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BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Seth Borenstein

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BUSINESS WORLD

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By: Federico R. Lopez

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CNN

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By: Laura Paddison

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MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

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MANILA BULLETIN

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PH calls for energy transition support from oil-producing countries](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

The Philippines has called on oil-producing countries to ramp up their support in the energy transition initiatives of developing countries like the Philippines that become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change despite contributing less to global emissions.

[UN report: PH one of strongest performers in Southeast Asia](#)

By: Anna Leah Gonzales

Philippine economic growth is expected to accelerate this year and in 2026, making the country one of the strongest performers among Southeast Asian economies, a report from the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs has said.

THE MANILA TIMES

[The Clima Act: Companies accountable for climate damage](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

Five days before 2024 ended, The New York Times published a banner story highlighting a new law that penalizes companies for their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It reported that Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York signed the Climate Change Superfund Act into law.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Federico R. Lopez

Beyond creating a future-ready energy system, our being among the top five countries in the world's climate vulnerability list necessitates that we prepare Philippine cities, communities, and infrastructure for resilience in a climate-changed world. The impacts of the climate crisis as well as climate action that will be demanded of everyone are among the forces in history that are in no way linear.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[GPCCI, German Embassy to host 2025 sustainability forum](#)

The German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI), in partnership with the German Embassy Manila, will host the 2025 Sustainability Forum: The Green Economies of Tomorrow on 31 January 2025 in Manila. The event aims to address pressing climate issues while promoting sustainable growth in the Philippines.

[Less greenhouse gas emissions sought](#)

By: Aljon Danniell Eguia

Environmental experts and business leaders gathered in Makati City for an ecological forum that highlighted the environmental advancements of Japanese businesses in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

THE MANILA TIMES

[NSC should also address human and environmental security](#)

By: Antonio Contreras

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) 81, which he signed on Dec. 30, 2024, reorganizing the National Security Council (NSC) of the Philippines.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Last 2 years crossed 1.5°C global warming limit — EU monitor

The last two years exceeded on average a critical warming limit for the first time as global temperatures soar "beyond what modern humans have ever experienced", an EU agency said Friday.

This does not mean the internationally-agreed 1.5C warming threshold has been permanently breached, but the Copernicus Climate Change Service said it was drawing dangerously near.

The EU monitor confirmed that 2024 was the hottest year on record, surpassing 2023 and extending a streak of extraordinary heat that fuelled climate extremes on all continents.

Another record-breaking year is not anticipated in 2025, as climate sceptic Donald Trump takes office, and a deadline looms for nations to commit to deeper cuts to rising levels of greenhouse gases.

But the UK weather service predicts 2025 will still rank among the top three warmest years in the history books.

This excess heat supercharges extreme weather, and 2024 saw countries from Spain to Kenya, the United States and Nepal hit by disasters that cost more than \$300 billion by some estimates.

Los Angeles is battling deadly wildfires that have destroyed thousands of buildings and forced tens of thousands to flee their homes.

US President Joe Biden said the fires were the most "devastating" to hit California and were proof that "climate change is real".

Copernicus said sustained, unprecedented warming made average temperatures over 2023 and 2024 more than 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than pre-industrial times.

Nearly 200 nations agreed in Paris in 2015 that meeting 1.5C offered the best chance of preventing the most catastrophic repercussions of climate change.

But the world is nowhere on track to meeting that target.

"We are now teetering on the edge of passing the 1.5C level," said Copernicus climate deputy director Samantha Burgess.

CLIMATE EXTREMES

Copernicus records go back to 1940 but other sources of climate data, such as ice cores and tree rings, allow scientists to say the Earth today is likely the warmest it has been in tens of thousands of years.

The 1.5C threshold is measured in decades, not individual years, but Copernicus said reaching this limit even briefly illustrated the unprecedented changes being brought about by humanity.

Scientists say every fraction of a degree above 1.5°C is consequential, and that beyond a certain point the climate could shift in ways that are difficult to anticipate.

At present levels, human-driven climate change is already making droughts, storms, floods and heatwaves more frequent and intense.

The death of 1,300 pilgrims in Saudi Arabia from extreme heat, a barrage of powerful tropical storms in Asia and North America, and historic flooding in Europe and Africa marked grim milestones in 2024.

The oceans, a crucial climate regulator which absorb 90 percent of excess heat from greenhouse gases, warmed to record levels in 2024, straining coral reefs and marine life and stirring violent weather.

Warmer seas mean higher evaporation and greater moisture in the atmosphere, causing heavier rainfall, feeding energy into cyclones and bringing sometimes unbearable humidity.

Water vapor in the atmosphere hit fresh highs in 2024 and combined with elevated temperatures caused floods, heatwaves and "misery for millions of people", Burgess said.

'STARK WARNING'

Johan Rockstrom of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research said hitting 1.5C was a "stark warning sign".

"We have now experienced the first taste of a 1.5C world, which has cost people and the global economy unprecedented suffering and economic costs," he told AFP.

Scientists say the onset of a warming El Niño phenomenon in 2023 contributed to the record heat that followed.

But El Niño ended in early 2024, and scientists have puzzled over why global temperatures have remained at record or near-record levels ever since.

In December, the World Meteorological Organization said if an opposite.

La Niña took over in coming months it would be too "weak and short-lived" to have much of a cooling effect.

"The future is in our hands — swift and decisive action can still alter the trajectory of our future climate," said Copernicus climate director Carlo Buontempo.

