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By: Noah Kaufman, Scott Barrett and Joseph E. Stiglitz

Casual observers of the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28) can be forgiven for attributing high stakes to the event. "We are on the brink of a climate disaster, and this conference must mark a turning point," UN chief António Guterres warned during the proceedings. Then, when a final agreement was reached, Canadian Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault hailed its "breakthrough commitments on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the transition away from fossil fuels."

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Marcos orders fast-tracking of water projects to counter climate threat](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed government agencies to speed up the completion of water-related projects across the country to mitigate potential water shortages.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BBC

[Climate change will bring megafloods to California](#)

By: Lucy Sherriff

The Santa Barbara police car blocked access to the bridge, lights flashing as the thundering, swollen brown river rampaged below. The water was running so high in this Southern California county that it gushed through the railings of the bridge, and poured out onto the road.

This region is familiar with water scarcity – usually battling extreme heatwaves, wildfires, and drought. Now, Southern California is confronting an overabundance of water, in the form of torrential rain and life-threatening floods.

Earlier this week, around half a year's worth of rain was predicted to fall in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas in just one day.

The city recorded its rainiest day ever on Monday, and it wasn't better news for the rest of California either. A state of emergency was declared and evacuation orders were issued. Mudslides hit neighbourhoods, drivers were stranded, and half a million residents lost power. About 37 million residents, or 94% of the state's population, are under flood alerts.

The already-deadly storm is caused by an atmospheric river, a corridor of water vapour in Earth's lower atmosphere which is carried along by the wind, forming long currents – a kind of sky river. The consequences can be dramatic. The precipitation that falls is comparable to the rain brought by hurricanes making landfall on the Gulf Coast.

And experts say that the frequency and intensity of these kinds of events will only increase. These severe floods in California are a "broadly underappreciated risk", according to a 2022 paper, co-authored by Daniel Swain and Xingying Huang, scientists at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado.

"I think we're reasonably prepared for what we're seeing right now," says Swain. "But the kinds of events we're talking about in that paper are far greater – they're longer in duration, more extreme and more widespread. Pretty much every dimension you could add to it. [...] I don't think that California has fully prepared to face the realities of these events," says Swain.

Climate change is increasing the risk of a California megaflood, Swain's study warns. This extreme storm scenario would produce runoffs 200-400% greater than anything

seen before in the Sierra Nevada, the sprawling 400-mile (650km) mountain range that traverses 24 of the 58 counties in California.

The last such megaflood happened in 1861, inundating a 300 mile-long (483km) stretch of the Central Valley and large portions of modern-day Los Angeles with water. It could happen again, any time. And, the extremity of such a flood is increased by around 10% per 1C of global warming, because the warmer the planet the more capacity the atmosphere has to hold water vapour.

"Imagine that what's unfolded over the past 48 hours [in California], just kept recurring for weeks. That's the kind of scenario we're talking about," says Swain.

It's difficult to quantify this kind of event, but one noticeable incident from 2023 that stands out is Tulare Lake, an ancient lake bed that was drained in the 1920s for agriculture. In March, the dry lake began to refill due to the atmospheric river storms that pummelled the state. Heavy farm machinery, orchards, and entire warehouses sunk beneath the water, a kind of modern-day farmyard Atlantis.

The intense rainfall in 2023 also caused landslides and floods that devastated entire communities, killed at least 22 people, and caused billions in damage. These kinds of extreme weather events disproportionately impact people of colour and low-economic status, like those in Pajaro, a community in Monterey County, which was flooded after a levee, a type of flood wall, failed.

Flooding in Southern California in January 2024 only reiterated the vulnerability of these groups.

"San Diego flooding two weeks ago showed again that disadvantaged communities bear the brunt of flood impacts when infrastructure is overtopped," says Brett Sanders, professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of California, Irvine. "If this storm ends up causing mainstem flood channels to overtop, then once again there will be low-income communities impacted, leaving people scrambling to salvage their belongings and find a place to live while not losing their job from missed work."

What California has experienced so far though, is nothing compared to what might be in store for the region. "I don't think we can point to recent events as a good indicator of the impacts to come," says Swain, "because these events will be far, far greater – larger, higher impact and more dangerous than what we're seeing now."

