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By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

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"IT is idiotic to waste our dwindling carbon budget on war," researchers from the United States and United Kingdom warned in a recent report revealing that the two countries' armed forces owe huge sums of money in climate compensation as they continue to involve themselves in wars and conflicts globally. Such conflicts are accompanied by widening carbon footprints and serious environmental destruction.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

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By: Yummie Dingdin and Jojo G. Silvestre

At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Ann Dumaliang, the co-founder and trustee of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, Philippines, made a compelling call to global leaders. Her message was clear: initiate meaningful conversations with the youth to effectively tackle the climate crisis.

This is her statement upon her return to the country:

“It’s good to be back in the Philippines after a productive participation at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. I was able to make new and important connections that will help advance genuine environmental movement in the Philippines and promote the conservation of Masungi. I look forward to continue engaging them and hopefully some of them will come over.”

“As a Filipina, I hope my participation at Davos brought to light the challenges faced by environment defenders and frontliners in the Philippines. I hope decision-makers here at home will listen to my call for intergenerational and intersectional dialogue in order to fight the biodiversity and climate crisis effectively and inclusively. The world awaits.”

FINANCIAL TIMES

[Climate change was big driver of historic Amazonian drought, study finds](#)

By: Bryan Harris

A historic drought that left swaths of the Amazon rainforest parched for much of last year was caused primarily by climate change, according to a new study, rather than naturally occurring weather patterns.

The research by 18 scientists from the World Weather Attribution group also found that the El Niño phenomenon that warms the Pacific Ocean — historically a driver of drought — “had a much smaller influence”.

“As the Amazon drought worsened in 2023, many people pointed to El Niño to explain the event,” said Ben Clarke, a climate scientist at Imperial College London.

“While El Niño did lead to even lower levels of rainfall, our study shows that climate change is the main driver of the drought through its influence on higher temperatures.”

The conclusion highlights the perilous risk to global ecology from climate change, with an estimated rise of at least 1.1C since pre-industrial times by the UN body of scientists in a 2021 report. Scientists believe it has worsened since as greenhouse gases from human activity continue to rise.

As the world’s largest rainforest, the Amazon acts as a giant carbon sink and is considered a bulwark of global climate stability.

But drought threatens the environmental integrity of the biome. As extreme heat and water shortages kill trees and spark fires in the summer, the forest begins to release its enormous stocks of carbon dioxide, in turn fuelling the cycle of global warming.

“The Amazon could make or break our fight against climate change,” said Regina Rodrigues, a climate scientist at Federal University of Santa Catarina and one of the study’s authors. “To protect the health of the Amazon . . . we need to move away from fossil fuels as quickly as possible.”

More than 60 municipalities in Amazonas state were placed in a state of emergency at the height of the drought in the closing months of last year, with the local government rushing basic supplies, including food and water, to remote Amazonian villages.

Water levels in normally huge rivers pivotal to the rainforest ecosystem, including the Rio Negro and Rio Solimões fell to their lowest points in 120 years. In some sections, they were completely dry.

At the time, the unprecedented drought was primarily attributed to the El Niño pattern, and an unusual patch of warm water in the Atlantic Ocean above the equator. The two phenomena inhibited the formation of clouds, causing rainfall to drop sharply.

But the scientists behind the WWA study found that, while El Niño and climate change both contributed to a reduction in rainfall, “the increase in high temperatures was driven almost entirely by climate change”.

To measure this effect, the authors analysed weather data and model simulations to compare the current climate — factoring in about 1.2C of global warming — with a cooler pre-industrial climate.

The scientists also examined two separate indices used to measure drought in an effort to establish which precise climatic factors were fuelling the event.

Statistical modelling was then used to distinguish the seasonal influence of El Niño from long-term climate change.

“This result is very worrying. Climate change and deforestation is already wrecking parts of the most important ecosystems in the world,” said Friederike Otto, a scientist at Imperial College London and one of the study’s authors.