Nations agreed to transition away from fossil fuels at a UN summit in 2023 but the latest meeting in November struggled to make any progress around how to make deeper reductions to heat-trapping emissions.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Greenland, a remote but resource-rich island, is key in a warming world](#)

By: Seth Borenstein

Remote, icy and mostly pristine, Greenland plays an outsized role in the daily weather experienced by billions of people and in the climate changes taking shape all over the planet.

Greenland is where climate change, scarce resources, tense geopolitics and new trade patterns all intersect, said Ohio University security and environment professor Geoff Dabelko.

The world's largest island is now "central to the geopolitical, geoeconomic competition in many ways," partly because of climate change, Dabelko said.

Since his first term in office, President-elect Donald Trump has expressed interest in acquiring Greenland, which is a semiautonomous territory of Denmark, a longtime US ally and a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It is also home to a large US military base.

Why is Greenland coveted?

Think of Greenland as an open refrigerator door or thermostat for a warming world, and it's in a region that is warming four times faster than the rest of the globe, said New York University climate scientist David Holland.

Locked inside are valuable rare earth minerals needed for telecommunications, as well as uranium, billions of untapped barrels of oil and a vast supply of natural gas that used to be inaccessible but is becoming less so.

Many of the same minerals are currently being supplied mostly by China, so other countries such as the United States are interested, Dabelko said.

Three years ago, the Denmark government suspended oil development offshore from the territory of 57,000 people.

But more than the oil, gas or minerals, there's ice—a "ridiculous" amount, said climate scientist Eric Rignot of the University of California, Irvine.

If that ice melts, it would reshape coastlines across the globe and potentially shift weather patterns in such a dramatic manner that the threat was the basis of a Hollywood disaster movie.

Greenland holds enough ice that if it all melts, the world's seas would rise by 24 feet (7.4 meters). Nearly a foot of that is so-called zombie ice, already doomed to melt no matter what happens, a 2022 study found.

Since 1992, Greenland has lost about 182 billion tons (169 billion metric tons) of ice each year, with losses hitting 489 billion tons a year (444 billion metric tons) in 2019.

Greenland will be “a key focus point” through the 21st century because of the effect its melting ice sheet will have on sea levels, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colorado. “It will likely become a bigger contributor in the future.”

That impact is “perhaps unstoppable,” NYU's Holland said.

Are other climate factors at play?

Greenland also serves as the engine and on/off switch for a key ocean current that influences Earth's climate in many ways, including hurricane and winter storm activity.

It's called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) and it's slowing down because more fresh water is being dumped into the ocean by melting ice in Greenland, Serreze said.

A shutdown of the AMOC conveyor belt is a much-feared climate tipping point that could plunge Europe and parts of North America into prolonged freezes, a scenario depicted in the 2004 movie “The Day After Tomorrow.”

“If this global current system were to slow substantially or even collapse altogether—as we know it has done in the past—normal temperature and precipitation patterns around the globe would change drastically,” said climate scientist Jennifer Francis of the Woodwell Climate Research Center.

“Agriculture would be derailed, ecosystems would crash, and ‘normal’ weather would be a thing of the past,” Francis added.

Greenland is also changing color as it melts from the white of ice, which reflects sunlight, heat and energy away from the planet, to the blue and green of the ocean and land, which absorb much more energy, Holland said.

Greenland plays a role in the dramatic freeze that two-thirds of the United States is currently experiencing.

And back in 2012, weather patterns over Greenland helped steer Superstorm Sandy into New York and New Jersey, according to winter weather expert Judah Cohen of the private firm Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

Because of Greenland's mountains of ice, it also changes patterns in the jet stream, which brings storms across the globe and dictates daily weather.

Often, especially in winter, a blocking system of high pressure off Greenland causes Arctic air to plunge to the west and east, smacking North America and Europe, Cohen said.

Why is Greenland's location so important?

Because it straddles the Arctic circle between the United States, Russia and Europe, Greenland is a geopolitical prize that the US and others have eyed for more than 150 years.

It's even more valuable as the Arctic opens up more to shipping and trade.

None of that takes into consideration the unique look of the ice-covered island that has some of the Earth's oldest rocks.

"I see it as insanely beautiful. It's eye-watering to be there," said Holland, who has conducted research on the ice more than 30 times since 2007.

"Pieces of ice the size of the Empire State Building are just crumbling off cliffs and crashing into the ocean. And also, the beautiful wildlife, all the seals and the killer whales. It's just breathtaking," he said.

BUSINESS WORLD

[Nowhere to go but Net Zero](#)

By: Federico R. Lopez

We're all aware that 2023 was a harsh year for our planet. It was the hottest year on historical record by a substantial margin of +0.15°C over the previous high set in 2016; and it's most likely the hottest year in the last 100,000 years.

However, with many parts of the globe experiencing their hottest summer on record these last few months, 2024 is well on its way to becoming the hottest year ever. The extreme heat has brought about:

- Deadly wildfires like those experienced in the South American countries of Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, and especially Chile, where 123 people perished in the country's deadliest wildfire;
- Scorching heatwaves such as those experienced in India, Mexico, the Middle East, and in several other Asian countries — Thailand, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and the Philippines — which suffered further exacerbation from El Niño. As if to remind us of El Niño's severity, the old Pantabangan town that was submerged in the 1970s reemerged as the Pantabangan dam's water level dropped 50 meters from its normal level of 221 meters;
- Severe droughts such as those experienced in Southern Africa that threatened food security for millions of people and affected livestock;
- Record-breaking levels for ocean heat and acidification that fueled typhoons and cyclones with stronger winds and heavier rainfall, causing floods and even landslides; and,
- Alarming sea level rise, Antarctic Sea ice loss and glacier retreat. Note that Antarctica can potentially raise sea levels by 58.3 meters. This is why it's called the "ice locker" of the world. Note also that, while sea ice and ice shelves do not raise levels when they melt, they hold back glaciers from sliding into the sea. And if they break or calve, they pave the way for glaciers and ice sheets behind them to slide in.