The state is beginning to experience what scientists are calling "hydroclimate whiplash" – essentially the climate veering wildly between extreme dryness, and extreme wetness. The swings of the pendulum will become greater as the climate warms, increasing these

kinds of weather events – meaning Californians will need to adapt to both a drier, and wetter, world.

ECO BUSINESS

How is climate change spreading neglected tropical diseases?

Global warming will cause a catastrophic rise in mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue and chikungunya, spreading them to less affected places including Europe and the United States, a World Economic Forum (WEF) report said this month.

That is raising concern over global efforts to eradicate a host of debilitating neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) that still cause immense suffering among millions of the world's poorest people, even though they can be prevented or cured.

What are neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)?

NTDs is a broad term that describes a group of 20 infectious illnesses, including dengue, lymphatic filariasis, soil-transmitted helminth infections, and trachoma. Many of them are vector-borne - spread by flies, mosquitoes and other insects - and mostly found in poor communities in tropical and subtropical regions of the world.

Altogether, more than a billion people are impacted by NTDs, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, and they cause thousands of preventable deaths each year.

What diseases are being fuelled by climate change?

Tropical disease experts say a resurgence of vector-borne diseases in areas where they were previously eliminated or controlled is imminent as climate changes raises global temperatures and disrupts rainfall patterns.

Heavy rains, for example, can flood urban waterways, turning them into favourable breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and a warmer climate accelerates the life cycle of parasites, thereby increasing their population.

Drought, meanwhile, can lead people and disease vectors to migrate elsewhere in search of water - causing NTDs to spread with them.

An additional 500 million people may be exposed to vector-borne diseases like malaria, dengue and Zika by 2050 as warmer temperatures speed up the geographical spread of mosquitoes to less affected regions like the U.S. and Europe, according to the report published at the WEF meeting in Davos earlier this month.

Ibrahima Socé Fall, director of the WHO's Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases Department, said more than 100 countries are recording dengue transmission.

Contrasting the threat with Covid-19, he said “the next public health challenge may not be a respiratory disease but a vector-borne disease”.

What is being done to tackle NTDs?

So far, more than 50 countries have eliminated at least one NTD, and the WHO released its second 10-year plan in 2021 with the aim of eliminating at least one of the 20 recognised NTDs in 100 countries by 2030.

At the COP28 climate conference in Dubai in December, donors pledged US\$777.2 million to fight NTDs and outlined goals including wiping out two of them - river blindness and lymphatic filariasis in Africa.

While past initiatives to combat the diseases have focused on providing free drugs and timely access to treatment, infectious disease specialists say the impact of climate change on NTDs should now be factored into disease elimination and control programmes.

“We know climate change will impact NTDs. What we don’t fully know is how or to what extent. But we can’t wait to act,” said Tala Al-Ramahi, from Reaching the Last Mile (RLM), a global health initiative leading the push against river blindness and lymphatic filariasis.

Fall said more data and research, for example on how heavy rainfall proliferates mosquito populations, could help prevent and predict outbreaks.

Adhering to the agreed-upon 1.5 degrees Celsius limit to curb emissions to address global warming could help mitigate the spread of vector-borne diseases, said Kris Murray, professor of environment and health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

He said it may become more difficult to check the spread of NTDs if countries’ global emissions continue at current rates.

“Any relative change in climate is huge because it could just give that edge to the vectors to sort of regain a foothold and become a little bit more difficult to manage. Climate could make it harder to control some NTDs,” he said.

Many more people are blinded, disabled and disfigured due to the diseases, which perpetuate a cycle of poverty, keeping millions of children out of school and adults from work.

The diseases afflict those without access to clean water, sanitation and the basic health services required to protect people against infection by bacteria, viruses and other pathogens, meaning those living in poor, rural areas or conflict zones are at particular risk.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Marcos wants more climate-resilient infra after Mindanao flooding](#)

By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

President Marcos has tasked government agencies to ensure that the infrastructure being built is responsive to the needs of the present and anticipates the worst following the recent flooding in Mindanao.

Marcos said this as he witnessed the signing of the civil works contracts for the Davao Public Transport Modernization Project (DPTMP) in Davao City, on Wednesday, Feb. 7.

