



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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By: Jonathan L. Mayuga

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## BUSINESS WORLD

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## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

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## **POLITIKO**

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## **THE GUARDIAN**

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## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Climate chaos, food crises threaten global peace](#)**

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## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[Gov't urged to revert unproductive fishponds to mangroves for climate fight](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Environmental organizations and scientists called on the government to revert all abandoned, undeveloped and underutilized (AUU) fishponds to mangrove forests to fight climate change.

### **[JICA leads project to reprocess food waste](#)**

By: Louella Desiderio

The local government of Mandaue, Cebu is working with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and two Japanese firms for a feasibility study to convert food waste to energy, soil conditioner or animal feeds to promote a circular economy and fight climate change.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **First Gen launches climate competition**

By: Jonathan L. Mayuga

Clean energy provider First Gen Corp. recently launched a P1-million campus competition for climate solutions.

Students from 29 universities and colleges have joined the competition to develop the best and most innovative ideas and solutions to cut their school's carbon footprint.

The Lopez-led First Gen opened the tilt, dubbed "Code Green for Campuses," as a way of encouraging students to contribute to the campaign against adverse climate change—a problem being aggravated by the continued buildup in the atmosphere of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

The competition challenges the students to submit solutions and ideas in response to the following problem statement: "Given climate change, schools and universities are encouraged to look for ways to limit their carbon footprint. With this in mind, what innovative solutions and programs can you develop to manage, if not limit, your school's current carbon footprint?"

In a statement, Ricky Carandang, First Gen vice president and head of corporate communications, said the school whose team submits the best solution or idea of decarbonization will win a P1-million prize in the form of an innovation fund for use as seed capital to bring to life the winning proposal.

Carandang said at least 52 teams from 29 schools, including the country's top universities and colleges, registered as participants in the Code Green for Campuses competition during its recent virtual launch.

The launch was supported by officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as event partners Edukasyon.ph, One Cainta Food Program, SustainaRumble, and Nomura Research Institute-Manila Branch.

Carandang added that, of the registered teams, 51 submitted their respective concept papers before the deadline for such submissions lapsed last February 9. Of the submitted entries, 43 passed the initial screening and will undergo an elimination round on Feb. 19 to determine the top 15 entries for the semifinal round.

At the semifinal stage, he said the 15 teams will get their respective mentors who will help the teams prepare or pitch their proposals for potential programs to be

implemented in their schools. Later, the 15 contestants will compete on March 4 for one of five spots in the final round of the Code Green for Campuses tilt.

During the final round, the five remaining participants will present their respective entries before a panel of judges to be led by Dr. Rodel Lasco, the executive director of the Oscar M. Lopez Center for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Foundation Inc. The final presentation will be held on March 16, at the Novotel Manila Araneta City in Cubao, Quezon City.

Aside from the P1-million innovation fund for the winning school, the student team that tops the competition also gets a P100,000 prize; the first runner-up receives P75,000; the second runner-up, P50,000; third runner-up, P30,000; and fourth runner-up, P20,000.

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **Philippine Urban Forum 2023: Spearheading sustainability in the country's urban development**

By: Angela Kiara S. Brillantes

The public sector is on the move to developing and transforming cities by promoting sustainable urbanization in the country. However, to ensure that innovative solutions towards sustainable cities effectively address an existing housing crisis and improve urban living, a nationwide action plan is necessary.

Such solutions and such a plan have begun to form as 1,300 urban development stakeholders from the national and local government, international and local nongovernment organizations, private sector, people's organizations, and the academe gathered at the Philippine Urban Forum 2023, spearheaded by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and UN-Habitat Philippines, last Oct. 5-6, 2023 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

As the department reported on its official publication, *The Shelter*, the forum covered a diverse array of topics on land use and transport planning, green building and architecture, nature-based solutions, urban planning smart tools and technologies, integrated ecosystem management and financing options for LGUs for funding local projects on urban development, among others.

DHSUD Secretary Jose Rizalino L. Acuzar, in his keynote message at the event, stressed that the government's Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program, more than addressing the housing backlog, seeks to create resilient and sustainable human settlements through urban development.

