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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Derco Rosal

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SUNSTAR

BAN Toxics: 'Invest in effective solid waste law Implementation'

AS INTERNATIONAL Zero Waste Month draws to a close, environmental NGO BAN Toxics urged the Philippine government to abandon plans to pursue waste-to-energy (WTE) as a solution to the country's escalating waste problem. The call came after Congresswoman Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced during the 25th anniversary of RA 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, that she intends to file a bill amending said law to allow the use of WTE technology for waste disposal. RA 9003 was the first law she signed as president.

THE JAPAN TIMES

EU must be 'less naive' in COP climate talks: French ecology ministry

The European Union must be "less naive" and "more transactional" in global climate negotiations and consider using financial and trade leverage to assert its position, the French ecology ministry said Tuesday.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY GUARDIAN

CCC highlights water utilities' role in climate resilience

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) underscored the urgency of aligning the business strategies and investments of essential services, including water service providers, with the country's national climate commitments during the 1st Manila Water Sustainability Leadership Talk in Quezon City.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Climate change is affecting people's sleep patterns—study
By: Rizal Raoul Reyes

The Philippines is currently facing a silent epidemic. In March 2025, the Philippine Society of Sleep Medicine Inc. (PSSMI) reported that the Philippines ranks first in Southeast Asia and fourth globally as the most sleep-deprived nation (Co, 2025), according to an article "Klim@Tulog" published for the Ateneo de Manila University website authored by Hxyll Almonguera and Shekinah Mesa.

Dr. Jimmy Chang, Director of PSSMI, warns the worst is yet to come, pointing out that this is not a static statistic. The crisis, he added, will aggressively worsen as Filipinos continue to sacrifice sleep quality for productivity or digital engagement.

Sleep is not merely "downtime;" it is a complex biological requirement. According to Baranwal et al. (2023), quality sleep, or sleep architecture, relies on a rhythmic, cyclic process between two critical stages: the nonrapid eye movement (NREM) and the rapid eye movement (REM).

NREM is a stage of deep repair where the body physically restores itself. Meanwhile, REM is described as the stage of dreaming and skeletal muscle atonia, essential for cognitive processing.

When this architecture is dismantled by deprivation, the authors said the consequences are catastrophic. Shanguang Zhao et al. (2025) found that lack of sleep significantly impairs high-intensity endurance by spiking maximum heart rates and slashing the time to physical exhaustion. More alarmingly, sleep deprivation weakens the very "wiring" of the brain, sabotaging the information transmission required for basic cognitive and motor functions.

"We are essentially operating on a failing battery," the authors said.

Given the current scenario, the authors asked: Is sleep deprivation still within our control? The evidence suggests people are losing their grip. Climate change has moved beyond "abstract terror" into an invasive reality that is sabotaging the bedroom, the last sanctuary of human well-being.

Bed or Sauna?

The most subliminal thief of sleep is rising ambient temperature. A study by Minor et al. (2022) confirms that global warming is objectively eroding sleep quality worldwide. As nighttime minimum temperatures rise, sleep duration shrinks. Our bodies are trapped in "urban heat islands," where concrete and asphalt act as thermal batteries, re-emitting heat long into the night.

The human body's physiology is remarkably sensitive to these shifts. To initiate sleep, the body's thermoregulation system must drop our core temperature by approximately 1°C to 2°C (Cerri & Amici, 2021). When the environment remains a kiln, this natural cooling is blocked.

"Our bodies are forced into a state of high metabolic labor—increased heart rate and sustained activity—just to stay cool. Furthermore, the heat can suppress melatonin, the vital hormone that signals the brain to drift off. We aren't just 'uncomfortable;' we are biologically locked out of rest," the authors said.

The New Nightmare Fuel: Trauma and Eco-Anxiety

Beyond the thermometer, the authors said climate change attacks sleep through psychological trauma. Typhoons, floods, and wildfires do more than destroy infrastructure; they leave a wake of displacement and "eco-anxiety"—a profound emotional distress regarding the planet's future.