In his speech, the President said that not only should infrastructure projects be completed on time, on spec, and within budget, but they should also anticipate circumstances, particularly those related to climate change.

"There is another instruction to all agencies that I need fully complied with— of which the recent flooding in Mindanao has empathically shown. The infrastructure we are building must not only wipe out the arrears of the past but must respond to the needs of the present and anticipate circumstances in the future," he said.

"We must build while bearing in mind the worst the future will bring — of the earth getting hotter, getting wetter — and not on outdated assumptions that no longer apply," he added.

According to Marcos, the government cannot fully serve the people if it gets stuck with data from the past.

"We cannot build climate-resilient infrastructure for our children based on the rainfall and temperature records during our parents' time," he said.

Several areas in the Davao Region have been submerged in flood following the continuous rains that started on Jan. 28. In Davao City, 23 barangays were placed in a state of calamity due to flooding and landslides.

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that the number of people who died due to the flooding rose to 18.

It added that 1,122,975 individuals or 324,040 families were affected by the bad weather in Northern Mindanao (Region X), Davao Region, Soccsksargen (Region XII),

Caraga (Region XIII), and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Of this, 795,057 individuals or 200,847 families were displaced due to the flooding and landslides.

MANILA STANDARD

[DENR, NASA team up on air quality research](#)

Specialists from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) – Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) will join National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientists to study Metro Manila’s air quality.

The DENR said it is sending engineers and air specialists on research flights with NASA scientists to conduct the study from Feb. 11 to Feb. 15.

The DENR said leading the team is ambient air quality monitoring specialist Chadbert Nikko Aquino, and joining him are fellow engineers and air specialists Paul Vallar, Brix Faustino, Billy William Franco, and Zeus Aragon.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Loyzaga said this assignment aims to build technical capacity and expertise for the agency.

Loyzaga earlier stated that the collaboration with NASA is a first for the Philippines and “will help improve air quality models, provide accurate forecasts, and develop effective policies to ensure better air quality in the future.”

The official said NASA will be conducting scientific research flights that are specifically designed to study the atmosphere of Metro Manila and its surrounding regions, with engineers and air quality specialists of the DENR boarding the flights and learning from the NASA scientists on board.

Their mission is to study the atmosphere in Metro Manila and its surrounding regions from space to the surface of the Earth.

The Philippine leg of the airborne field campaign is part of the Airborne and Satellite Investigation of Asian Air Quality (ASIA-AQ), a partnership that brings together experts from NASA and DENR, in collaboration with the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA), Manila Observatory, Ateneo de Manila University, and the University of the Philippines.

The DENR team will be joining lead scientists from the US with NASA Tropospheric Composition Program Scientist Dr. Barry Lefer at the helm. He is supported by Dr. James Crawford (ASIA-AQ Lead Scientist at NASA Langley Research Center) and Dr. Louisa Emmons (ASIA-AQ Forecasting Team Lead at the National Center for Atmospheric Research).

They will be collaborating with Atmospheric Scientists from the Manila Observatory's Air Quality Dynamics Laboratory composed of Dr. James Bernard Simpas, Dr. Maria Obiminda Cambaliza, and Dr. Melliza Cruz.

Within the week, the DENR-EMB team will go on four research flights aboard two aircrafts employed by ASIA-AQ, the NASA G-III and NASA DC-8, which are both based in Clark, Pampanga.

The campaign will also serve as a platform for the Philippines to understand its local air quality issues, improve its interpretation of satellite observations, and develop better air quality models.

Water scarcity a perpetual threat with climate change — President

By: Charles Dantes

President Marcos ordered the public and private sectors to hasten the completion of all water projects nationwide amid the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, saying water scarcity has now become a “perpetual threat that comes with climate change.”

“It is for this reason that I continually stress the urgency of improving water security, and directed agencies concerned to expedite the completion of all water projects across the country,” the President said during the inauguration of the Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project on Wednesday.

The state weather bureau on Tuesday reported that water levels in all nine dams in Luzon have dropped to below normal starting Jan. 27 amid the El Niño phenomenon.

PAGASA said the water level at Angat Dam, which supplies water to over 98 percent of Metro Manila, dropped further to 210.08 meters from the regular 212-meter level.