"We want to make sure that all our citizens have a safe place to live, that all our sectors, including those considered the smallest in society, the poorest of the poor, participate in the planning and development. Friends and colleagues in the industry, if you can see and notice one country and one spirit, I hope we include the poorest of the poor because they are the ones who need help the most," Mr. Acuzar said in Filipino.

"As the secretary of DHSUD, our goal is to address not only the housing needs in our country. We also want to pay attention to planning urban development in our cities and communities. We also want to address slum blighted areas and to make sure that there are enough services and infrastructure especially in our cities," he added.

The Philippine Information Agency reported that the insights and inferences that have stemmed from the knowledge exchange between the stakeholders in the two-day forum

will serve as an additional anchor point of the Philippine New Urban Agenda which underpins the implementation of science-based policies in the urban development sector.

### Building resilience

One of the forum's discussions highlighted the importance of incorporating climate resilience into project designs for a more sustainable community. According to the Climate Change Commission (CCC), nature-based solutions are key to addressing climate change. These solutions include initiatives that protect, restore, and manage natural and semi-natural ecosystems.

"Our cities are facing unprecedented challenges due to the triple planetary crises of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Urban areas compound these crises but have a fundamental role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through nature-based solutions that offer innovative ways to reduce carbon emissions and enhance overall climate resilience," CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera was quoted as saying.

"We need to strengthen our efforts that would champion the benefits of nature-based solutions as viable measures in saving our future and our planet. Nature-based solutions are an integral piece to the whole picture of our efforts on climate action," she added.

### Financial sustainability

Another session highlighted the significance of financial sustainability in urban development, particularly cities. In the public sector's view, the focus on financing is seen in resilient housing. This can be done through exploring socialized housing tax, strategic public-private partnerships, and updating market value schedules.

Also shared during the forum was the Strengthening Institutions and Empowering Localities Against Disasters and Climate Change (SHIELD) program, which is led by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and was established to further support community resilience and sustainability in urban spaces.

This program aims to strengthen government initiatives to build community resilience by "collaborating with multiple stakeholders to unlock financing, invest in resilient development, and implement risk-informed and inclusive resilience actions."

Also joining the forum, the Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA) shared how they serve as a project preparation facility that can help cities prepare sustainable projects and attract more investments.

#### Other highlights

The Philippine Urban Forum also hosted training sessions tackling sustainable urban governance, covering topics such as creating climate-resilient and bankable projects and strategies for more inclusive urban development in the country.

The forum also featured an urban exhibit and gallery that showcased urban mobility projects from Mobility Awards, an organization that promotes smart and sustainable mobility. Mobility Awards emphasized through the exhibit the importance of interconnected urban governance and address inclusivity within communities.

The event concluded with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the DHSUD and Department of Science and Technology (DoST).

According to the memorandum, developing integrated systems will be prioritized to automate land use and human settlement planning.

Further, it will help the local government units to create data-driven and risk-based strategies for building sustainable communities through the DHSUD's PLANADO Program and DoST's PlanSmart Ready to Rebuild application.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [The Global South can lead on climate solutions but lacks resources: Quezon city mayor Joy Belmonte](#)

By: Hannah Alcoseba Fernandez

Joy Belmonte was digging for signs of the human past when politics beckoned. She had just returned from the United Kingdom where she did a master's degree in archeology, and was teaching museum studies and the history of archaeological theater at the University of the Philippines.

It was not so much that she was the daughter of influential parents – former speaker of the house of representatives and Quezon City mayor Sonny Belmonte and the founder of two of the Philippines' biggest newspapers, Betty Go-Belmonte – that pushed her towards public service. It was being told by a previous mayor of Manila that she would not be granted an excavation permit because archeology was “irrelevant”.

“Not a lot of women did archaeology, and that was really my dream. I was not at all interested in politics, but I realised that if the opportunity presented itself, it might be a good thing [to run for office],” Belmonte told Eco-Business.

“I didn't want what happened to me happen to other people who want their voices to be heard. Part of that experience really impressed upon me that we lacked leaders who gave consideration to issues other people felt were important.”