Today, there is no one and no place on the planet that's spared from the "unprecedented fury" unleashed by the increasing number and more frequent occurrence of extreme weather events that are also "supercharged" by climate change.

What scientists have been fearing and warning us on the devastating effects of climate change continue to unfold every single day now, highlighting our own vulnerabilities to the powerful wrath of nature. Our own actions led us to the climate crisis we now face, yet the cost of further inaction to address this crisis head on can only be catastrophic.

What's more, the world is not on track in limiting global warming to 1.5°C, according to the 2023 Global Stocktake (GST), a core component of the 2015 Paris Agreement that assesses each country's progress on climate action and encourages them to augment their climate goals. The slow mitigation could have been compensated by adaptation to shield us from the worsening climate change impacts, but the UNEP Adaptation Gap Report of 2023 noted the world is also underfinanced and underprepared from the climate hazards.

A key finding from the recently published 2024 World Risk Report reveals that “crises and risks are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected. Extreme weather events, conflicts and pandemics overlap and amplify each other. Global trends such as climate change, population growth and political polarization promote multiple crises and intensify their effects.” It's also disheartening to note that the Philippines remains to be among the top countries most vulnerable to disaster risks as it's lacking the needed coping and adaptive capacities to mitigate them.

Amidst all these, how then can we secure a decarbonized and regenerative future?

In recent years, I've been actively speaking about the global Journey to Net Zero through these three phases, namely, (1) reducing the current level of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions — estimated by a United Nations body at 59 gigatons per year; (2) then eliminating all GHG emissions and getting to Net Zero by 2050; and (3) reducing finally the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere to achieve net negative emissions.

The ultimate goal here is to solve the climate crisis that, by all accounts, is undeniably real and in urgent need of action. We have a narrowing time frame of the next 25 years to make our every action count and avoid irreversible damage to our planet. There is no other way to go but Net Zero.

Progress through phases 1 to 3 in the journey to Net Zero has many facets beyond just energy. It spans agricultural practices, food production, waste management practices, building designs, construction materials, industrial processes, deforestation, fluorinated greenhouse gases or f-gases used in refrigeration and many others.

All these facets present opportunities for the private sector to help scale up their decarbonization ambitions. They require as well more creativity, innovation, out-of-the-box thinking, and even seeing around corners.

On the other hand, the key elements of the energy transition involve these five cornerstones:

- 1) Reducing the carbon intensity of electricity;
- 2) Scaling up energy efficiency efforts;
- 3) Electrifying as much of transport and the industrial sectors;
- 4) Using carbon-neutral fuels for other hard-to-reach sectors; and
- 5) Deploying nature-based and man-made carbon capture, use and storage.

All these will have immense implications for the central role of the electricity grid. The most important point is that, by 2050, we will need five times the electricity — and 10 to 12 times the clean energy — we use today.

For the First Philippine Holdings/Lopez Group, our diverse portfolio of clean and renewable energy sources allows us the best opportunity to shepherd our country's energy transition to Net Zero. Aligned with the Philippine Energy Plan, we've set our target to grow our low-carbon energy portfolio to 13,000 megawatts (MW) by 2030, of which 9,000 MW will be from renewable energy.

At Energy Development Corp., we've embarked on a multiyear, well-drilling operation to expand output for our various geothermal power plants to ensure a more steady and reliable supply from one of the few renewable energy sources capable of delivering power on a 24/7 basis. We've also lined up our expansion and growth projects in hydro, solar and wind that we will be pursuing in the next few years.

Still, we recognize the importance to keep the lights on during this energy transition, more so with the imminent depletion of our Malampaya natural gas reserves. We've completed our liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at the First Gen Clean Energy Complex and ushered our floating storage and regasification vessel, the BW Batangas, into the Batangas Bay. Our LNG facility is ready to make up for any shortfall in Malampaya production and continue to power our natural gas plants.

This early though, we are looking at new technologies and alternative fuels to repower our natural gas plants, consistent with our own commitment to Net Zero by 2050.

As we clean up our energy grid, we are also working to scale up energy efficiency as the “first fuel” and encourage its use everywhere. We’ve been developing our own arsenal of solutions such as rooftop solar, remote energy monitoring systems that allows consumers real-time updates of energy consumption, energy efficiency audits and energy solutions for commercial and industrial establishments, and distributed microgrids and resilient power solutions that can deliver reliable electricity.

In navigating this energy transition, we are also advancing our regenerative mission as we bear in mind the need to provide electricity to many more Filipino households who have never been fortunate enough to have 24/7 electricity in their lives.

A few days before Christmas 2021, our FP Island Energy microgrids started lighting up the lives of over 2,100 households in the islands of Haponan, Lahuy, and Quinalasag in Camarines Sur. This access to 24/7 electricity has allowed residents to engage in small businesses such as ice-making for their daily fish catch, printing services, mobile charging, internet access and online banking services. Teachers now use computers and printers in delivering lessons and school materials, and we’ve even donated Knowledge Channel’s portable media library to some schools so students get to participate in more on-demand, interactive learning.