Emphasizing the critical role of water security, President Marcos warned of the adverse impacts of water supply disruptions.

“Any disruption to the water supply, such as the one posed by the El Niño phenomenon, which we are feeling the effects of now, degrades our quality of life, it dampens economic activities, and can fuel disorder,” the President said.

President Marcos earlier instructed the Department of Public Works and Highways, in collaboration with various government agencies, to prioritize and expedite water supply projects in areas vulnerable to the El Niño phenomenon.

He also tasked the DPWH and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to explore public-private partnerships for rehabilitating and enhancing the country’s water supply systems, along with constructing large-scale water impounding projects to expand coverage areas.

During yesterday’s inauguration, Mr. Marcos commended the efforts of Apo Agua of Aboitiz InfraCapital, DCWD, and the local government of Davao in bringing the Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project to fruition.

The Davao City Bulk Water Supply Project is one of the largest private bulk water supply facilities in the country, drawing from the Tamugan River to diminish Davao City’s reliance on groundwater.

“Thank you for showing us the deep well of potential that public-private partnerships hold, not just in securing water supply, but also in paving the way for enhanced economic growth, jobs creation, and an improved standards of living for all Filipinos,” the President said.

“Anticipating problems instead of letting them catch us by surprise is how we approach these challenges in the Bagong Pilipinas. We prepare for contingencies, solve problems, and defuse potential crises before they occur,” he added.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PCO: Incorporate gender into climate policies toward green economy](#)

By: Filane Mikee Cervantes

An official of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) has emphasized the importance of incorporating gender into climate policies, as it would support a just, inclusive, and equitable transition toward a green economy.

During the two-day Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) in Bangkok, Thailand from Feb. 6 to 7, PCO Undersecretary Cherbett Karen Maralit said the Philippines has put gender-responsive considerations in policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Maralit particularly cited the country's Climate Change Act, which incorporates a gender-sensitive, pro-children, and pro-poor approach in designing and implementing all climate change and renewable energy efforts, plans, and programs.

She also highlighted that the People's Survival Fund, or the country's adaptation fund, takes into account the local projects' responsiveness to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities.

She said women played a crucial role in building climate-resilient communities through the government's Disaster Risk Resiliency Program.

"The Disaster Risk Resiliency Program of our Department of Social Welfare and Development strengthens the capacity of disaster-vulnerable families by enhancing their disaster risk reduction, mitigation, and management capabilities while providing them temporary income opportunities in exchange for training or work. In 2023, 54 percent of participants were women, which underscores their significant role in building communities' climate resilience," she said.

In terms of international cooperation, she said the Philippines and the United Nations recently signed the 2024-2028 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

The goal under this framework, Maralit said, would be for all people to "benefit from a just transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient development, sustainable management of the environment, natural resources, and biodiversity, and strengthened resilience to disasters and natural hazards".

Maralit, meanwhile, urged regional stakeholders to continue mainstreaming gender-responsive considerations in all policies across levels.

"Recognizing the continued relevance of gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, particularly in livelihood and health, we appeal to everyone to close the existing gender gaps and the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls," she said.

Filipino women in post pandemic recovery

Meanwhile, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has put a spotlight on Filipino women for playing an integral role in the Philippines' post pandemic recovery.

NEDA Economic Development Specialist II Arsenia Crisilda Maxinne Pepino said in the midst of the pandemic, around 62 percent of the new businesses registered were women-owned micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the country.

Pepino said women's labor force participation increased to 56 percent from 51.2 percent in 2021 while lockdowns were being lifted.

"Research shows that in 2020, the Philippines was one of the top countries with the greatest number of female CEOs and women occupying senior management positions. These are a testament to how women are essential in uplifting the Philippine economy," she said.

Pepino, however, stressed that women empowerment measures must be reinforced to dismantle multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women that push them into poverty.

"Despite steadily making strides toward economic progress, many women and girls are still living in poverty and experiencing situations of economic and social marginalization. Women's labor force participation decreased from its progress in 2022. Women's employment rate also remains lower than men, while they bear the brunt of a greater proportion of unpaid care work," she said.

She cited that the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028 identifies several strategies to address gendered poverty by providing women with even more economic opportunities while also continuing to address gender-based discrimination.