As soon as her father finished his term in office in 2010, she ran for vice mayor of the most populous city in the Philippines. She won. Nine years later, she became the city's first elected female mayor. Gender equality, enhancing social services for the marginalised, and better waste management have been key areas of focus during her time in office.

In this interview, the 54 year-old politician tells Eco-Business how she has used her environmental advocacy to put Quezon City on the map as an Asian metropolis fighting plastic pollution and climate change.

Tell us about when you first became an advocate for the environment.

I always trace it back to 2009, when Typhoon Ketsana [the second most devastating cyclone of that year] struck Metro Manila. My dad was the mayor of Quezon City then, and that was the first time our city and our country experienced sustained rains lasting

about three days. There were massive floods all over our city and we had never experienced anything like that.

My father and the local government officials were at a loss as to how to handle the situation. I distinctly recall that when the floods subsided, the city was dealing with so much plastic on trees, roads, and sewers. It was a horrible sight. It was then that I realised how destructive plastic pollution is, and I wanted to combat it if given the opportunity.

How did you introduce the ban on single-use plastic to a city known to be the biggest waste producer in Metro Manila?

When I was elected vice-mayor, we started by passing an ordinance to reduce plastic bags use [stores were required to must display a sign to encourage consumers to bring their own recyclable or reusable bags.

We thought that drastic regulation to ban plastic bags might not work. It's a mindset change that we were trying to achieve. When we got people convinced, or at least prepared to bring their own eco bags, we could see a gradual behavioural change until such time that we felt people were ready for a complete ban on plastic bags.

[When I became mayor], we banned all single-use material, including paper, not just plastic, because we wanted to reduce the volume of litter in the waste stream.

How did the "Trash to Cashback", an initiative that allows residents to exchange recyclables for basic necessities, come about?

It really started as one of our ways of addressing the effects of the pandemic. So many people had lost their jobs, or were displaced. At the same time, the collection of garbage was irregular, or not being segregated at source which used to be our practice in the city.

We decided on this incentives programme, where you can trade in recyclables like paper, metals and plastics to get "environmental points" that you could exchange for basic necessities like eggs, rice, and vegetables. Since people were in need of food and most had lost their jobs, it was something that was very important to them.

The programme has collected around 300,000 kilogrammes of recyclable and single-use plastics and diverted it from landfill and upcycled it to useful products since its launch in 2022. What's next?

We want to move on from having to incentivise people to segregate their waste for recycling. At the end of the day, it should be your mindset to segregate waste, because it's the right thing to do, regardless of whether you will receive any kind of incentive. The programme works because people are trading in their recyclables left and right, but at the end of the day, the goal is to be able to segregate at source, recycle, reuse, and reduce your waste without incentives.

What has Quezon City done to address sachet culture?

We piloted a project with 30 sari-sari stores [small neighbourhood shops] to install refillable containers to dispense an unbranded liquid detergent, dishwashing liquid, fabric softener and all-purpose cleaner. To be honest, I was not excited about it because I wasn't so sure it was going to work. But the pilot was a success which showed me that Filipinos are not brand conscious when it comes to these products at least.

We were able to document 47,000 sachets being diverted from the waste stream. But the most important insight for me is the fact that people are not brand conscious. So we can go back to manufacturers to say, 'If you don't shape up and change your packaging or cooperate with us environmentalists to prepare or design something that is more reusable, we have evidence to show that your loyal customers are going to leave you the more we implement this project.'

I spoke to Senator Loren Legarda who is already a top environmentalist and she said none of the manufacturers are answering her calls to sit down to help solve this problem.

This year we're going to install refillable systems in another 5,000 sari-sari stores, and hopefully we're able to roll out just enough so that manufacturers feel the pinch. About 60 per cent of their sales come from sari-sari stores, so if we put a dent in their balance sheet, maybe they might be willing to sit down and talk.

Aside from plastic recycling schemes, Quezon City has been recognised as one of the 119 cities globally leading the charge against climate change by international non-profit CDP. Why is it important for cities to be at the forefront of sustainability issues?