How can the brain enter the vulnerability of REM sleep when it is hyper-vigilant, listening for the next storm or grieving a lost home? For many, the "natural and social systems" we are currently confronting have turned the night from a time of healing into a period of survival.

Finally, the conclusion emphasized that sleep deprivation in the Philippines is no longer just a lifestyle choice—it is a casualty of a planet in crisis. Without addressing the environmental heat and social instability we face, "a good night's rest" may soon become a luxury of the past.

ECO BUSINESS

How can the world engage with China to strengthen global environmental governance?
By: Sun Yixian and Tyler Harlan

Global environmental action is under serious threat, driven in part by Donald Trump's renewed anti-climate agenda, including withdrawing the United States from the Paris Agreement.

At the same time, escalating geopolitical tensions are pulling governments' attention away from the climate crisis and toward security, trade and industrial competition. In this unsettled landscape, China is increasingly stepping in to a more influential role in global environmental governance.

China, the world's second largest economy, is a key player in multilateral institutions and the leading producer of clean technologies. As such it will inevitably be drawn in to the vacuum of climate and environmental leadership in some shape or form.

But what might that look like? And what does it mean for the rest of the world?

China's ambiguous role
At the COP30 climate conference held last year in Belém, many expected China to step more fully into the leadership vacuum left by the US. Instead, it delivered a message that was ambitious in parts, cautious in others and at times difficult to interpret.

That ambiguity reflects a broader truth. China's environmental role is expanding rapidly but not always coherently, making it difficult to determine if it is ready to be a leader, and what kind of leader it will be.

Scepticism and concern continue to shape global reactions to China's growing environmental influence. Alongside its rapid expansion of clean energy at home and growing role as a supplier of related technologies abroad, critics point to persistent contradictions. These include continued expansion of coal domestically and the mixed social and environmental impacts of its infrastructure projects abroad.

Others focus more on the geopolitical and geoeconomic implications of China's dominance in clean-tech supply chains and the dependencies this may create.

Taken together, observers recognise China's importance, but remain unsure how to interpret its ambitions, motivations and the degree of trust its claims warrant.

However, this ambiguity should not be a reason to dismiss China's rising leadership in global environmental action. Instead, it underscores the need for strategies to engage China critically and constructively, acknowledging both the opportunities created by its rise and the legitimate concerns surrounding its governance practices, transparency and geopolitical intentions.

The question is not whether China should lead, but how its growing influence may be shaped to support global climate and biodiversity goals in an era of geopolitical fragmentation.

In an analysis with 11 other leading experts of environmental governance specialising in China, we found the country's ambition on environmental actions to be shaped by overlapping motives. This has produced a form of leadership that is fragmented, pragmatic and evolving.

Taking this into account, the rest of the world needs a clear-eyed and constructive approach to design their China engagement strategies for accelerating our sustainability transition. Here, we make recommendations in three key areas.

Advancing international cooperation

China now plays a decisive role in multilateral environmental governance. It shepherded the negotiations of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Its commitment is indispensable to the Paris Agreement, especially since the US withdrawal. And it increasingly pushes for progress on desertification, nature-based solutions and plastic pollution.

China has also launched climate and biodiversity funds to support other developing countries. Hence, its positions and actions have critical influence on the pace, scope and direction of related international governance processes.

Acknowledging this, policymakers worldwide should build on and expand government-to-government engagement with China for promoting international cooperation on various environmental issues.

China's top leaders have also stressed the country's commitment to supporting the existing multilateral system. Accordingly, other countries should welcome China's willingness to lead some processes and collaborate with it to further strengthen relevant international environmental institutions and regulations.

China is also a unique bridge between developed and developing countries, given its double identity as a developing country in the existing system and the world's largest emerging economy. While pushing China to change its developing country status is likely counterproductive, the international community can encourage it to take more responsibility as a leader of the Global South.

Leading international cooperation should not be a zero-sum game between China and other countries eager to be environmental leaders. Accordingly, countries from both the Global North and Global South can work with China to keep existing multilateral agreements resilient to geopolitical turbulence.