These strategies, she said, include mainstreaming gender and green competencies to increase women's income-earning ability; and strengthening social protection systems to reduce the risks faced by vulnerable groups.

"Aside from employment facilitation, policies shall address labor market issues such as mobility constraints, security concerns, technological capacities, and gender-based discrimination. Laws such as the Telecommuting Act of 2018 give women the option to avail alternative work arrangements, enabling them to work from home while pursuing other productive activities," she said.

She said gendered poverty could also be addressed by elevating women's presence in leadership roles, especially in male-dominated fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

With regard to women's unpaid care work, she said the government aims to strengthen the provision of daycare services for government employees' children under five years of age.

She also noted that lawmakers have started to lobby for legislation to mandate the provision of incentives for unpaid care workers.

Meanwhile, she said the Interagency Committee on Gender, Children, and Youth Statistics (IAC-GCYS) has put forward initiatives on estimating the value of unpaid care work and its possible contribution to the economy.

"The path to eliminating gendered poverty is truly challenging, but we believe that true gender equality can only come into fruition when all stakeholders— men and women alike, collectively work together for a more equitable Philippines," she said.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Meanwhile, Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) Officer-In-Charge Khay Ann Magundayao-Borlado urged member-states of the United Nations to adopt gender-responsive budgeting as an investment in the future to ensure "no one is left behind".

Magundayao-Borlado said gender-responsive budgeting goes beyond just allocating funds but includes ensuring that resources cater to diverse needs based on sex, gender, age, disability, and other social status.

"Strengthening domestic resource mobilization for women and gender equality following a participatory and inclusive process where the voices and perspectives of those most affected are made part of decision-making is essential for sustainable development," she said during the consultation.

She said that in the Philippines, under Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women Act) and Republic Act 7192 (Women in Development and Nation Building Act), 5 to 30 percent of official development assistance funds and at least five percent of the total budget appropriations of all government instrumentalities are allocated to Gender and Development programs.

She said that in 2022, 24 percent of the budget of national government agencies was utilized to implement gender-responsive initiatives, encompassing not only those aimed at empowering women and achieving gender equality but also the integration of gender-responsive elements into flagship programs.

"Addressing gender inequalities not only promotes women's human rights but is also a pivotal step towards eradicating overall poverty," she said.

She highlighted that the Philippines has ensured that gender equality and inclusivity are key components of its human development and poverty reduction programs, citing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, the country's conditional cash transfer program, as an example.

"Empowering women creates a ripple effect, benefiting families, communities, and society at large," she said.

She also called for the strengthening of international support and global multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially for developing countries, stressing that "the fight against women's poverty is a collective global effort, creating a world where fiscal policies transform lives and foster equality".

The Philippine delegation, also composed of representatives from Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Budget and Management and Climate Change Commission, was supported by Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok.

SUNSTAR

[SECURE NEGROS| 3 bishops back Capitol's campaign on renewable energy](#)

By: Teresa D. Ellera

Three bishops in Negros are backing the campaign of the Provincial Government of Negros Occidental on renewable energy.

"We, the undersigned Bishops with territorial jurisdiction within the Province of Negros Occidental, in our commitment to stewardship of God's creation and in alignment with the social teachings of the Catholic Church, hereby express our united support for the Provincial Government's SecuRE Negros Program which aims to ensure the just energy transition and increase the energy security of the Province of Negros Occidental," Bishops Patricio Buzon of Bacolod Diocese, Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos Diocese, and Louie Galbines of Kabankalan Diocese said in a collegial statement Tuesday, February 6.

"This initiative represents a significant step forward in establishing a renewable energy roadmap for our beloved province," they said, adding, "As shepherds of our respective dioceses, we recognize the urgency of addressing environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change, which disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable among us. The earth, our common home, has been entrusted to us by the Creator, and it is our shared responsibility to safeguard its integrity for present and future generations."

In a solid move to address the climate and energy

crises, Governor Eugenio Jose Lacson led the launching of the SeCURE Negros Campaign-Ensuring Power Security with Renewable Energy at the Capitol Social Hall in Bacolod City on Monday, February 5.

The bishops said that Capitol's SecuRE Program, with its focus on sustainable and renewable energy sources, aligns with their call to care for creation and live out their faith in action.