CNN

[2024 was the hottest year on record, breaching a critical climate goal and capping 10 years of unprecedented heat](#)

By: Laura Paddison

It's official: 2024 was the hottest year on record, breaking the previous record set in 2023 and pushing the world over a critical climate threshold, according to new data from Europe's climate monitoring agency Copernicus.

Last year was 1.6 degrees hotter than the period before humans began burning large amounts of fossil fuels, Copernicus found. It makes 2024 the first calendar year to breach the 1.5-degree limit countries agreed to avoid under the Paris climate agreement in 2015.

Scientists are much more concerned about breaches over decades, rather than single years — as above that threshold humans and ecosystems may struggle to adapt — but 2024's record “does mean we're getting dangerously close,” said Joeri Rogelj, a climate professor at Imperial College London.

The Copernicus analysis points to a slew of climate records falling last year: The planet endured its hottest day on record in July; each month from January to June was the warmest such month on record; and levels of planet-heating pollution reached unprecedented highs.

Last year is part of a pattern of off-the-charts heat. Every single one of the world's 10 hottest years happened in the last decade, according to Copernicus data.

Behind these statistics lies a huge toll. “Every fraction of a degree ... brings more harm to people and ecosystems,” Rogelj said.

The extreme weather that swept the globe last year shows just how dangerous life in a warmer world already is.

Back-to-back hurricanes in the US, fueled by ultra-warm ocean temperatures, killed hundreds of people. In Spain, more than 200 people died in catastrophic floods. Amazon rivers fell to unprecedented lows during the region's worst drought on record and the Philippines experienced an extraordinary typhoon season, with six in just 30 days.

The climate crisis played a role in all of these extreme events, according to scientific analyses.

Scientists are still trying to fully understand why global heat has been so extreme for the past two years.

The main driver is clear: the human-caused climate crisis, boosted by El Niño, a natural climate pattern that tends to have a warming influence, which began in 2023 and ended earlier this year. But it doesn't explain all of the heat.

Scientists have also pointed to a recent drop in shipping pollution following regulations — a win for human health, but, in a cruel twist, this type of pollution also helps cool the planet by reflecting sunlight back into space.

The eruption of a huge underwater volcano in the South Pacific in 2022, which sent plumes of water vapor — a potent greenhouse gas — into the atmosphere may have also contributed.

Then there are the clouds. A December study found a dearth of sun-reflecting clouds over the ocean may be another factor.

Scientists believe it's unlikely 2025 will be another record-breaking year. La Niña, a natural climate pattern that tends to have a global cooling influence, was declared Thursday.

“But people shouldn't think that's climate change hitting pause or plateauing,” said Paulo Ceppi, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. “A small dip doesn't change the clear upward trajectory we're on,” he added.

Scientists say the decades to come are likely to be hotter still as humans continue to burn planet-heating coal, oil and gas.

“The world doesn't need to come up with a magical solution to stop things from getting worse in 2025,” said Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College London. “We know exactly what we need to do to transition away from fossil fuels.”

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[The Philippine Commission on Women at 50: A bold vision for gender equality](#)

By: Judith Albano

As the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) celebrates its 50th anniversary, it marks five decades of pioneering work in advancing women's rights and gender equality in the Philippines.

Established in 1975 as the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, the PCW has evolved into a key institution shaping policies and programs that promote women's empowerment across all sectors of society.

Throughout its history, the PCW has championed groundbreaking legislation for women's rights in the country. In 2009, it helped pass the Magna Carta of Women, establishing a comprehensive framework for eliminating discrimination against women and ensuring their equal access to opportunities in social, political, and economic spheres.

Leading change through legislation

The commission's legislative achievements continue to create meaningful change. In 2019, the commission supported the 105-Day Extended Maternity Leave Law, which increased paid leave for new mothers from 60 to 105 days, significantly improving support for working mothers across the nation.

As a result, the Philippines now consistently ranks among the top nations globally in gender equality indices. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2018, the country ranked eighth worldwide, leading in women's economic participation and education.

A strategic vision for the future

The commission's current agenda follows its Updated Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan (GEWE) 2019-2025. This comprehensive plan addresses persistent challenges through strategic initiatives to increase women's participation in the labor force and support female entrepreneurs through improved access to financing and resources.

Looking ahead, the PCW aligns its priorities with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality and women's

empowerment. This alignment strengthens the commission's approach to both local and global challenges.

The organization tackles several pressing issues, including the economic impact of crises on women, gender-based violence, and access to quality healthcare services. In response, the PCW has built stronger partnerships with civil society organizations, private sector stakeholders, and international partners.

Environmental focus and data-driven solutions

Environmental concerns have also emerged as a key priority, with the PCW addressing women's unique vulnerabilities to climate change. The commission now integrates gender perspectives into environmental policies and disaster response strategies, ensuring women's needs are considered in climate action initiatives.

The PCW strengthens its impact through data-driven policymaking, using improved collection and analysis of gender-specific data. This evidence-based approach helps address the needs of marginalized groups, including those living in climate-vulnerable areas, indigenous women and those affected by conflict or disaster.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Earth records hottest year ever in 2024](#)

Earth recorded its hottest year ever in 2024, with such a big jump that the planet temporarily passed a major climate threshold, several weather monitoring agencies announced Friday.

Last year's global average temperature easily passed 2023's record heat and kept pushing even higher. It surpassed the long-term warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s that was called for by the 2015 Paris climate pact, according to the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Service, the United Kingdom's Meteorology Office, and Japan's weather agency.