When cooperating with China, countries should also be more transparent and consistent, such as through multilateral institutions, in defining rules for accelerating a just transition to net zero.

Supporting a just transition in the Global South

China's role as the world's largest investor in and supplier of clean technologies is another important indicator of its emerging green leadership.

Over the past decade, it has quickly shifted away from financing coal-fired power plants overseas and its "Green Belt and Road Initiative" has begun to reshape the composition of its overseas project portfolio. Solar, wind and transmission projects now account for a growing share of its outbound investments or construction contracts.

Accordingly, Global South countries can maximise benefits from continuous and strengthened engagement with China. This can be done, for example, by maintaining access to affordable clean technologies from the country, attracting Chinese investments in green industries, and collaborating on green-technology development.

At the same time, many Global South countries lack the capacity to effectively negotiate, monitor and enforce rules for Chinese engagement, especially on social and environmental safeguards. They must therefore carefully design agreements on Chinese investment and infrastructure projects by including transparency clauses, local participation requirements and independent monitoring and grievance mechanisms.

Host governments should also strengthen domestic institutions to negotiate on equal footing with Chinese companies and to enforce accountability and benefit-sharing mechanisms, such as through technology transfer. Multi-stakeholder platforms bringing together governments, civil society, local communities and Chinese investors to co-design projects and co-regulate implementation can help. They can ensure engagement is mutually beneficial with gains distributed equitably among relevant stakeholders.

By designing suitable governance mechanisms, Global South countries can better leverage China's capital and technologies to accelerate a just transition.

Driving environmental science and green-tech development

China's growing role as a global hub for clean-energy technology and environmental science creates both major opportunities and serious points of tension.

Over the past decade, Chinese firms have significantly driven down costs of clean technologies and accelerated deployment worldwide. Meanwhile, Chinese governments, research institutes and universities have rapidly expanded scientific cooperation, training programmes and technical exchanges with partners across the globe.

These efforts have supported capacity building in areas ranging from renewable integration and pollution control to conservation and climate adaptation, especially in countries with limited research infrastructure.

Yet these flows of technology and knowledge are far from neutral. Much of China's international scientific cooperation reflects technocratic, state-led approaches that can sideline social participation, local knowledge and distributive concerns.

Collaboration is also becoming increasingly entangled with geopolitical competition, as many Global North governments, especially in Europe and North America, have restricted research ties with China in the name of national security. This fragmentation of scientific cooperation risks slowing global innovation precisely when rapid technological learning and diffusion are most urgently needed.

Rather than retreat from cooperation, the global research community should work to protect and reshape scientific exchange with China through clearer rules, reciprocity and transparency. Environmental and climate research should be treated as a global public good, not as a domain for zero-sum rivalry.

At the same time, international partners should push for more open data-sharing, joint standard-setting and institutional arrangements that ensure Chinese technologies and expertise are adapted to local ecological and social contexts rather than imposed through one-size-fits-all models. Careful, strategic collaboration can both accelerate global low-carbon transitions and steer China's growing scientific influence toward more inclusive and accountable outcomes.

As one of the most influential actors in global environmental governance, China's aspirations to be a responsible international leader provide opportunities for accelerating sustainability transitions. But China's leadership approach, which is driven by multiple interests, remains ambiguous and incoherent.

Understanding the various motivations and constraints of that approach is important for other countries as they design suitable strategies to engage with China. Strategic engagement will improve Chinese actors' understanding of the concerns of their international partners, and ultimately help China reform its policies to provide stronger leadership for global environmental governance.

[The Philippine island positioning itself as Asia-Pacific's agroecology hub]

By: Keith Anthony Fabro

Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr. is a sustainable-food entrepreneur based on Negros Island in the Philippines, which recently hosted the global "good food" movement Slow Food's first-ever regional conference in Asia and the Pacific.

Held in Bacolod City, in Negros Occidental province in November 2025, the gathering brought together farmers, chefs, food artisans and policymakers from across the region to discuss agroecology, biodiversity and climate-resilient food systems.