At the same time, scientists at world weather agencies have said they have been “astonished” at the levels of warming of the oceans, which store about 90 per cent of the excess heat trapped in the earth’s system by greenhouse gases.

“If we continue burning oil, gas and coal, very soon we’ll reach 2C of warming and we’ll see similar Amazon droughts about once every 13 years,” Otto added.

GMA

[World groundwater levels showing 'accelerated' decline - study](#)

Groundwater levels across the world have shown widespread and "accelerated" decline over the past 40 years, driven by unsustainable irrigation practices as well as climate change, according to a study published on Wednesday.

Groundwater is a major source of fresh water for farms, households and industries, and depletion could pose severe economic and environmental threats, including falling crop yields and destructive land subsidence, particularly in coastal areas, said the study, published in the Nature scientific journal.

"One of the most likely major driving forces behind rapid and accelerating groundwater decline is the excessive withdrawal of groundwater for irrigated agriculture in dry climates," said Scott Jasechko from the University of California, Santa Barbara, one of the paper's co-authors.

But drought, driven by climate change, was also having an impact, with farmers likely to pump out more groundwater to ensure their crops are irrigated, he said.

Depletion has been particularly pronounced in arid climates with extensive croplands, said the study, which analyzed 170,000 wells in more than 40 countries. Northern China, Iran and the western United States were among the worst-hit regions.

More than a third of the 1,693 aquifer systems - bodies of porous rock or sediment holding groundwater- monitored by the study fell by at least 0.1 m (3.94 inches) per year from 2000 to 2022, with 12% seeing annual declines of more than 0.5 m. Some of the worst hit aquifers in Spain, Iran, China and the United States fell by more than 2 m per year over the period.

In around 30% of the aquifers studied, the depletion rate has accelerated since 2000.

Some aquifers did improve over the period, in part as a result of local measures aimed at restricting how much water can be pumped out.

Aquifers can also be replenished with water diverted from elsewhere. However, such recoveries were "relatively rare" and much more work still needed to be done, Jasechko said.

MANILA BULLETIN

Marcos: Attending int'l environmental fora to help PH combat climate change

By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

President Marcos thinks that attending international environmental events would be helpful for the Philippines to address the effects of climate change as he ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to prioritize local environmental issues.

Marcos said this during his meeting with the Philippine Delegation of the Conference of Parties (COP28) in Malacañan on Wednesday, Jan. 24.

During the meeting, the President agreed that participating in environmental events would contribute to "influential and resourceful actions in combating climate change in the Philippines."

Marcos likewise directed the DENR and all concerned agencies to prioritize addressing specific local environmental issues first. He emphasized that there should be specific plans to improve climate change mitigation efforts locally as these would benefit the country.

The President also suggested providing guidance and assistance to "areas that require support" from LGUs in different sectors.

In a Facebook post, Marcos reaffirmed the country's commitment to global climate action after the Philippines got a seat on the Loss and Damage Fund Board at COP28.

"With a seat on the Loss and Damage Fund Board at COP28, our commitment to global climate action remains resolute," he said.

The NAP and NDC urge agencies to mainstream both plans in the government's development planning and budget processes. It would also strategically engage the private sector and development partners to address adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk arising.

Present during the meeting was DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, who represented President Marcos at COP28 in Dubai last year after he abruptly canceled his trip developments surrounding the Filipino seafarers taken hostage by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

During the meeting, Loyzaga presented key outcomes of COP28, including:

- The improvement of energy capacity by 2030
- Transitioning from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just and orderly manner
- Accelerating zero-and-low emissions technologies and reduction of emissions from road transport
- Adopting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Framework for Climate Resilience by 2030
- Commitment budget for Loss and Damage (LD) Funds
- Operationalization of LD with the World Bank as Interim Hosting and call for scale-up in concessional and grant for climate change

In addition, Loyzaga discussed the key wins for the country, which focus on the nexus of biodiversity and climate action, the inclusion of the workforce as important implements, a firm commitment to use available science, and emissions avoidance.

