



NEWS ROUNDUP

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BUSINESS WORLD

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By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

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CLIMATE HOME NEWS

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By: Matteo Civillini

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CNN

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By: Laura Paddison

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CBS NEWS

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MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

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MANILA BULLETIN

[Germany extends P2 B aid for PH climate actions](#)

By: Joseph Pedrajas

Germany has extended around P2 billion or 50 million euros assistance to the Philippines for the country's pro-environment initiatives.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Time for a second Green Revolution](#)

By: Bjorn Lomborg

One of humanity's biggest achievements in the last century was making a huge increase in food production. From 1900 to 2000, there was a six-fold increase in crop harvests while the global population increased less than four-fold, meaning that, on average, people today have around 50 percent more food available than their great, great grandparents.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[High time to develop PH innovation ecosystem: NEDA](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan believes it is “high time” to develop the country's innovation ecosystem.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] Climate action setbacks as countries go back to fossil fuels and nuclear energy](#)

By: Daphne Oseña-Paez

THE world is still struggling with the energy crisis as the global economy continues to slow down and the price of energy remains high. This was exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict which brought about the EU sanctions on Russian oil and gas in 2022.

[Marcos OKs 19 projects to boost PH innovation](#)

By: Catherine S. Valente

PRESIDENT Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. has approved 19 projects as part of his administration's efforts to promote and advance the culture of innovation in the country, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan announced Tuesday.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Germany working on new immigration law to attract more Filipino workers](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Germany is hoping to attract more workers from the Philippines through a new immigration law, citing the profound contributions of Filipino workers to their local industries who have since relocated there.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[PHL to spend most of P2.85-B global fund share on biodiversity projects](#)

By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

THE PHILIPPINES is allocating most of its share from a multilateral green fund to projects that will protect and conserve the country's biodiversity, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Tuesday.

Under the 8th replenishment of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF-8), the Philippines has been granted \$52 million or P2.85 billion.

"With one of the largest allocations in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is expected to narrow the gap for biodiversity spending," DENR said.

The country has nine projects proposed for GEF-8 funding.

These projects are categorized across the five focal areas of biodiversity, climate change mitigation, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters.

"With almost a 40% increase, one of the top countries resulting in this STAR allocation. We should take this opportunity," Al O. Orolfo, director of DENR-Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Services (FASPS), said in a statement.

"This allocation is an opportunity to provide some financing gaps to funding different environmental concerns," he added.

The agency did not disclose the cost and description for each of the proposed projects.

The DENR, through the FASPS, will work with the GEF Secretariat and other financing agencies during the project's implementation cycle from 2023-2026.

"In the end, it should trickle down to the communities, but at the same time, it should also have a global impact," said Mr. Orolfo.

In June last year, 29 donor governments pledged \$5.33 billion to the global fund for the next four years to help meet nature and climate targets, according to the GEF website.

“The record funding will support large-scale initiatives to address biodiversity and forest loss, improve ocean health, combat pollution, and reduce the effects of climate change within the decade,” GEF said.

CLIMATE HOME NEWS

[UAE minister calls for “phase out” of oil and gas](#)

By: Matteo Civillini

A key minister from the country hosting the next Cop climate talks has called for the “phase out” of oil and gas.

Governments failed to agree on this wording at previous climate talks and this phrase is likely to divide nations at the Cop28 summit in Dubai in November.

The UAE’s environment minister Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri told the Munich Security Conference: “We need the oil and gas sector to be with us. We need to shift the way they are doing business and we need to decarbonise what they are doing. We need to then phase out oil and gas in a just way.”

A Cop battle line

At the Cop26 climate talks in 2021, all governments agreed to commit to a “phase down” of coal. This was the first time a fossil fuel had been mentioned in a Cop decision.

At the next year’s talks in Egypt, a broad coalition of nations including India, rich nations and vulnerable islands pushed for an agreement to phase out fossil fuels, which would include oil and gas as well as coal.

But a handful of oil and gas producers opposed that language, the hosts Egypt did not include it in the final text and the coalition pushing for it eventually decided not to block the agreement over the issue.