Uy has also been named "Slow Food councilor" for Southeast Asia, after having spent nearly two decades working with organic farmers and the provincial government to advance a vision of Negros as an "organic island" — a sustainable food hub where people can access healthy, locally grown produce at fair prices without relying on imported, oil-based chemical fertilisers that undermine environmental health, farmer livelihoods and food security.

That vision now encompasses an estimated 20,000 hectares (nearly 50,000 acres) of organic farmland across Negros, involving roughly 20,000 small-scale farmers and farming households, with Bacolod serving as a key urban hub linking producers, markets and institutions.

Uy's work in sustainable food systems began in 2005, when he and his wife started a composting business that converted organic waste into fertiliser. At the time, chemical inputs were inexpensive and widely used, but a subsequent spike in global oil prices exposed the vulnerability of conventional agriculture to fossil fuel dependence.

That experience prompted Uy to establish an organic farm in 2006, both to demonstrate the viability of organic inputs and to build direct relationships between farmers, chefs and consumers. Over time, his efforts expanded into farmer consolidation, retail outlets and food enterprises designed to bypass middlemen and improve farm incomes.

As a Slow Food councilor, Uy has taken this work beyond Negros to the national and regional levels. The designation of Bacolod City as the Center for Sustainable Gastronomy and Negros Occidental as the Organic Capital of the Philippines reflects that broader ambition. For Uy, these recognitions are not symbolic but strategic — intended to position the island as a platform for promoting agroecology, biodiversity and regenerative agriculture as practical responses to climate change across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Mongabay's Keith Anthony Fabro interviewed Ramon Uy Jr. during the Slow Food event in Bacolod. The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Mongabay: Chin-Chin, how did you get started in the sustainable food movement?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy: We started in 2005 with a composting business, producing organic fertiliser from waste. My family owned equipment for composting, and since I had experience in

vermicomposting [composting using worms], my wife and I thought it made sense to turn it into a livelihood as we were preparing to get married. We began buying waste, converting it into organic fertiliser, and selling it. That's how everything started.

At first, people laughed at us because chemical fertiliser was still cheap. But about a year after we started our Fresh Start business, oil prices soared, and fertiliser prices, being oil-based, jumped almost overnight in 2006. Many farmers were worried because costs were rising, but since we weren't using chemicals, we weren't affected. That was when we realised how empowering organic farming could be.

Mongabay: How did that early experience shape your thinking about industrial agriculture more broadly?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: That experience showed us how dependent chemical agriculture is on oil. When oil prices go up, farmers suffer immediately. We didn't feel that shock because we weren't using chemical inputs. That's when we saw that organic systems are not just environmentally better, but also more resilient to global energy shocks.

Mongabay: As an entrepreneur focused on agroecology, what ideas, philosophies or frameworks guide your work?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: I spend a lot of time listening to audiobooks, and authors like Michael Pollan and Dan Barber have really shaped how I think about food policy. I'm also very lucky because I work closely with many organic experts, and since I started, I've always been learning from my colleagues.

I don't have a formal degree in this field, but we study and learn based on what we see and experience on the ground. I've been part of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) since 2010, and I currently sit on its Asia board. I also serve as a Slow Food councilor.

Mongabay: What does Slow Food mean to you?
Ramon "Chin-Chin Uy Jr.: Slow Food is a movement. It was founded in Italy in the 1980s as a response to industrialisation and fast food. When the first McDonald's opened on the steps of Rome, Italians, who are very protective of their food culture, felt the need to defend it, so it wouldn't disappear.

Fast food makes you lose flavor. In agriculture, we've become focused only on yield, not on taste. When you target yield alone, you end up relying heavily on chemicals.

Mongabay: Based on what you see in Bacolod and across the Philippines, how would you describe how agroecology is practiced on the ground?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: I call it "organic by neglect." Because we're an archipelago, there are still many places where farming is essentially organic. There are farmers who grow food without chemicals, but they don't call themselves organic farmers. They plant crops like sweet potato because our soils are naturally fertile.

Most farmers here manage 1 or 2 hectares (about 2.5-5 acres). That scale is easier to manage organically. Once farming becomes large-scale, that's when you start needing chemical interventions.

