution through however many progressive steps it takes, over whatever period of time it takes, to reach a desired goal.

Applying a “net-zero” goal to the Philippines is irrelevant on one hand, and harmful to the country’s well-being on the other. Irrelevant, because the contribution of the Philippines’ emissions to the global total is mathematically insignificant. Our climate-induced typhoons are not caused because the Philippines still operates some coal power plants, and if every molecule of harmful emissions from those and other sources in the Philippines instantly ceased, the weather extremes we are subjected to would not be reduced in the slightest. Harmful, because following the net zero, “we can power the entire country with renewable energy now” narrative would stifle growth — the growth the country needs to be able to build resiliency, and adapt to a changing climate the Philippines is realistically powerless to affect. Growth the country needs to reach that point when setting a “net-zero target” actually becomes feasible, and when it becomes a moral imperative because the moral imperative of assuring basic subsistence has already been satisfied.

Again, this is not a call to shun climate action; we as a species do not have the luxury to make that irrational choice without mortal consequences. Everyone, from the level of the individual, to business enterprises, to communities, to the entire nation, to the entire world, must do what we can to undo the damage we have done to our planet, if not for our sake, then for the as yet blameless future generations to come. However, any effort is futile if it is not taken with due respect for reality, context, proportionality and consequences, intended or not.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MSN

Nueva Vizcaya boosts climate resilience with expanded local action program
By: Leander C. Domingo

To strengthen local climate resilience, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) has expanded its Accelerated Climate Action and Transformation for Local Communities (ACT Local) Program to Nueva Vizcaya.

A two-day training held from Oct. 2 to 3 provided technical support to local government units in formulating and updating their Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs), integrating climate action with education and cultural heritage.

Sen. Loren Legarda, chairman of the Senate Committee on Climate Change, emphasized the importance of local climate planning: "All pro¬vinces, municipalities and cities must have LCCAPs. How can we withstand the challenges of natural hazards if we don't understand our vulnerabilities and risks?" She stressed that climate adaptation must be grounded in science and local realities.
CCC Vice Chairman and Executive Director Robert Borje highlighted the need for evidence-based planning: "Disaster response is one thing; preparedness is another." He emphasized that climate plans must be based on reliable data and scientific research, advocating for nature-based solutions to sustain Nueva Vizcaya's ecosystems and livelihoods.

Participants gained science-based knowledge and tools in LCCAP formulation, climate projections, Climate and Disaster Risk Assessment, Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Local Climate Change Expenditure Tagging and access to the People's Survival Fund.

The event's key agencies and academic partners included the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, Department of Science and Techno¬logy, Nueva Vizcaya State University and Isabela State University.

CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne Herrera emphasized that ACT Local is a national response to the growing need for localized, science-based climate action. "Health, well-being, income, livelihood and education are all part of LCCAP. These are all essential components of climate action that must be addressed," she said.

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