The European team calculated 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.89 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming. Japan found 1.57 degrees Celsius (2.83 degrees Fahrenheit) and the British 1.53 degrees Celsius (2.75 degrees Fahrenheit) in releases of data coordinated to early Friday morning European time.

American monitoring teams – NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the private Berkeley Earth – were to release their figures later Friday but all will likely show record heat for 2024, European scientists said. The six groups compensate for data gaps in observations that go back to 1850 – in different ways, which is why numbers vary slightly.

"The primary reason for these record temperatures is the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere" from the burning of coal, oil and gas, said Samantha Burgess, strategic climate lead at Copernicus. "As greenhouse gases continue to accumulate in the atmosphere, temperatures continue to increase, including in the ocean, sea levels continue to rise, and glaciers and ice sheets continue to melt."

Last year eclipsed 2023's temperature in the European database by an eighth of a degree Celsius (more than a fifth of a degree Fahrenheit). That's an unusually large jump; until the last couple of super-hot years, global temperature records were exceeded only by hundredths of a degree, scientists said.

The last 10 years are the 10 hottest on record and are likely the hottest in 125,000 years, Burgess said.

July 10 was the hottest day recorded by humans, with the globe averaging 17.16 degrees Celsius (62.89 degrees Fahrenheit), Copernicus found.

By far the biggest contributor to record warming is the burning of fossil fuels, several scientists said. A temporary natural El Nino warming of the central Pacific added a small amount and an undersea volcanic eruption in 2022 ended up cooling the atmosphere because it put more reflecting particles in the atmosphere as well as water vapor, Burgess said.

"This is a warning light going off on the Earth's dashboard that immediate attention is needed," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd. "Hurricane Helene, floods in Spain, and the weather whiplash fueling wildfires in California are symptoms of this unfortunate climate gear shift. We still have a few gears to go."

"Climate-change-related alarm bells have been ringing almost constantly, which may be causing the public to become numb to the urgency, like police sirens in New York City," Woodwell Climate Research Center scientist Jennifer Francis said. "In the case of the climate, though, the alarms are getting louder, and the emergencies are now way beyond just temperature."

The world incurred \$140 billion in climate-related disaster losses last year – third highest on record – with North America especially hard hit, according to a report by the insurance firm Munich Re.

"The acceleration of global temperature increases means more damage to property and impacts on human health and the ecosystems we depend on," said University of Arizona water scientist Kathy Jacobs.

This is the first time any year passed the 1.5-degree threshold, except for a 2023 measurement by Berkeley Earth, which was originally funded by philanthropists who were skeptical of global warming.

Scientists were quick to point out that the 1.5 goal is for long-term warming, now defined as a 20-year average. Warming since pre-industrial times over the long term is now at 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Celsius).

"The 1.5 degree C threshold isn't just a number – it's a red flag. Surpassing it even for a single year shows how perilously close we are to breaching the limits set by the Paris Agreement," Northern Illinois University climate scientist Victor Gensini said in an email.

A 2018 massive United Nations study found that keeping Earth's temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius could save coral reefs from going extinct, keep massive ice sheet loss in Antarctica at bay and prevent many people's death and suffering.

Francis called the threshold "dead in the water."

Burgess called it extremely likely that Earth will overshoot the 1.5-degree threshold, but called the Paris Agreement "extraordinarily important international policy" that nations around the world should remain committed to.

European and British calculations figure with a cooling La Nina instead of last year's warming El Nino, 2025 is likely to be not quite as hot as 2024. They predict it will turn out to be the third-warmest. However, the first six days of January – despite frigid temperatures in the US East – averaged slightly warmer and are the hottest start to a year yet, according to Copernicus data.

Scientists remain split on whether global warming is accelerating.

There's not enough data to see an acceleration in atmospheric warming, but the heat content of the oceans seem to be not just rising but going up at a faster rate, said Carlo Buontempo, Copernicus' director.

"We are facing a very new climate and new challenges – climate challenges that our society is not prepared for," Buontempo said.

This is all like watching the end of "a dystopian sci-fi film," said University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann. "We are now reaping what we've sown."

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PH calls for energy transition support from oil-producing countries](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

The Philippines has called on oil-producing countries to ramp up their support in the energy transition initiatives of developing countries like the Philippines that become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change despite contributing less to global emissions.

This was the message of Department of Energy (DOE) Undersecretary Rowena Guevara at the 15th session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly in Abu Dhabi held from Jan. 12 to 13.

"Developing countries are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, despite contributing the least to global emissions," Guevara said in her statement during the Assembly on Monday.

"It is essential that those who have historically benefited from fossil fuels now support those who are striving to achieve a sustainable future."

Guevara shared the Philippines' clean energy goal of increasing renewable energy (RE) share to the power mix by 35 percent in 2030 and to 50 percent by 2040.

To achieve these targets, the DOE identified six energy transition strategies, which include accelerating RE development and utilization, building a smart and green grid, developing ports for offshore wind, voluntary early retirement or repurposing of coal-fired power plants, energy efficiency and conservation, and decarbonization the transport sector.

Guevara said the Philippines will need 52.8 gigawatts of new RE installed capacity in the next 20 years to hit its RE targets, with investments heavily dependent on the private sector.

This is why the Marcos administration eased restrictions on foreign investments in the RE sector, allowing 100 percent equity in RE projects, she said.

"As a result, applications for service contracts have increased and we now have over 1,400 service contracts for over 150 GW of RE," Guevara said.

She said building resilient RE infrastructures that can withstand typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions is likewise critical in the energy transition.