Mongabay: You've been critical of food systems where organic products are exported while local communities eat chemically grown food. Why do you see this as a structural problem?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: In many developing countries, farmers grow organic food for export to wealthy countries, while their own communities eat food grown with chemicals. That shows how broken the food system is. Organic food should be for everyone, not just for export or for the rich.

Mongabay: Critics often argue that organic farming cannot match conventional yields. How do you respond?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: With crops like rice, you can grow organically without chemicals, and yields can be comparable. What matters more is net profit. Organic farming lowers costs, so even if yields are average, farmers earn more. There are also health benefits for farmers and consumers.

Mongabay: You've said there is "no such thing as cheap food." What do you mean?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: Non-organically grown vegetables may appear cheaper, but once you factor in the costs to human health and the environment, they are not truly cheap. When you apply true cost accounting and include environmental externalities, there is no such thing as cheap food — we pay for it later.

Chemical-based farming may give high yields in the short term, but degraded soils, pollution and depleted water tables all come at a cost. The question is: who will pay for that?

Mongabay: What are the main limitations of the Philippines' Organic Agriculture Act; why has it fallen short of helping small-scale organic farmers?
Ramon "Chin-Chin" Uy Jr.: The Organic Agriculture Act is meant to support small organic farmers. The problem is really certification. We lobbied to move away from third-party certification and shift toward a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS).

But right now, the government is still implementing PGS using a third-party approach. If I'm the farmer and you're the buyer, and we already know and trust each other, why does someone else still need to come in to inspect my farm just so I can call my produce organic? That defeats the purpose.

Organic farmers are already building healthy soil, protecting the environment and producing healthy food. Yet we're the ones required to submit documentation, ensure traceability and even pay fees just to call our products organic. Meanwhile, conventional farmers using chemicals face almost no regulation. That's not just a Philippine problem — it's happening globally.

Mongabay: What policies are needed to help farmers transition, given that the Organic Agriculture Act is not enough?

Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: We need to give more importance to farmers, especially when it comes to prices. Farmers work hard but often sell at very low prices. Staple crops like rice should be supported, and farm-gate prices protected.

We also need incentives and real financial support so farmers don’t rely on middlemen and fall into debt. Without that support, farmers lose motivation to keep farming.

Mongabay: Negros Island has a long history of sugar monoculture. How can sustainable food initiatives help address biodiversity loss and land-use pressures?
Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: Biodiversity is the opposite of monoculture. You don’t want to rely on just one crop — that’s a lesson we already learned from sugar. Diversification is a core principle of organic agriculture.

When you have many varieties, if one crop fails, you have backups. That diversity makes farms more resilient.

Mongabay: Across the Philippines and Southeast Asia, farmers are facing stronger typhoons and climate impacts. How do agroecology and community-based food traditions contribute to climate resilience?
Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: Organic farming is more climate-resilient. Organic soils absorb up to four times more water, so they perform better during droughts and heavy rains.

For me, sustainability is no longer enough. We need regeneration. We need to make the land better than it was before. Regenerative organic agriculture restores ecosystems while producing food.

Mongabay: From the farm tours to the Foodways Exhibition, what did you see Slow Food attendees learning, tasting and discovering?

Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: This was an international meeting place for farmers, chefs, artisans and food policy advocates. People saw many cultures and how proud communities are of their food traditions.

Many said this felt like it was the real Philippines — not a polished image, but people, culture and food.

Mongabay: As Slow Food councilor for Southeast Asia, what kinds of partnerships do you want to cultivate moving forward?

Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: We’re open to partnerships across sectors. We don’t work alone. After this event, our focus is on developing Slow Food communities across the Asia-Pacific region, supported by dedicated staff, Slow Food Travel, and biodiversity mapping.

Mongabay: Finally, if there’s one key takeaway you hope people bring home from this event, what would it be?
Ramon “Chin-Chin” Uy Jr.: We want people to build relationships, exchange cultures and talk honestly about how to make the world a better place.