[Mariana Zobel warns it's not 'business as usual' with climate catastrophe](#)

By: James A. Loyola

Mariana Zobel de Ayala, executive director of the country's oldest conglomerate Ayala Corp., said the catastrophic impact of the ongoing climate change requires corporations to take drastic steps to counter this as they can longer go on with "business as usual."

"It is our belief that business plays a critical role in responding to these challenges and providing innovative solutions to transform the world we live in... the reality of climate change can no longer be denied," said Zobel in her keynote speech during the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX) inaugural meeting.

"We are at the cusp of a total and complete climate catastrophe if we continue to do business as usual. The role of business in the climate action agenda thus cannot be understated and will require transformation in order to reimagine how we can mitigate our environmental impacts," she added.

She also noted that, at Ayala Land, where she is senior vice president for leasing and hospitality, "we have taken significant steps to embed environmental sustainability as a fundamental part of how we operate, with a focus on efficient land use and eco-efficiency."

"This is evident in the way that we've run our malls and offices on renewable energy and continue to explore circular approaches to waste in our estates. These efforts are also in line with the Ayala Group's commitment to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050," Zobel said.

She stressed that, "our commitment to sustainability stems from our belief that we have a responsibility to our stakeholders for the environmental impacts of our business activities, and that we owe it to future generations to leave behind a world they can still inhabit and a world where no one is left behind."

Meanwhile, she said "there is so much more that businesses can do to work more closely with their stakeholders, from ensuring a safe and inclusive work environment for their employees, treating their partners with dignity and respect, and collaborating more effectively with communities in the areas where they operate."

"On the topic of building safe and inclusive work environments, I believe in the power that diversity, equity, and inclusion have in an organization," she further noted.

She explained that, “including people’s unique perspectives and backgrounds helps us unlock the very best in our people and add value to the communities where we work and live.”

“In many work environments, we still see a lack of representation for individuals from marginalized and underrepresented groups, especially as you go up in leadership ranks,” Zobel said.

She said that, “when I look back on my life and career journey so far, I cannot help but reflect on how my identity has shaped the path I’ve taken and influenced the way I view the world. My unique perspective as a woman – a daughter and sister, a wife and mother, and a female in business – has taught me so much. The different facets of what makes us unique – our age, gender identity, upbringing, and life experience – contributes so much to the social fabric of our organizations and country at large.”

[\[Opinion\] Seeing the light: Understanding the need for renewables](#)

By: Anna Mae Lamentillo

In a tropical country like the Philippines, it is a waste if we cannot fully utilize the benefits of the sun, including in supplying our energy needs.

It's a welcome development that more Filipinos are now seeing the light on the need for more renewables. In a Pulse Asia Survey conducted on September last year, 85 percent of Filipinos agreed on the importance of increasing the use of renewable energy (RE) sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower.

The energy supply sector is the highest source of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, about 35 percent, according to the United Nations. Shifting to renewable energy sources is one way to significantly reduce these emissions and our overall dependence on fossil fuels.

In fact, the Philippine government is pushing for more renewables, with a target of having 35 percent renewables in the country's energy mix by 2030, and further to 50 percent by 2040.

Based on the latest report from the Department of Energy (DOE), renewables make up 22 percent of the Philippines' energy mix.

As of 2022 data from the DOE, the renewable energy share in the power mix is at 29.24 percent, or 8,264 megawatts (MW) out of a total of 28,258 MW installed on grid capacity. The RE mix is composed of 1,952 MW from geothermal, 3,745 MW from hydro, 611 MW from biomass, 427 MW from wind, and 1,530 MW from solar.

The Philippines has untapped renewables potential of at least 246,000 MW from various sources. If we are able to harness these, we will be able to achieve our targets as well as energy security that is clean, reliable, and affordable.

In fact, end-users can now tap renewable energy to power their establishments or even homes. The cost of solar photovoltaics has drastically decreased over the years. This has encouraged end-users, particularly industrial and commercial companies, to invest in solar rooftop systems to significantly reduce their energy consumption from the distribution utilities.