Whether you belong to a city or the national government, a developed country or a developing country, it is your responsibility to be part of the solution to the climate crisis.

Many people say, we [the Philippines] contribute the least to the problem, so why should we be involved in such solutions? Let the developed countries come up with

solutions. I feel that it's such a cop out [to do so]. It's a nice message to send to the world that we are the least or one of the least contributors, but we are working much harder than you, developed countries, to solve this problem. They should be ashamed and do their part.

You were at the United Nations Global plastic treaty negotiations second session in Paris in May last year. Tell us about your experience.

Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo held a session where she invited mayors from around the world to talk about the plastics issue. I was proud, coming from the Philippines, which is known for other [negative] things. If my city can be that city that will bring a more positive image for our country, then why not?

The next day, I was selected as the mayor to represent the city perspective at the treaty. It was nerve wracking because everybody else there was a big-time academic, all these important people, and then there's me as the only Asian there. We were fighting for cities to be heard in the conversation about plastic pollution. Change happens fastest at the city level.

What are your thoughts on the UN global plastics treaty? Critics have highlighted the low ambition of some countries and point out that the process has been influenced by major plastic producers.

I think that more determined, high ambition cities or countries, really have to go out and be more aggressive and fight for a majority vote, rather than a consensus.

I'm not suspicious if big corporates are involved because they have to be active. Just because they are active does not mean they want to delay the process. What they're fighting for is for it to be a coordinated effort that involves everybody.

If some are committed and some are not, then there is no level playing field. Some countries are pushing for a voluntary (treaty) but what we need is a strong, legally binding, mandatory document where we have to be compliant, otherwise it won't work.

What's been the most difficult challenge you've faced over the past 12 months?

It is frustrating in a sense that we want to move faster in terms of climate solutions, but we cannot because we are constrained by a lack of resources. Despite all our campaigning for climate finance in international venues, there are not enough lenders. Even if there are those who are willing to lend like the World Bank, [who tell us] we can

borrow from them to convert all our buses to electric or scale up our solar panels, their interest rates are still too high. There is no scheme to help us speed up our work.

Quezon City may have the perfect climate change action plan, but we have made the rounds in asking donors for funding and there are still a lot of “no’s”. But we can’t stop there. We just have to make do with what we have. Like this year, we are going to transition one bus to electric where one route is a free ride. Every year, our aim is to launch one electric bus to complete the eight bus routes in Quezon City.

How can you convince Filipinos that not all politicians are corrupt?

Before you can rally the people behind you and the causes that you fight for, you have to win their trust and confidence.

We have already garnered more than 250 recommendations since we got into office. We have been recognised for various services, from the best jail to the best veterinary service. But my favourite accolade is the three straight years where we got ‘clean opinions’ from the Commission on Audit (COA). [The COA is the supreme auditing arm of the Philippine government. A clean opinion means that the municipality’s financial statements are free of error, fraud, irregularity and are properly maintained.] No mayor of Quezon City has ever been given even one clean opinion.

This proves to the people that their government is using taxpayers’ money wisely, that the projects that they’re spending your money on are sound and good and they go back to the people. Every time we get that clean opinion, I give a bonus of P10,000 to the employees of city hall. That is the one recommendation that I would like to sustain until the end of my term. It proves the government can be trusted so when I say, ‘Come on people, stop drinking from your PET bottles and bring your own water bottle’, they will do it because they believe in me. If your credibility is sound, that for me is the best endorsement as a leader.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### DA-10 spearheads climate info caravan cum El Niño forum in Camiguin

The Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office (DA-RFO)-10, through the Climate and Environment Risk Reduction Management Unit (CERRMU), conducted a Climate Information Caravan cum El Niño forum on February 6-7, in Camiguin province, to foster resilience and preparedness within communities vulnerable to the impacts of the climate phenomenon.

Per the report, the outlook for areas' potential for dry spells and drought conditions shows that Camiguin is likely to experience dry conditions by the end of February and is predicted to shift to drought conditions by the end of May 2024, based on the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) PAGASA data.

Around 77 participants, coming from the different government sectors and some farmer-leaders of Camiguin, convened to learn valuable information on climate patterns and forecasts affecting the agricultural and fishery sectors of the province.