We grow organic food, improve farmers’ lives, preserve the environment and earn a living. I don’t think there’s a better job than this.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Philippine climate funding drops below 3% of GDP in 2026 despite high risk exposure]
By: Derco Rosal

Even as the Philippines emerged as the most at-risk country globally, the government plans to scale back its total funding for climate adaptation measures in 2026, reducing it to less than three percent of the country's overall output.

"Programmed climate change adaptation expenditure for 2025 amounts to 3.9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), while proposed spending for 2026 is projected at 2.7 percent of GDP," the International Monetary Fund (IMF) wrote in a report published last week.

Based on the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) strategic priorities, the government has proposed lowering its budget for climate change programs by 15 percent to ₱983 billion from ₱1.16 trillion in 2025.

Notably, it slashed planned adaptation spending by a quarter to ₱844 billion from ₱1.12 trillion in 2025, scaling back major items such as water sufficiency, climate-smart industries and services, and sustainable energy.

Mitigation measures—whose funding increased more than fourfold to ₱139.4 billion from ₱32.6 billion—failed to offset the massive drop in planned spending for adaptation.

This development runs counter to the government's climate adaptation spending trend, which averaged 1.7 percent of GDP annually from 2022 through 2024, up from just one percent from 2015 through 2021.

According to the IMF, destructive typhoons reduce economic output in affected regions by about 0.4 percent, or up to 0.3 percent of the country's total GDP. Meanwhile, farm workers' productivity declines by 2.5 percent.

A World Bank report estimates that climate change could cost the Philippines up to 7.6 percent of GDP by 2030 and 13.6 percent by 2040 if no deliberate action is taken.

"The costs associated with adapting to climate-resilient infrastructure are not explicitly specified in the Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) and could potentially be large," the Washington-based multilateral lender noted.

According to World Bank estimates, building new climate-resilient infrastructure would cost around 0.6 percent of GDP. The IMF said this figure is conservative, as it excludes the cost of upgrading existing structures.

As it stands, the Philippines has been cutting infrastructure spending, which includes the controversial “ghost” flood-control projects.

Infrastructure spending plummeted in November 2025 as the Marcos Jr. administration curtailed funding releases for public works projects amid an intensifying crackdown on corruption in flood-control programs.

Government outlays for infrastructure and capital projects shrank 45.2 percent to ₱48 billion in November from ₱87.6 billion in the same period in 2024. This steep decline reflected tighter fiscal controls as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) faced heightened scrutiny over corruption allegations.

Given the high cost of climate measures, the IMF warned that heavy reliance on borrowing to finance these efforts could make it more difficult for the government to meet its obligations.

“Relying solely on borrowing to finance resilient investment could increase the debt burden over time,” the IMF said, adding that it would complicate fiscal consolidation efforts in the medium term.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. aims to end his term in 2028 with a debt-to-GDP ratio of around 60 percent.

However, the administration appears to be moving further from this goal, as the latest debt report showed the ratio rose to 63.2 percent in 2025—the highest level since the 65.7 percent recorded in 2005.

“If the government chooses to invest in resilient infrastructure without incurring additional debt, revenue mobilization and/or expenditure rationalization may be required,” the IMF said. Finance Secretary Frederick D. Go has yet to disclose the government’s priority tax measures for this year.

Meanwhile, economic managers led by Go have trimmed government revenue targets for the current and succeeding years. The 2026 target was lowered to ₱4.82 trillion from ₱4.98 trillion, while the 2027 and 2028 targets were cut to ₱5.12 trillion and ₱5.57 trillion—down 4.5 percent and 5.9 percent from earlier projections, respectively.

“Creating fiscal space through stronger revenue mobilization and more efficient spending is therefore critical to financing resilience without increasing public debt,” the IMF said, adding that private investments channeled through public-private partnerships (PPPs) could serve as an alternative source of funding for climate-adaptive infrastructure.