The battle is set to continue at Cop28. While hosts are supposed to be neutral, they have a lot of power over which requests from governments make it into the Cop draft decisions.

Breaking cover?

At Cop27, the UAE was quiet on the fossil fuel issue. The resistance to criticism of fossil fuels was led by Saudi Arabia whose lead negotiator Albara Tawfiq told the plenary that the UN climate convention “needs to address emissions and not the origins of the emissions”.

Saudi Arabia officially spoke on behalf of the Arab Group at the talks – a coalition of 22 nations across the Middle East and North Africa which includes the UAE. But the extent to which each member of the group supports the Saudi position is unclear.

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, fellow for the Middle East at Rice University's Baker Institute, told Climate Home in December that Cop28 "might force them to break cover".

Cop president

The UAE's hosting of this year's climate talks has come under heavy criticism following the appointment as its boss of Sultan al-Jaber, the head of state oil giant Adnoc.

Campaigners said his appointment sent the wrong signal and that the fossil fuel industry was hijacking the world's response to the global warming crisis.

Responding to the criticism, minister Almheiri said al-Jaber had been placed in Adnoc to change the company and guide it throughout the energy transition.

"We're always going to be an energy exporter, but the type of energy we export is changing already and will change in the future," she said.

Experts around table

Sultan al-Jaber himself took to the stage at the Munich Security Conference on a panel discussion with US Climate envoy John Kerry.

The Cop28 boss said the UAE would focus on promoting an "inclusive" climate agenda, which does not exclude fossil fuel players.

"When you talk about energy transition please include the energy experts," said al-Jaber. "Don't think you are going to come up with solutions without the experts around the table."

Al-Jaber was keen to highlight the UAE's push for renewable energy happening under his watch. On top of his Cop28 and fossil fuel jobs, al-Jaber is the chairman of Masdar, the UAE's renewable energy company.

Thanks to its abundance of sunshine, the UAE boasts some of the world's cheapest solar power. The government expects to have installed more than 9GW of solar capacity by 2030, tripling current levels.

The UAE was the first country in the region to set a 2050 net zero goal. And at Cop27, it became the first to announce absolute emission cuts, instead of from a hypothetical business-as-usual baseline.

Pragmatism and balance

But, in an address sprinkled with repeated appeals for “pragmatism” and “balance”, Al-Jaber also reiterated the UAE’s resolve on the need for continued investment in oil and gas in the short term.

“Transitions usually take time. Any successful transitional is built on a practical, not emotional roadmap,” he told the audience in Munich. “We need to adopt a diversified energy mix approach.”

Adnoc, the oil and gas company presided over by al-Jaber, plans to boost investment by \$150 billion over the next five years. The funding will also speed up an increase in oil and gas production capacity.

The International Energy Agency said in 2021 that new fossil fuel investments are incompatible with limiting global warming to 1.5C.

CNN

[Antarctic sea ice hit record lows again. Scientists wonder if it's 'the beginning of the end'](#)

By: Laura Paddison

Antarctic sea ice has reached record low levels for the second time in two years, with some scientists alarmed that dramatic drops are a signal the climate crisis may now be more clearly influencing this vast, complex and isolated region.

The sea ice that fringes Antarctica dropped to just 737,000 square miles (1.91 million square kilometers) on February 13, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, or NSIDC, below the previous record of 741,000 square miles (1.92 million square kilometers) set on February 25 last year.

Sea ice could still shrink further; the lowest level of the southern summer may not be reached for more than a week.

The last two years mark the only time that sea ice levels have dipped below 2 million square kilometers since satellites began monitoring it in 1978.

It's "not just 'barely a record low,'" Ted Scambos, a glaciologist at the University of Colorado Boulder, told CNN. "It's on a very steep downward trend."

Unlike the Arctic, where the rate of sea ice loss has followed a fairly consistent downward trajectory as climate change accelerates, Antarctic sea ice extent has swung up and down, making it harder to figure out how the continent and its surrounding ocean are responding to global heating.