Households can also benefit from the net metering scheme enabled by the Renewable Energy Act. This means that they can sell their excess energy supply to their distribution utility.

Moreover, policy changes will also play a significant role in achieving our country's RE targets.

With the RE sector now fully open to foreign ownership, the government sees more foreign investment on RE which will help meet our long-term climate targets.

The Board of Investments (BOI) is also providing more incentives to registered projects that will be supplying their own electricity by putting up their own RE facility. These self-financed energy efficiency projects (EEP) are entitled to the income tax holiday incentive as prescribed under the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Law and duty exemption on importation of capital equipment, raw materials and spare parts or accessories.

We hope to see more renewable energy investments and projects in the country, and less independence on coal and other fossil fuels.

By fully harnessing our renewable energy potential, we can show the world that even if we are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, we can be a leader in climate resilience and sustainability efforts.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Scientist proposes dimming the Sun to beat climate change

By: Dale Arasa

Peter Irvine, an Earth Science Lecturer at the University College London, proposed dimming the Sun to beat global warming. He believes we will fail to meet our climate goals, but he also observed that powerful volcanic eruptions cool global temperatures for a few years. Consequently, he thinks we should block sunlight by releasing particles in the sky.

Our world temperature rose by 2°C last year, showing that countries have failed to meet climate targets. Despite numerous global meetings, the Earth only gets hotter. Our existing methods aren't working, so Irvine proposes mimicking the cooling effect of volcanic eruptions. Could it be an effective solution?

This article will discuss the radical proposal to block sunlight by spreading particles in high altitudes. Later, I will elaborate on recent developments in climate change.

How dimming the Sun could beat climate change

The Earth Science expert cited powerful volcanic eruptions from the Philippines' Mt. Pinatubo and Indonesia's Mt. Tambora as an example of his unusual solution. He said these phenomena spread microscopic particles in the upper atmosphere that last several years.

Similarly, we could copy this effect by deploying jets to release reflective particles into the upper atmosphere. He cited environmental research from IOPScience as evidence.

Dimming the Sun wouldn't perfectly undo climate change. However, we could place an even cooling effect worldwide by choosing where we release particles.

Peter Irvine says this approach could significantly reduce climate risks. Otherwise, they would likely worsen over time. For example, he says several species are migrating to the Earth's poles for lower temperatures.

Global temperatures are also breaching the human body's threshold, risking the lives of outdoor workers. Moreover, warmer air draws more moisture from the soil during dry spells and dumps more in rain.

In other words, climate change is worsening droughts and floods worldwide. Irvine believes dimming the Sun could offset this effect.

He also believes blocking sunlight could keep our frigid regions frozen. That could prevent rising sea levels and the leaking of methane from permafrost.

The UCL expert admits his proposal won't prevent greenhouse gas buildup. It will not stop people from releasing carbon dioxide and other pollutants.

Releasing sky particles could also make the sky slightly whiter. Moreover, mimicking volcanic eruptions by releasing sulphate particles could exacerbate acid rain worldwide.

Adding atmospheric particles could also slow our ozone layer's recovery. Nevertheless, he said on *The Conversation* that climate change's overwhelming risks outweigh these side effects.

How detrimental is climate change?

Releasing particles in the sky to block sunlight may seem outrageous to most. However, you might understand its intent once you realize the extent of global warming.

As mentioned, climate change makes the planet too hot for humans to survive. Specifically, researchers warn global temperatures may increase from 1.5°C to 4°C or 34.7°F to 39.2°F.

They looked at previous temperature increases to predict how much higher it could be. They said extreme global warming started during the Industrial Revolution.

Worldwide adoption of heavy machinery and factories burned unprecedented amounts of fossil fuels. That increased activity caused global temperatures to rise by almost 1°C or 1.8°F.

In 2015, it prompted 196 countries to sign the Paris Agreement, which aimed to prevent global heat from reaching the 1.5°C threshold. The worst-case scenario of rising temperatures involves an increase of 1.5°C to 4°C.