SUNSTAR

[BAN Toxics: 'Invest in effective solid waste law Implementation']

AS INTERNATIONAL Zero Waste Month draws to a close, environmental NGO BAN Toxics urged the Philippine government to abandon plans to pursue waste-to-energy (WTE) as a solution to the country's escalating waste problem. The call came after Congresswoman Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced during the 25th anniversary of RA 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, that she intends to file a bill amending said law to allow the use of WTE technology for waste disposal. RA 9003 was the first law she signed as president.

According to the group, the government should first focus on effectively implementing RA 9003 and addressing persistent gaps, noting that improper waste disposal, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of public awareness remain widespread. BAN Toxics emphasized that the law has yet to be fully realized, even after 25 years.

The 2023 Commission on Audit (COA) report shows that only a fraction of barangays have operational Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs), with just 39 percent of barangays (16,418 of 42,046) served by MRFs in 2021. Many local government units also lack adequate sanitary landfills, with only 29.25 percent (478 of 1,634 LGUs) having access to SLFs, leaving much of the country's waste improperly managed or sent to dumpsites instead of environmentally sound facilities.

Under RA 9003, LGUs are mandated to divert at least 25 percent of their solid waste through reuse, recycling, composting, and other resource recovery activities, with targets increasing every three years. However, official assessments show that many LGUs have struggled to meet these diversion requirements in practice, with much waste still unmanaged or improperly disposed.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has also acknowledged a lack of recycling infrastructure and waste processing facilities as a key barrier to effective implementation, adding that waste segregation at the source remains inconsistent across local governments.

"We should first conduct a comprehensive assessment of RA 9003, and invest our efforts and resources in improving its implementation before considering waste-to-energy or other burn technologies," said Jam Lorenzo, BAN Toxics Deputy Executive Director and Head of Policy Development and Research.

According to Lorenzo, WTE is not clean energy, as it produces a wide range of toxic chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that remain in the environment for a long time. Citing a biomonitoring study by Zero Waste Europe from 2023–2024, Lorenzo said that even the most advanced waste incineration technologies emit unintentionally produced POPs, such as dioxins and furans.

He also noted that WTE facilities prefer dry, inorganic waste such as plastics due to its high energy content. “WTE is often framed as a solution to plastic pollution, but burning plastics creates new environmental and health risks by releasing toxic pollutants. Instead of reducing plastic waste, it only encourages continued virgin plastic production derived from fossil fuels, reinforcing dependence on extractive industries that drive pollution and climate change.”

The DENR estimates that the Philippines produces about 61,000 metric tons of solid waste every day, 12 to 24 percent of which is plastic. This translates to around 163 million plastic sachet packets, 48 million shopping bags, and 45 million thin-film bags used daily.

BAN Toxics is advocating for a Zero Waste framework to address the waste crisis, calling for decisive action to reduce or eliminate waste at the source by cutting reliance on plastics, especially single-use plastics, and ensuring accountability from producers and corporations for the full lifecycle of their products. The approach emphasizes designing products and systems that prevent waste from being generated, while promoting reusable and refillable packaging, community-based recycling and composting, and behavioral change among consumers to adopt more sustainable habits.

“Waste-to-energy may promise an easy solution, but it is a false one. Easy fixes rarely solve systemic problems. Lasting change comes from investing in systems and infrastructure needed to properly implement our waste management laws and reduce waste at the source,” Lorenzo said.

BAN Toxics stresses the need for a fundamental shift from fragmented, “end-of-pipe” waste disposal to integrated, sustainable, and holistic approaches. The group notes that current siloed efforts by the government can be inefficient, costly, and environmentally harmful. It advocates for a systems approach that coordinates technologies, policies, and community actions to achieve more sustainable waste management outcomes.

THE JAPAN TIMES

EU must be 'less naive' in COP climate talks: French ecology ministry

The European Union must be "less naive" and "more transactional" in global climate negotiations and consider using financial and trade leverage to assert its position, the French ecology ministry said Tuesday.

The comments came before a meeting of EU environment ministers in Cyprus this week to review last November's U.N. climate summit, which ended with a watered-down pact that omitted EU demands over fossil fuels.

Monique Barbut, France's minister for ecological transition, had already expressed disappointment over the outcome and said the EU must be prepared to "assert its red lines" and reject similar proposals in future.