Aside from these efforts, the government is initiating policies to encourage exploration in the geothermal sector, longer loan period for pump storage hydropower technologies, and considering energy transition trading, she said.

"Energy transition is a shared responsibility, and we must act with urgency, solidarity, and fairness," she added.

[UN report: PH one of strongest performers in Southeast Asia](#)

By: Anna Leah Gonzales

Philippine economic growth is expected to accelerate this year and in 2026, making the country one of the strongest performers among Southeast Asian economies, a report from the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs has said.

In its recently published flagship report World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025, the UN projects Philippine economic growth to accelerate to 6.1 percent this year.

Economic growth is forecast to further go up to 6.2 percent in 2026.

"The Philippines is one of the strongest growth performers among [South]east Asian economies," said UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Economic Affairs Officer Zhenqian Huang.

"The anticipated sustained growth reflects robust domestic demand, ongoing public investments, and the positive effects of recent investment policy reforms, along with a vibrant labor market and a growing services sector," Huang added.

Huang said economic growth will be driven by strong investment activity and robust private consumption.

"Monetary easing amid lower inflation will support domestic demand in the near term. Robust remittance inflows will bolster household income and expenditures," he added.

He noted that improved government revenue collection also enabled sustained public spending on infrastructure which in turn helped unlock long-term growth potential.

"Additionally, the global demand for AI-related electronic products is expected to boost merchandise trade, while services trade will benefit from the ongoing recovery in international tourism," Huang said.

He, however, noted that the growth outlook faces potential downside risks.

"Increasing trade tensions, including the possibility of higher tariffs, could undermine merchandise trade performance," he said.

Huang said current account deficits since the end of the pandemic also make the economy susceptible to exchange rate volatility, especially if there are unexpected monetary policy shifts by major developed country central banks.

"Additionally, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to climate change, with more frequent and unpredictable natural disasters potentially leading to significant economic and social losses," Huang said.

The report, meanwhile, forecasts inflation to settle at 3.0 percent in 2025 and 2026 which is well within the government's 2 to 4 percent target.

"Inflation in the Philippines has been relatively benign and is projected to remain within the central bank's target range in the near term," Huang said.

"A key contributor to this stability is the moderation in food prices. Price pressures on food are expected to continue easing, particularly as the government has reduced the import duty on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent, effective until 2028," he added.

Huang, however, reiterated that potential higher tariffs from trading partners, disruptions to supply chains and trade routes, and climate-related disasters could reignite upward pressure on prices.

THE MANILA TIMES

[The Clima Act: Companies accountable for climate damage](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

Five days before 2024 ended, The New York Times published a banner story highlighting a new law that penalizes companies for their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It reported that Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York signed the Climate Change Superfund Act into law.

This legislation mandates that companies responsible for carbon dioxide emissions from 2000–2024 should make an annual contribution of \$3 billion for the next 25 years. The revenue generated will support climate resilience initiatives and fund projects aimed at mitigating climate change impacts in the state.

In the Philippines, the House of Representatives' Committee on Climate Change held its fourth technical working group (TWG) meeting on the proposed the Climate Accountability (Clima) Act. The goal is to hold companies accountable for their contributions to climate change, especially their GHG emissions.

The bill defines climate accountability as "the responsibility of and corresponding need for reparation from businesses and carbon majors significantly responsible for climate change. A climate accountability regime establishes a governance mechanism for ensuring that climate targets are met through robust regulation and progress reporting. The accountability of carbon majors shall range from negligence to causation."

While differing in scope and scale, funding mechanisms and legal context, the Clima Act and the Climate Change Superfund Act share notable similarities.

Both embody the fundamental "polluter pays principle" where businesses causing environmental damage are held financially responsible for the aftermath. This approach would incentivize them to reduce their carbon footprint and invest in sustainable practices, contributing to the overall goal of reducing GHG emissions nationally, thereby achieving their Nationally Determined Contribution targets.

Vulnerable communities

Both bills seek to generate financial resources from businesses to support climate-related projects and assist affected communities, illustrating a commitment to corporate accountability in addressing climate change. It emphasizes the need to bolster climate

resilience, recognizing that significant investments are essential for adapting to and mitigating climate change effects.

In a chat interview, Greenpeace Philippines senior campaigner Virginia Benosa-Llorin shared, "Each nation must take steps in ensuring the biggest polluters pay their fair share. Either they act to stop fossil fuel companies from destroying the climate now, or have the world resign to a near future where life-and-death climate impacts become the new normal. Thus, the swift passage of the Clima bill must be prioritized. It would create a legal framework to hold corporations accountable for climate loss and damage."

The Copernicus Climate Change Service, European Union's Earth Observation Program says it is "virtually certain that 2024 will be the warmest year on record and the first year of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels." Given the global climate crisis and the Philippines' vulnerability to climate impacts, passing the Clima Act would enhance our country's commitment to climate action, aligning with international agreements like the Paris Agreement. It could serve as a foundation for further climate legislation and policy initiatives. It would also meet the growing global expectations for businesses to operate sustainably and ethically while holding our local companies accountable for their GHG emissions and fostering corporate responsibility for climate impacts.

The legislation would reflect a broader commitment to climate justice, ensuring that those least responsible for climate change, but most affected by its impact receive the resources needed for adaptation and recovery. According to former Department of Finance assistant secretary Paola Sherina Alvarez's presentation, Climate Finance in the Context of the Philippines, " ... on a long-term average basis, the country is expected to incur an annual loss of P171 billion due to typhoons."