Camiguin is a farming and fishing province with a rich agricultural heritage and is known for its fertile volcanic soil, favorable climate, and diverse agricultural practices that primarily focus on the cultivation of crops such as rice, corn, coconut, various fruits and vegetables, and fisheries.

DA-10 Regional Executive Director Carlene C. Collado said the activity aims to provide invaluable insights, knowledge about climate conditions, and information on the El Niño phenomenon and its environmental impact.

Meanwhile, Camiguin Provincial Agriculturist Aida G. Chan conveyed her appreciation to everyone in attendance for their full cooperation at the event.

"I'm thankful to DA-10, especially to Dir. Collado, for granting our request to have this activity [Climate Info Car Cum El Niño Forum], as this would greatly help our sector leaders and farmers to better understand the effect of the El Niño phenomenon and its mitigation measures needed concerning the agricultural sector in our province," she said.

Significant to its role in providing information, DA-10 Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) alternate focal person Gay Nanette M. Aleria added that the activity serves as a platform for raising awareness about the importance of climate

change adaptation and the need for collective action to address the challenges posed by El Niño.

The agency's top priorities were to put water management plans and other related actions into action, keep an eye on and work with PAGASA on climate forecasts, improve the DA-El Nino mitigation and action plan, boost production in areas that weren't at risk, and fix up areas that had been damaged.

Lastly, strengthen collaboration with local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to address the anticipated changes in precipitation patterns during El Niño.

Also presented are the El Niño action plans of DOST PAGASA, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the National Food Authority, Philippine Crop Insurance, Corp., and the National Irrigation Administration.

## POLITIKO

### [UN Chief Slams 'Distressing' Spending On Arms Over Climate](#)

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lamented Tuesday the emphasis placed by some governments on buying weapons at the cost of policies tackling global warming and hunger.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lamented Tuesday the emphasis placed by some governments on buying weapons at the cost of policies tackling global warming and hunger.

"It is distressing to see governments spending heavily on arms, while starving budgets for food security, climate action, and broader sustainable development," Guterres told a Security Council meeting on the links between food, climate and conflict crises.

"We can break the deadly nexus of hunger, climate chaos, and conflict. And quell the threat they pose to international peace and security," he said, calling for the United Nations to act with policies addressing all three issues "together."

Without action, "the situation will deteriorate," he warned. "Conflicts are multiplying. The climate crisis is set to spiral, as emissions continue to rise. And acute food insecurity has been increasing year on year."

UN climate chief Simon Stiell emphasized the links between the three issues, telling the Council that combined they are "devastating."

"There is no national security without food security. And there will be no food security without enhanced action to stop climate change," he said

"If heating continues, food production will decline across many countries. In others, little will grow at all. Food shortages, price spikes, and hunger are likely. Without climate action they are almost certain."

To illustrate the fatal link between global warming, agriculture and conflict, several speakers highlighted land-use disputes in West and Central Africa between nomadic herders, who sometimes move from country to country, and sedentary farmers.

"Climate change and environmental and security pressures have altered these migratory routes," warned Beth Bechdol, deputy director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, citing countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

“This has led to a steady increase in tensions between farming and herding communities, often linked to growing competition for already scarce natural resources, such as water and land, or to damage incurred to crops in fields,” she said.

## THE GUARDIAN

### [Nearly 15% of Americans don't believe climate change is real, study finds](#)

Nearly 15% of Americans don't believe climate change is real, a new study out of the University of Michigan reveals – shedding light on the highly polarized attitude toward global warming.

Additionally, denialism is highest in the central and southern US, with Republican voters found less likely to believe in climate science.

Using artificial intelligence, researchers analyzed over 7.4m tweets posted by roughly 1.3 million people on the social media platform X (previously Twitter) between 2017 and 2019. The social media posts were geocoded, and classified as “for” or “against” climate change using a large language model, a type of artificial intelligence developed by OpenAI.