The two polar regions are very different. While the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by continents, Antarctica is a continent surrounded by the ocean – this means its sea ice can grow outward, unconstrained by land. Antarctic ice tends to be thinner than Arctic ice, with greater highs in the winter and steeper declines in the summer.

Climate models projected declines in Antarctic sea ice that were similar to the Arctic, but until recently the region was behaving completely differently than those models predicted.

It hit a record high for winter sea ice extent in 2014 when it reached 7.76 million square miles, which seemed to support the idea that the Antarctic may be relatively insulated from global warming.

But in 2016, something changed. Scientists began observing a steep downward trend.

At first, some put it down to the usual variability of this vastly complex continent, with its diverse, intertwined climate systems. But after two low sea ice records in a row, scientists are becoming concerned.

“The question is, has climate change reached Antarctica? Is this the beginning of the end? Will the sea ice disappear for good in the coming years in the summer?” Christian Haas, head of the Sea Ice Physics Research Section at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany, told CNN.

Several factors may feed into why sea ice is so low, including winds, ocean currents and ocean heat.

Air temperatures have been higher than usual in parts of the Antarctic, around 1.5 degrees Celsius above the long term average.

Another important consideration is the belt of westerly winds which circle Antarctica, known as the Southern Annular Mode. These winds, which can increase sea ice melt, have been stronger than usual, according to the NSIDC, and added to weather conditions that pump warm air to the region.

The strength of the winds has been linked, in part, to the increase of planet-heating pollution as well as the hole in the ozone layer above the continent.

There are also suggestions that sea ice may be melting because of warmth trapped just below the surface of the ocean, Scambos said.

“Basically, you’re getting heat stirred into the upper layer [of water] around the Antarctic,” he said. If that theory holds up, and is linked to the general warming of the oceans, “then that has big implications for the stability of the Antarctic ice sheet.”

The disappearance of sea ice can have cascading effects in Antarctica and beyond.

While it doesn’t directly affect sea levels, because it is already floating in the ocean, the loss of the fringe of sea ice around the Antarctic leaves coastal ice sheets and glaciers

exposed to waves and warm ocean waters, making them much more vulnerable to melting and breaking up.

An altered Antarctic landscape could have significant impacts on its wildlife, from the microorganisms and algae that prop up the food chain – food for krill which, in turn, feed many of the region’s whales – to the penguins and seals that rely on sea ice for feeding and resting.

Parts of Antarctica have been seeing alarming changes for a while.

The Antarctic Peninsula, a spindly chain of icy mountains which sticks off the west side of the continent like a thumb pointing toward South America, is one of the fastest warming places in the Southern Hemisphere.

Carlos Moffat, an oceanographer at the University of Delaware, who has just returned from a research trip to the Antarctic Peninsula, told CNN that the low sea ice and very warm ocean temperatures they found “are dramatically different from what we have observed in the last few decades.”

Moffat, who visits the region every summer as part of the Palmer Long-Term Ecological Research, said: “This year’s conditions are against a backdrop of long-term change in this region of Antarctica.”

Last year, scientists said West Antarctica’s vast Thwaites Glacier – also known as the “Doomsday Glacier” – was “hanging on by its fingernails” as the planet warms, with rapid retreat possible over the next few years. Scientists have estimated global sea level rise could increase by around 10 feet if Thwaites collapsed completely, devastating coastal communities around the world.

It’s too early to say whether the record sea ice decline is the new normal or whether it will bounce back, and Antarctica is known for its significant swings. The NSIDC points out that: “While 2022 and 2023 have had record low minimum extent, four out of the five highest minimums have occurred since 2008.”

“It’s going to take a while to unpack,” Scambos said. “We’re still reacting to a relatively sudden change. Certainly the last few years have been a dramatic exclamation point on a trend that was just developing after 2016.”

Scientists will need at least another five years of data and observations, he estimated, but added: “It does feel like something has changed in the Antarctic and that things are fairly dramatic.”

DW AKADEMIE

[Nigerian presidential candidates ignore climate change](#)

By: Katrin Gansler

Nigeria is badly hit by climate change, resulting in desertification, a shrinking Lake Chad in the north, flooding in the center, and coastal erosion in the south. Yet the issue plays no role in election campaigns.

Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, is in the middle of an election campaign. Eighteen presidential candidates are focusing on the many problems that urgently need to be addressed.

They all agree on the importance of creating jobs, fighting corruption and improving security.

According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), around 3.1 million Nigerians are displaced, often due to attacks by insurgent groups and armed gangs.

Sarah Alabi, a supporter of Labour Party candidate Peter Obi, was very clear on what matters to her.

"My hope? For Nigeria to be a peaceful country," she said.

Adverse weather

Last year's severe flooding killed more than 600 people and displaced hundreds of thousands of others. It has become obvious that Nigeria faces another challenge that affects the entire country: Climate change.

Either there is too much or too little rain. While the surface area of Lake Chad continues to shrink, robbing fishermen of their livelihood, the Atlantic Ocean is eating into the country's coast in the south.

The sea has even swallowed entire streets in Lagos. Sarah Alabi had another take on the issue. She said the country's think climate will indeed change if Obi wins. "Then things will work out," she added.

Are oil and gas revenue or a threat?

On the campaign trail, the presidential candidates do not discuss climate change and its devastating consequences. Obi, for example, is betting on fossil fuels.

"We'll create an environment that will spark investment in our oil and gas sector. Nobody will steal our oil again," he said on the campaign trail. "Our gas should be developed where it will give us more money than our oil."

Together with Angola and Algeria, Nigeria is one of Africa's largest oil exporters. Crude oil production averages about 1.2 million barrels per day. In some years, oil revenues accounted for more than half of the national budget.

The consequences can be seen in the Niger Delta in the southeast, where oil slicks stretch across the water. In some places, the shore is pitch black. Neither fishermen nor farmers can work there.

Nnimmo Bassey, a laureate of the 2010 Alternative Nobel Prize, criticized Nigeria's oil production industry, which began in 1958.

"We still have gas flaring releasing millions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere, polluting the environment, causing biodiversity loss, displacement of communities and so many more problems, including deforestation and coastal erosion," the environmental activist said.

'Nothing to be done'

At the beginning of February, several environmental protection organizations tried to find out how the candidates position themselves on climate change.

Of the 18 presidential hopefuls, only four agreed to take part in a panel discussion in the capital Abuja. Although Bassey admitted that they did somewhat grasp the subject. But his conclusion was sobering.

"The environment has turned into a critical problem in Nigeria. But unfortunately, policy makers don't seem to understand that. Or they just think that there is nothing to be done about it," said Bassey.

In Gwagwalada, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Abuja, climate activist Adenike Oladosu was setting up her first office. The founder of the 'I Lead Climate Action Initiative' shared Bassey's assessment that environmental protection and climate change are not an issue in the election campaign.

Oladosu said a lot of education was needed to put due pressure on politicians.

"Two years ago, a bridge on the road between Lokoja and Kaduna was destroyed by floods," she pointed out. "But people weren't talking about the environment, they were talking about the spiritual dimension and the casualties."

Oladosu is calling for a bigger debate on climate change and better information on the subject.

Africa must pay more attention to climate change

In addition to her work in villages around the capital, Oladosu was also trying to call attention to the Lake Chad crisis. Its water surface has been shrinking for decades. As is the case in the Niger Delta, fishermen and farmers are losing their livelihoods.

Increasing attention is being paid to the fact that insurgent groups such as Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) are profiting from the situation by recruiting young men who have lost all prospects.

Oladosu insists that more attention needs to be paid to Lake Chad in particular, and funding be increased.

"This is a lake that affects not only Nigeria, but also Niger, Chad and Cameroon. If we just pay lip service to it, the crisis will not go away. According to a UN report it will get worse," Oladosu said.

When she noticed that Nigerian politicians were not taking up the issues, she decided to act herself.

We need political leadership to raise awareness," she said, adding that he saw Nigeria at a crossroads. Saturday's election will determine whether climate action will move forward, or the situation will only worsen, she said.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Prime Infra, DENR sign reforestation agreement](#)

By: Jed Macapagal

Prime Infra through WawaJVCo Inc. and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have committed to undertake the reforestation of a 1,800-hectare area within the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL).