"The transition to renewable energy is not only an environmental imperative but also a moral one. It speaks directly to our commitment to social justice, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that the benefits of development reach all members of society, especially the least among us. By supporting the SecuRE Program, we are advocating for policies that prioritize the common good, respect for human dignity, and the promotion of a more equitable society," they further said.

The bishops said they pledge to work alongside the Provincial Government, local communities, and all stakeholders in the implementation of the SecuRE Negros Program. "We commit ourselves to raise awareness about the importance of renewable energy, to mobilize our respective dioceses in support of sustainable initiatives, and to advocate for the integration of moral and ethical considerations in the development of energy policies," the three bishops also emphasized.

"We call upon the faithful and all people of goodwill in Negros to join us in supporting the SecuRE Negros Program. Let us work together in harmony and with resolute purpose to achieve a just energy transition that respects our common home, promotes the well-being of every inhabitant of our province, and bears witness to our faith in a God who calls us to protect and cherish the gift of creation. May this unity statement serve as a testament to our commitment to environmental stewardship and our collective efforts towards a sustainable future for Negros," they added.

During the program launch on Monday, Lacson emphasized the vital role of renewable energy in ensuring power security.

The SecuRE Negros Campaign signifies Negros Occidental's steadfast commitment to securing its energy future

through the transformative power of renewable energy, he said.

Focused on establishing reliable energy systems, the campaign aims not only to champion accessibility, and sustainability but also affordability, and ensure power security in the face of global challenges, he said.

He added the campaign underscores the economic, political, and environmental advantages of transitioning to distributed energy systems (DES) using renewable energy sources.

Technologically and financially feasible and environmentally responsible, renewable energy attracts investments, lowers long-term energy costs, and fosters job creation, contributing to the province's economic growth, the governor said.

Moreover, the shift to cleaner energy sources catalyzes innovation in related industries, fostering economic diversification and growth, he said.

Lacson also highlighted the importance of government commitment and policies, stating, "the road may be long, but it will be bright if we all work together to make our province truly the Renewable Energy Capital of the Philippines."

Negros Occidental, already a top producer of solar electricity in the country, can become a model for sustainable energy practices, he said.

The province hosts five solar power firms operating six plants, with the Solar Farm in Cadiz City being Southeast Asia's largest solar farm, generating a remarkable 132.5 megawatts of power

The SecuRE Negros campaign leverages multi-stakeholder engagement strategies for a just transition, emphasizing that the adoption of renewable energy empowers all stakeholders in the province, he said, adding that this is both an investment in future generations and an express commitment to climate action, mitigating the impacts of climate and energy crisis.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] How to enforce climate agreements with trade measures](#)

By: Noah Kaufman, Scott Barrett and Joseph E. Stiglitz

Casual observers of the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28) can be forgiven for attributing high stakes to the event. "We are on the brink of a climate disaster, and this conference must mark a turning point," UN chief António Guterres warned during the proceedings. Then, when a final agreement was reached, Canadian Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault hailed its "breakthrough commitments on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the transition away from fossil fuels."

But the truth is that neither the contents of the Dubai agreement nor what was left out of it will have much impact on climate change. We have seen this movie many times before, starting with the 1992 treaty that created the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Back then, all countries committed to preventing "dangerous" climate change, which would have required dramatic cuts in annual global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. But emissions have continued to rise, albeit at a lower rate than they might have otherwise. Voluntary commitments have proven mostly hollow.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that fevered warnings about climate risks and the need for action are misguided. As economists who have spent decades studying climate change, we recognize that some of the economics literature has too often been used by those opposing a meaningful response. As we note in a recent report for the Institute of Global Politics, economic models that purport to identify "optimal" climate policies often systematically underestimate the benefits of emissions reductions and overestimate their costs.

Moreover, economists have let their admiration for a single policy solution, carbon taxes, get the better of them. This has given rise to misleading claims that relying on carbon prices alone is the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions. In fact, the many market failures that stand in the way of a rapid, equitable transition to net-zero emissions underscore the need for a broad portfolio of policies (which includes carbon prices).