“Over half of the tweets we looked at simply denied that climate change was real, that it was a hoax,” said Joshua Newell, co-author of the study and professor of environment and sustainability at the University of Michigan. “It wasn't surprising but it was disappointing, I would hope that more and more Americans would believe in climate change and the importance of addressing it.”

Donald Trump emerged as one of the most influential figures among climate change deniers. His tweets around a cold snap in Texas in December 2017, as well as his missives rejecting the 2018 IPCC report released at the Cop24 UN conference, were some of his most engaged social media posts among climate change deniers.

“Public figures such as Trump are highly influential,” Newell said, “when they use these events to trigger disbelief in climate change among social media users.”

The findings are consistent with similar studies, such as the recent survey out of Yale University which estimates that as of 2023, 16% of Americans do not believe in climate change (about 49 million people).

Acceptance and belief in global warming is most prevalent along the west and east coasts, correlating with those regions' high rates of Democratic voters. Still, clusters of denialism exist within blue states, like in the case of Shasta county, California. There, disbelief in climate change is as high as 52%, but statewide, less than 12% of California's population does not believe in global warming.

“It comports with my understanding that there is a small but very vocal and active minority of the public that still denies the overwhelming evidence of human-caused warming,” said Michael Mann, climatologist and geophysicist at the University of Pennsylvania, about the study.

Last week, Mann was awarded \$1m in a defamation lawsuit against conservative writers who called his pioneering climate change research “fraudulent”, comparing it to the work of a convicted child molester. In his book *The New Climate War*, Mann argues that scientists have to rebut the misinformation and disinformation promoted on social media by bad actors, “not because we’re going to win them over, their ideological heels are dug in, but because they are infecting the entire social media space with myths, falsehoods and toxic anti-scientific sentiment”, Mann said.

Researchers’ use of AI helped classify millions of social media posts that otherwise would be too time-consuming and expensive to conduct. Still, some skepticism remains regarding the ethics of using AI for research, as artificial intelligence has a documented history of bias, especially in facial recognition, highlighting the need for human vetting.

“It’s an intriguing new tool to use for these purposes,” Mann said. “But its limitations must be kept in mind as it’s an evolving technology.”

It is up to social media platforms to combat misinformation, and fact-check what the researchers call “knowledge vulnerability”.

“There is proper action by the social media companies to monitor disinformation and to act accordingly,” Newell said, referencing Trump’s ban from X (then Twitter) following the January 6 insurrection. “These very powerful social media companies should consider similar strategies for misinformation regarding climate change.”

## THE MANILA TIMES

### Climate chaos, food crises threaten global peace

The United Nations chief warned Tuesday that climate chaos and food crises are increasing threats to global peace, telling a high-level UN meeting that climate disasters imperil food production and "empty bellies fuel unrest."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the UN Security Council to address the impact of food shortages and rising temperatures on international peace and security — a view echoed by many countries but not Russia.

"Climate and conflict are two leading drivers of [our] global food crisis," the secretary-general said. "Where wars rage, hunger reigns — whether due to displacement of people, destruction of agriculture, damage to infrastructure or deliberate policies of denial."

"Meanwhile, climate chaos is imperiling food production the world over," he said.

Guterres said the world is teeming with examples of "the devastating relationship between hunger and conflict."

In war-torn Gaza, he said, no one has enough to eat, and the tiny strip accounts for 80 percent of the 700,000 hungriest people in the world.

After more than a decade of war in Syria, he said, 13 million Syrians go to bed hungry every night.

And in Myanmar, prospects of ending hunger have gone into reverse because of conflict and instability, he said.

Simon Stiell, the United Nations climate chief, told the council that climate change is contributing to food insecurity and conflict.

He said 1 in 10 people on the planet today already suffers from chronic hunger, and if climate change accelerates, "it will become worse."

"Rapid, sustained action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to increase resilience is needed now to help stop both from spiraling out of control," Stiell said.

The executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change said the Security Council "must acknowledge more can be done rather than hoping the problem will go away — which it won't."

The UN's most powerful body should be requesting regular updates on climate security risks, he said.

Beth Bechdol, deputy director of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, said scientific evidence is clear: "Climate change is compromising food security, and its impacts are a growing threat to international peace and security."