A Penn State study from last year said the ambient wet-bulb temperature limit for young, healthy people is roughly 31°C or 87.8°F at 100% humidity.

Meanwhile, only the Middle East and Southeast Asia have recorded temperatures and humidity that surpass human limits. Raising global heat by 2°C above preindustrial levels would expose the following populations to unbearable temperatures:

- 2.2 billion Pakistanis and Indians in the Indus River Valley
- A billion people in eastern China
- 800 million people in sub-Saharan Africa

Most lower-to-middle-income areas may lack access to air conditioning and similar systems. As a result, they are unlikely to manage the extreme heat.

Conclusion

Earth Science Lecturer Peter Irvine says we should spread atmospheric particles to dim the Sun. It is a radical solution but might be the only effective one.

After all, our existing methods haven't stopped or slowed global warming. Still, we must carefully assess its unintended consequences and confirm we can mitigate them.

Nevertheless, we must find ways to ensure future generations can continue living on our planet safely. Learn more about the latest digital tips at [Inquirer Tech](#).

THE MANILA TIMES

[US, UK militaries owe \\$111B in climate compensation – study](#)

"IT is idiotic to waste our dwindling carbon budget on war," researchers from the United States and United Kingdom warned in a recent report revealing that the two countries' armed forces owe huge sums of money in climate compensation as they continue to involve themselves in wars and conflicts globally. Such conflicts are accompanied by widening carbon footprints and serious environmental destruction.

The report, published by UK-based think tank Common Wealth and the US-based Climate and Community Project, revealed that the American and British militaries "owe" at least \$111 billion in reparations to communities most threatened by their planet-heating pollution, through a "social cost of carbon" framework calculation used to assess the climate damage done by each additional ton of carbon in the atmosphere.

The US, the report said, is the largest military emitter in the world as a result of huge amounts of energy-hungry hardware and the need to equip as many as nearly 800 bases around the world.

Despite clear evidence showing that the US military is responsible for a myriad of environmental and public health harms globally, wars supported or participated in by the US continue. The "toxic legacy of war" brought by the US is still spreading to other continents.

The two biggest emitters continue unabated as the issue is ignored by most international climate agreements.

"The US military prioritizes its perceived strategic interests over evidence of its ecological impact. Nonetheless, the military presents itself as a solution to the climate crisis even if the opposite is true. Conflicts supported by the US are a source of insecurity, violence, and instability that will exacerbate the effects of the climate crisis while the military itself is a major source of ecological damage," co-author Khem Rogaly told the Beijing-run Global Times tabloid in a recent interview.

Patrick Bigger, another co-author, argued it is "idiotic to waste dwindling carbon budget on war" through involvement in more conflicts. The two authors called on less military activities and a reduction of US and UK military bases around the world.

True scope much higher

The US and UK governments and their militaries are important architects of the modern fossil fuel economy, research has found. The two militaries have generated at least 430 million metric tons of carbon dioxide since the 2015 United Nations Paris climate agreement. In 2017 alone, the Pentagon produced more emissions than Portugal.

Since 2001, the US Defense Department has consistently accounted for between 77 and 80 percent of the US government's total energy consumption. This is even based on opaque data from the department, and the true scope of emissions is likely much higher than official data suggests, the authors said.

Moreover, the two militaries' contributions to the climate crisis stretch far beyond their present consumption of fossil fuels. Even if unproven options to decarbonize military technology — such as sustainable aviation fuels for fighter jets — become viable, military activity leads to different forms of environmental damage including deforestation, chemical leaks from military bases, and land dispossession.

Across the US military's nearly 800 bases worldwide, military land appropriation, war-making and the supply chain processes, and raw materials needed to facilitate it all lead to air pollution, ecosystem destruction, biodiversity loss, and adverse health impacts, they explained.

Even if the military was run purely on renewables, its core activities, which include the appropriation of land to build bases and the destruction of habitats, trees, and buildings, would still have a significant environmental footprint, they stressed.