The Climate Change Reparation Fund will be established to assist communities affected by extreme weather events. It will provide support for recovery and resilience-building, which are vital for mitigating climate change impacts on vulnerable communities.

"The Clima Bill is a commendable piece of human rights-based legislation aimed at protecting vulnerable communities affected by climate change. Since July 2024, I have participated in the deliberations and witnessed the dedication of the 30-member TWG to balance the interests of all sectors: government, business, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and civil society sectors, and communities. They have also worked to ensure that the bill can be easily administered and implemented if it becomes law," stated Agnes de Jesus, chief sustainability officer of First Philippine Holdings Corp.

The Clima Act's timely passage is not merely a legislative formality but a necessary measure to equip the nation with the tools required to address climate change effectively, support affected communities and uphold the principles of sustainability and justice amid growing environmental challenges.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Nowhere to go but Net Zero](#)

By: Federico R. Lopez

Beyond creating a future-ready energy system, our being among the top five countries in the world's climate vulnerability list necessitates that we prepare Philippine cities, communities, and infrastructure for resilience in a climate-changed world. The impacts of the climate crisis as well as climate action that will be demanded of everyone are among the forces in history that are in no way linear.

These are forces that will transpire "gradually and then suddenly." If we're not prepared and conveniently ignore it, we'll be overwhelmed and not recognize the world around us in the coming 30 years.

The science tells us we no longer have a choice. We need to act in a systematic and collaborative way if we want to succeed and make serious headway in tackling other issues like hunger, poverty, and the other pressing Sustainable Development Goals of our time. Trying to solve those will be futile if we don't build for the resilience we need, and if we don't ultimately solve the climate crisis.

We also need to be cognizant of the changing demands of consumers. According to the UNDP-Oxford University "Peoples' Climate Vote 2024" survey, 80% of people globally want their governments to take stronger climate action to tackle the climate crisis. A higher 86% want to see their countries set aside geopolitical differences and work together on climate change. The Peoples' Climate Vote 2024, which is the biggest global standalone survey on climate change, offers undeniable evidence that people everywhere support bold climate action.

All these beliefs are embedding themselves into consumer buying habits; the companies that people now choose to work for; global supply chains; the availability of financing and insurance for assets and projects; and even social acceptability, to name a few. The combined effects of all these forces are being seen in how companies and brands are reorienting around decarbonization goals.

Many governments are also strengthening their climate policies and targets while more countries are introducing carbon pricing instruments like emissions trading system, carbon taxes, and carbon trading.

For the Philippines, we see our government's efforts for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to climate action through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Climate Change Commission. Following the submission of our country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in April 2021, the National Greenhouse Gas Inventories for 2015 and 2020 were completed. With stakeholder support, the NDC Implementation Plan and the National Climate Change Action Plan were developed with a focus on food security, water sufficiency, ecosystem and environmental stability, and human security.

Complementing the government blueprint are planned regulations to align the private sector to this course, given that businesses contribute a large portion to the national greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint.

It's evident that decarbonizing and scaling up a green electricity grid over the next 25 years is the greatest energy transition in the history of mankind. It's not just changing the electricity system but building a new global energy system with components we have never built before and at a massive scale. This will need nothing short of collaborative action among various players and well-coordinated and timely action on the part of regulators, who must ensure energy security and be well-versed on the elements that make for a successful and just energy transition.

We recognize though that it takes more than energy security and the energy transition to stabilize the distressing state of the climate.

While addressing the climate crisis feels like such a daunting task, we remain optimistic as we see a myriad of sectors coming together and taking collective action. Our Mission, "to forge collaborative pathways to a decarbonized and regenerative future," continues to guide our path. It reaffirms our commitment to work together with all stakeholders, including the Net Zero Carbon Alliance, to rally more businesses and organizations across all sectors to achieve our Net Zero ambition.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[GPCCI, German Embassy to host 2025 sustainability forum](#)

The German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI), in partnership with the German Embassy Manila, will host the 2025 Sustainability Forum: The Green Economies of Tomorrow on 31 January 2025 in Manila. The event aims to address pressing climate issues while promoting sustainable growth in the Philippines.

“We are delighted to provide this platform for innovation and collaboration,” said Marie Antoniette Mariano, President of GPCCI. “The event will explore opportunities in the Philippines not only in key sectors but also in creating green jobs that will drive our sustainable future.”

Key topics include the Philippines’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), green infrastructure, and workforce development in a green economy.

The forum aligns with the German Embassy Manila’s Climate Talks Manila series, which reviews COP29 outcomes.

“Germany remains steadfast in its commitment to climate action,” said Dr. David Klebs, Economic Counsellor of the German Embassy Manila. “I look forward to hearing diverse insights from the forum’s esteemed panelists and exploring actionable solutions to our shared challenges.”

Sessions will feature panelists from the Climate Change Commission, Planet 2050, the Asian Development Bank, and more, highlighting actionable solutions for climate action, green infrastructure, and jobs.

Less greenhouse gas emissions sought

By: Aljon Danniell Eguia

Environmental experts and business leaders gathered in Makati City for an ecological forum that highlighted the environmental advancements of Japanese businesses in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The event, titled “Partnership to Strengthen Transparency for Co-Innovation Promoting Quality Corporate-Level GHG Measurement and Reporting as a Business Opportunity,” explored how Japanese companies are leading the way in environmental sustainability.

Junya Tanaka, a speaker at the forum, stressed the Japanese government’s mandate for private companies to report their GHG emissions.

In 2021, a significant number of companies, 13,284 to be precise, reported their emissions, amounting to 613.6 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

However, Tanaka pointed out a key challenge.