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [Gov't urged to revert unproductive fishponds to mangroves for climate fight](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Environmental organizations and scientists called on the government to revert all abandoned, undeveloped and underutilized (AUU) fishponds to mangrove forests to fight climate change.

More than half of the Philippines' extensive mangrove ecosystems, estimated at 450,000 hectares in 1918, have been lost primarily to fishpond conversion and other coastal development projects.

According to a University of the Philippines study, mangrove losses in the country were the second worst in the region, next to Myanmar.

In December last year, the groups sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel and Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, emphasizing the importance of protecting and rehabilitating mangroves to enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change.

Mangroves provide a range of ecosystem services, including coastline protection, carbon storage and sequestration, and provision of habitats for various species. Mangroves also support the livelihood of coastal communities.

"The law is clear that the grant of Fishpond Lease Agreements come with mandatory conditions, such as automatic reversion back to mangroves once the fishponds have been abandoned, or remain undeveloped or underutilized. However, the implementation of this provision remains slow," Oceana Vice President Gloria Estenzo-Ramos said Wednesday.

The groups also noted inconsistencies in the implementation of existing laws and the policies issued by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in managing AUU fishponds.

Fisheries Office Order 115 issued by the BFAR in March 2011 provides for an institutional framework to make abandoned fishponds as productive assets under a community-based management system that involves fisherfolk organizations and cooperatives.

Then in 2012, BFAR issued Fisheries Administrative Order 197-1 that sets out a process for cancellation of Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLAs) and promotes aquasilviculture stewardship contracts. Aquasilviculture integrates aquaculture with mangrove forestry.

“We learned that FAO 197-1 is in the process of amendments as FAO 197-2. From the initial copy that we got, we found it to be all about fishponds or other aquaculture and nothing in the provisions are friendly to, or supportive of, mangroves,” said Dr. Jurgenne Primavera, chief mangrove scientific advisor of the Zoological Society of London.

“The attempt to include mangrove-friendly aquaculture failed in defining the metrics to ensure the survival and growth of these intertidal trees,” she added.

Primavera also called for a comprehensive inventory of all AUU fishponds, FLAs and other culture ponds as well as a national guideline on determining AUU fishponds.

Around 994 hectares of fishponds, both with and without FLAs, were reverted to DENR's jurisdiction, according to 2023 data released by BFAR. The fisheries bureau also identified 55 hectares of fishponds operating without FLAs.

## JICA leads project to reprocess food waste

By: Louella Desiderio

The local government of Mandaue, Cebu is working with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and two Japanese firms for a feasibility study to convert food waste to energy, soil conditioner or animal feeds to promote a circular economy and fight climate change.

JICA said the work on the feasibility study involves Japanese firms Guun Co. Ltd. and Takematsu Shoji Co. Ltd. as well as the Mandaue City Environment and Natural Resources Office (MCENRO).

“JICA welcomes the efforts of the local government of Mandaue, specifically MCENRO, to work with us and with Japanese firms for a feasibility study on recycling biodegradable wastes,” JICA senior representative Oshima Jiro said.

“This partnership continues JICA and Cebu’s long-standing cooperation to make the latter greener, more livable, and climate resilient,” Oshima added.

Under the initiative, Guun and Takematsu Shoji would share their technologies to turn middle or low-quality food waste to alternative fuel, soil conditioner, or high quality food waste to animal feeds.

Both firms are known for their expertise in waste management.

Headquartered in Yokohama City in Japan, Gunn has over 20 years of experience in recycling waste into fuel. It was involved in the solid waste management and resource recycling for Cebu’s Inayawan landfill.

Meanwhile, Takematsu Shoji has operated a large-scale food waste to animal feeds recycling facility in Yokohama City.

JICA believes the cooperation could help in efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and mitigate climate change in the country.

The initiative is part of a program being implemented by JICA with the private sector to use Japanese technologies and ideas to offer solutions to challenges like waste management.

Other projects being implemented under the JICA’s partnership program with Japanese companies in the Philippines include disaster management using artificial intelligence,

renewable energy through solar power and agroindustry development using Japanese technology.

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