The Cost of Wars Project found that US military pollution had accounted for over 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, which amount to 257 million passenger cars annually. They compared this astonishing output as higher than the emissions from whole countries like Sweden, Morocco, and Switzerland.

The Cost of Wars Project also found the total emissions from war-related activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria to be estimated at more than 400 million metric tons of carbon dioxide alone.

The so-called war on terror also left a legacy of environmental damage and major health problems in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, where the US military routinely incinerated plastics, electronics, and other forms of toxic waste in giant burn pits, Al Jazeera reported.

The open waste burning pits set up near the US military bases in many places around the world have become a major source of pollution, damaging the local environment and negatively affecting residents' health.

A 2006 US Air Force memo describing a burn pit in Iraq described "the worst environmental site I have personally visited... It is amazing that the burn pit has been able to operate without restrictions over the past few years."

One base, Joint Base Balad in Iraq, burned more than 200 tons of trash every day. One soldier described the smoke as "thick like San Francisco fog," according to the book *Military Burn Pits: A Toxic Legacy of War*.

To this day, the destruction caused by the US military continues, with the widespread use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a so-called forever chemical mainly found in fire-fighting foam, on US installations and foreign bases like Okinawa in Japan. Resistant to breakdown, these chemicals poison the waters, causing birth defects and cancer, Al Jazeera reported in December 2023.

Moreover, since 2002, at least 270 environmental accidents on US Marine Corps bases on Okinawa have contaminated land and local waterways but, until now, few of these incidents have been made public, the Japan Times reported in 2016.

Last September, the US announced it would send armor-piercing munitions containing depleted uranium to Ukraine, a move widely criticized and condemned by the international community. Studies have shown that depleted uranium is radioactive and long-term exposure can have serious effects on human health and the environment.

The modern deployment of technology by the US military has also been questioned as an excessive drain on the planet's resources.

The military application of AI technology in military applications, for example, has raised concerns about significant water usage, which is a critical issue given the global challenges of water scarcity.

AI's high computational demands lead to substantial water consumption, primarily for cooling data centers. Large data centers, for instance, can use between 1 million and 5 million gallons of water per day, equivalent to the water usage of a town of 10,000 to 50,000 people, the Washington Post reported in April 2023.

The large-scale water consumption associated with AI development and deployment, in general, is undeniable. This consumption is of growing concern, especially in regions facing water scarcity and in the context of global efforts to manage and conserve water resources.

Concealed in global climate agreements

Nevertheless, the US military's carbon emission issue has long been the "elephant in the room." The US has created a labyrinth of exemptions regarding the environmental pollution risks that may arise from its military expansion.

Khem Rogaly told the Global Times that the ecological impacts of the US and UK militaries — through greenhouse gas emissions, historic operations to protect fossil fuel interests, and environmentally damaging military infrastructure — are concealed in international climate agreements.

As a result of US lobbying, overseas military emissions were exempt from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (expired in 2020) that aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, military emissions reportedly remained optional in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Apparently, the US is blind to its global carbon footprint. The country turns the money that should have been used to eliminate pollution and as compensation for environmental damage to invest in the military industry and enrich the wallets of the military-industrial complex tycoons.

The military-focused industrial strategies of both the US and the UK have benefitted from state intervention while green sectors have suffered from a lack of support, said the two researchers.

"But understanding the true ecological costs of military activity is essential to provide even a minimal recompense for damage and to set out the necessary path toward a reduction in military infrastructure and operations," Rogaly said when explaining the reason why he publicized the report.

"All countries have a responsibility to decarbonize their economies. However, the US and the UK, as two of the largest historical emitters and ongoing high per capita emissions (especially the US) — these countries bear even more responsibility as more Global South countries have faced increasingly intense effects of global heating because of military-related pollution," Bigger stressed.

They call for the US and the UK to contribute to independently governed funds to compensate Global South countries facing climate crises.

"The US' domestic policy must also facilitate the development of a new industrial base focused on green manufacturing instead of military production, through state-led conversion plans and social programs for workers currently in the arms sector and those reliant on its supply chains," they appealed.

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