“The electronic report rating is about 90 percent, but further efforts are needed to increase the rate,” said Tanaka, adding that the voluntary reporting rate remains low at only 1 percent.

Under the Joint Crediting Mechanism, Japan offers its neighboring countries access to various low-carbon technology projects and mitigation actions.

In the Philippines, one notable example is the Binary Geothermal Power Generation project, received from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Thailand has benefited from Gas Cogeneration and Refrigeration Systems provided by Kansai Electric Power Company, while Vietnam has received Waste-to-Energy technology from JFE Engineering.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) of the Philippines presented a pie chart illustrating the critical sectors for climate action -- waste, agriculture, energy, transport and industrial processes. Energy and Transport emerged as the sectors with the highest estimated costs for mitigation, requiring USD 36.5 billion and USD 32.9 billion, respectively.

Also, the CCC stressed its focus on achieving energy efficiency in the energy sector and facilitating the transition of public utility vehicles to eco-friendly alternatives in the transportation sector.

“It is ambitious but achievable,” said Arnold Belver of the CCC, adding that these initiatives are supported by the national budget.

THE MANILA TIMES

[NSC should also address human and environmental security](#)

By: Antonio Contreras

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) 81, which he signed on Dec. 30, 2024, reorganizing the National Security Council (NSC) of the Philippines.

The restructured NSC is now composed of the following: president as chairperson; Senate president; speaker of the House of Representatives; Senate president pro tempore; three House deputy speakers designated by the speaker; majority and minority leaders of the Senate and the House; chairpersons of specific Senate and House committees (foreign relations, national defense and security, public order); executive secretary; national security adviser; secretaries of foreign affairs, justice, national defense, the interior and local government, and labor and employment; chief presidential legal counsel; secretary of the Presidential Communications Office; head of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office, and other officials or private citizens who may be appointed by the president.

Additionally, the executive committee of the NSC has been reorganized to include the following: president as chairperson; executive secretary; Senate president or representative; speaker of the House or representative; national security adviser; secretaries of foreign affairs, justice, national defense and the interior and local government; and other members or advisers designated by the president.

The reorganization was framed as a means to ensure that the NSC remains a resilient institution capable of adapting to evolving domestic and international challenges, and that its members uphold and protect national security and sovereignty.

Many critics of the President, particularly those coming from diehard Duterte supporters, criticized EO 81 for excluding the vice president and former presidents from the NSC. This amounted to the exclusion of Vice President Sara Duterte and former president Rodrigo Duterte. The move was rationalized by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, who stated that, at present, the vice president is "not considered relevant to the responsibilities of membership in the NSC." But Duterte loyalists see the move as nothing but political vendetta, considering that the Dutertes have become strong critics of the current Marcos government.

Be that as it may, legally, any sitting president has the prerogative to reorganize or constitute, or even redefine the functions of the NSC. It is a fact that Sara Duterte has

repeatedly threatened the President and has become a security threat herself. The Dutertes have imaged themselves as pro-China, a stance which may compromise our national security if they remain in the NSC.

What is more problematic beyond this issue of the exclusion of the Dutertes is the manner in which the new composition of the NSC has glossed over the changing nature of national security. A perusal of the membership in the reorganized NSC indicates that the traditional security discourse still predominates, where the state remains as the primary concern. The main objective is to protect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the state from threats that are primarily external and military in nature. These include armed conflict, invasion and threats from other states. Traditional security often relies on military power, alliances and diplomacy to ensure national security.

The membership as stipulated in EO 81 does not in any way directly address human security concerns that are more focused on the individual or community rather than the state. The main objective of human security is to ensure the safety and well-being of people from a wide range of threats. These threats come in the form of economic insecurity brought about by poverty and unemployment; food insecurity stemming from hunger and famine; health insecurity aggravated by diseases and pandemics; personal insecurity amplified by violence and crime; and political insecurity that include human rights abuses and political oppression. Security threats can be both internal and external, and are often nonmilitary. These security threats require an approach that involves a multi-sectoral and holistic strategy, addressing the root causes of insecurity through governance, development and social protection.

The membership of the reorganized NSC also appears not to have adequate representation to address issues related to environmental security at a time when climate change is now considered the biggest security threat not only in the Philippines but globally, and that our country is ranked at the top of being the most vulnerable to extreme weather events. The focus of environmental security is the role of the environment in sustaining life and human well-being. Its main objective is to protect ecosystems, natural resources and the environment to prevent conflict and ensure sustainable development. Environmental security threats include environmental degradation and global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, pollution, biodiversity loss and natural disasters. The approach to address these threats include sustainable development, conservation, climate adaptation and international cooperation.

While traditional security remains a significant concern, addressing both human and environmental security alongside traditional concerns enables a more comprehensive and sustainable framework for global security. Traditional security focuses on state survival, while human and environmental security address human dignity and sustainability concerns. Military and defensive strategies usually deployed to foster traditional security should be complemented by multi-sectoral, collaborative and preventive measures that are necessary to pursue human and ecological security objectives.

Fortunately, EO 81 leaves space for the president to expand the membership to include other relevant officials and even private individuals. While not listed as permanent members, EO 81 stipulated that the heads of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation, as well the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, may attend NSC meetings.

In order to address human and environmental security concerns, the President should further expand membership in the NSC to include agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Climate Change Commission, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Economic Development Authority and the commissions addressing human rights, women, Indigenous peoples, among others. There should also be some representation coming from civil society groups advocating for the environment and social development issues.

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