The EU must be "less naive" and "more assertive, more demanding, and more transactional if we want to have an impact in these negotiations," her office said ahead of the Cyprus meeting.

"We are in a tougher world where the European Union, when it comes to climate negotiations, is more isolated," a senior source from Barbut's office told reporters.

"States that had previously been somewhat hesitant to speak out are doing so much more freely since the American withdrawal" from the global fight against climate change, the source added.

U.S. President Donald Trump has withdrawn the world's largest economy from the Paris Agreement on global warming and the bedrock U.N. climate treaty that underpins it.

His administration sent nobody to the last U.N. climate summit in Brazil, where the EU's call for the inclusion of a "roadmap" away from fossil fuels was left out of the final deal.

The EU ended up accepting it instead of scuttling a deal altogether.

The EU is the largest payer of climate finance — money to help developing countries transition to a low-carbon future — and Barbut's office suggested the 27-nation bloc could use this in a more "political" manner.

The source also questioned if the EU should "continue to demonstrate climate and financial solidarity with countries" that have failed to meet their obligations under the Paris Agreement.

These include updating their national pledges for cutting emissions, the latest round of which were due last year.

But more than 60 countries — some of them major climate finance recipients such as India, Egypt, and the Philippines — have still not turned in their latest plans.

“We have tools like trade agreements,” whose implementation can be conditional on compliance with the Paris Agreement, the minister’s office added.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY GUARDIAN

CCC highlights water utilities' role in climate resilience

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) underscored the urgency of aligning the business strategies and investments of essential services, including water service providers, with the country's national climate commitments during the 1st Manila Water Sustainability Leadership Talk in Quezon City.

In his keynote address, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje highlighted that for a water-stressed and disaster-prone archipelago, climate risk is systemic and must be managed in coherence with sectoral agencies and private operators while engaging the communities who are also active agents of resilience.

"Climate action does not succeed on policy alone. Nor does it succeed on infrastructure alone. It succeeds when institutions, communities, and individual Filipinos move together," Borje said.

Moreover, he highlighted the central role of water utilities in strengthening climate resilience, noting that climate impacts directly affect water availability, infrastructure integrity, and service continuity, making climate action a governance and operational priority.

"The role of water utilities is fundamental. We must ensure water security despite a changing climate, by climate-proofing infrastructure, diversifying water sources, and integrating nature-based solutions for watershed management," Borje said.

Highlighting the policies under the guidance of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Borje underscored the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) as the country's core frameworks for addressing climate risks and advancing sustainable development.

He emphasized that water utility companies contribute to national mitigation targets through improved wastewater treatment, energy efficiency, and low-carbon operations, while also advancing adaptation through risk-informed planning and resilient infrastructure.

"This is where the idea of bridging sustainability and resilience becomes concrete," Borje said.

"When your sustainability strategies align with our NDC and our NAP, you are doing more than complying with policy. You are translating national commitments into daily realities for millions of Filipinos."

Affirming this view, Manila Water President and CEO Roberto Locsin underscored that providing service for sustainable solutions means more than just delivering the basic needs.

“Every task we perform, every decision we make, can be transformed into direct climate action. This is the power of our work. It goes beyond operations, it shapes resilience for generations to come,” Locsin noted.

The Sustainability Leadership Talk is Manila Water’s platform for engaging leaders from government, academe, and industry peers on sustainability and resilience.

Its inaugural session, with the theme “Bridging Sustainability and Resilience for a Climate-Smart Future,” focused on climate action, public-private partnerships, and embedding resilience into organizational planning and operations.

The CCC actively engages with the private sector as a core part of its mainstreaming strategy, recognizing business as a crucial partner in achieving national climate resilience.

The agency leverages relevant pathways, such as bilateral partnerships and its system of contact groups, to sustain collaboration as a loop of action and ambition.

Aligned with the national climate agenda and the country’s commitments under the Paris Agreement, the CCC reaffirmed its commitment to working with the private sector and other stakeholders to advance climate-resilient development and safeguard essential services amid a changing climate.

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