In a world of urgent challenges, policymakers and the public have limited attention for climate change. Rather than focusing so much on international conferences that require unanimous support, entail no accountability, and ultimately have little effect on emissions, we should be directing our energies toward negotiating agreements that can achieve transformational progress in narrow, but crucial, economic sectors.

We already know that this more targeted approach works. Consider the Montreal Protocol, which protects the stratospheric ozone layer, or the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Marpol). Unlike the voluntary commitments made at each climate-change COP, these two treaties established binding obligations that can be enforced through international trade markets. The Montreal Protocol bars participating countries from trading in chlorofluorocarbons (ozone-depleting chemicals) with non-participating countries, and under Marpol, access to ports is restricted to ships that meet certain technical standards.

These two treaties have worked because they create positive feedback effects: the more countries that agree to participate, the higher the pressure on others to join. As a result, the ozone layer will return to its pre-1980 level in a few decades, and over 99 percent of oil is now shipped according to Marpol specifications, virtually eliminating a major source of marine pollution.

The same approach has already worked for climate agreements. The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol phases down hydrofluorocarbons, a powerful greenhouse gas. Like the examples above, the amendment incorporates a trade measure designed to create a positive feedback effect once a critical threshold of participation has been met. Owing to this structure, ratification is in every country's interest. Even in polarized America, it received strong bipartisan support in the US Senate last year.

We should now do the same for other major emissions sources. Aluminum production, for example, is responsible for about 2 percent of global GHG emissions each year. Yet by replacing carbon anodes with inert anodes, the industry could dramatically reduce its emissions. An aluminum treaty might require that parties both switch to inert anodes and import aluminum only from other participating parties.

In contrast to unilateral threats of trade measures, this approach to international climate agreements is fundamentally cooperative and multilateral. It differs from unilaterally imposing domestic regulations on foreign production, as the European Union is doing, or from imposing carbon-based tariffs on certain imports without any corresponding domestic regulations, as some in the US have proposed. These methods may only invite retaliation.

To succeed, international climate agreements must be compatible with countries' economic strategies, not least those of lower-income countries like India, where most future emissions will occur. That is why the Montreal Protocol and Kigali Amendment include provisions whereby richer countries agree to help poorer countries pay the costs of compliance.

The international community took the wrong lesson from the Kyoto Protocol. It should be obvious by now that relying on voluntary commitments and aspirational targets does not work. The problem with Kyoto was that it did not get the incentives right.

By focusing climate agreements on individual sectors, linking obligations to trade access, and addressing the "common but differentiated" roles of rich and poor countries in international negotiations, the world will have a better chance to achieve the goals outlined in the Dubai agreement: a rapid and equitable transition to net-zero emissions.

Then, future climate-change COPs can focus on other consequential issues rather than on crafting the right mix of hollow words that everyone can agree on.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Marcos orders fast-tracking of water projects to counter climate threat

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed government agencies to speed up the completion of water-related projects across the country to mitigate potential water shortages.

In a speech during the inauguration of the Davao City Bulk Water Supply (DCBWSP) Wednesday, Marcos called water scarcity a “perpetual threat that comes with climate change.”

“It is for this reason that I continually stress the urgency of improving water security, and directed agencies concerned to expedite the completion of all water projects across the country,” the president said.

“Any disruption to the water supply, such as the one posed by the El Niño phenomenon, which we are feeling the effects of now, degrades our quality of life, it dampens economic activities, and can fuel disorder,” he added.

PAGASA earlier said that a strong El Niño, which brings drier conditions to some parts of the country, is ongoing and may continue until February. Majority of global climate models suggest the phenomenon will likely persist until the March-April-May 2024 season.

Recent data from the state weather bureau showed that water levels in Luzon dam, including Angat, have dropped below normal.

Water-energy nexus

Marcos said the DCBWSP exemplifies a government policy shift away from relying on groundwater sources and toward utilizing surface water sources.

The project will utilize the Tamugan River as its surface water source and employ a 100% renewable energy-powered water treatment facility to bulk water supply for Davao City.

“It is not just about supplying Davao City with bulk water, it is also about ensuring that its people are provided with clean water and to improve their quality of life,” Marcos said.

DCBWSP is a project of the Davao City Water District and Apo Agua Infraestructura, Inc., a water subsidiary of Aboitiz InfraCapital.

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