Prime Infra and the DENR on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) where the latter and WawaJVCo will design, develop and establish afforestation, reforestation and revegetation programs within the UMRBPL.

The MOU is in line with the vision and mission of DENR and the Environmental, Social and Governance framework of Prime Infra that integrates sustainability efforts in resource management and decarbonization strategies.

The programs intend to generate carbon units, based on internationally accepted voluntary carbon standards which will enable investments in sustainable social and environmental projects for the communities where WawaJVCo and Prime Infra operate.

The MOU also affirms the commitment of WawaJVCo to exert best practices in stakeholder consultations with and involvement of the local community and indigenous peoples, as it is the developer and operator of the Wawa bulk water supply project in Rizal province designed to deliver a reliable water supply of at least 518 million liters per day to Manila Water and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

Guillaume Lucci, Prime Infra president and chief executive officer, said the reforestation project will also “ensure the sustainability of our water supply while providing a natural carbon sink program and ultimately, protect our environment and support local communities.”

Lucci added the MOU could serve as a blueprint for a wider implementation of Prime Infra’s nature-based solution program to create value in its other energy and waste management businesses.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Germany extends P2 B aid for PH climate actions](#)

By: Joseph Pedrajas

Germany has extended around P2 billion or 50 million euros assistance to the Philippines for the country's pro-environment initiatives.

This came after German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock met her Filipino counterpart, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Enrique Manalo, who was touring various German cities for a series of activities, including fostering bilateral ties and participating in a security conference.

According to the German Foreign Office, it is important for Germany to strengthen its cooperation with its partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

"As one of the countries most affected by the climate crisis, the Philippines have embarked on an ambitious course in their transition towards renewables. As a partner country of the German Climate Initiative, we are supporting them with over €50 million," it said, reiterating Baerbock's commitment to Manalo.

Aside from climate support, Germany also expressed intention to intensify its cooperation with the Philippines to attract more skilled workers as the latter's "largest trading partner" in the European Union as well as support for the peaceful resolution of conflict in Mindanao.

In his Twitter posts, Manalo said he is "very pleased to have had a comprehensive meeting" with Baerbock in Berlin, when they "exchanged views on regional security issues including West Philippine Sea and the Ukraine crisis."

"We reaffirmed the importance of a rules-based international order and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We agreed to increase cooperation on climate change, renewable energy, trade & investment, labor and human rights, among others," he added.

Manalo, in a press conference, expressed appreciation for Germany's commitment as he said "this is important because the climate change issues for countries such as the Philippines is also a security issue."

He noted that rising temperatures are leading to more extreme and frequent weather events, “as we have seen over the past few years.” That led to loss of infrastructure, destruction of harvest, and the livelihoods of people, he added.

“and it is a boon to be able to work with countries such as Germany, under the Indo-Pacific guidelines, which have committed to tackling climate change and protecting the environment,” Manalo said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Time for a second Green Revolution](#)

By: Bjorn Lomborg

One of humanity's biggest achievements in the last century was making a huge increase in food production. From 1900 to 2000, there was a six-fold increase in crop harvests while the global population increased less than four-fold, meaning that, on average, people today have around 50 percent more food available than their great, great grandparents.

Most of the increase in production came from farmers growing more food from each hectare of land. The extraordinary progress is due to the Green Revolution that turbocharged modern inputs for farming.

It has been estimated that Nobel Peace Prize-winning agronomist Norman Borlaug, who spearheaded the intensification of modern farming methods, saved more than one billion lives from hunger. As well as feeding people, the Green Revolution made societies much richer. And, as agriculture becomes more efficient, people are freed from backbreaking labor and able to engage in a much broader range of productive activities.

The Green Revolution was an extraordinary achievement. However, the world needs a second Green Revolution to extend the benefits to the world's poorest and reduce global hunger.

It is especially needed today as we fall behind on feeding the planet. Since 2016, world leaders have made grand development promises for every country by 2030, called the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the most crucial goals focuses on ways to boost agriculture—from ending hunger to ensuring better nutrition and more sustainable farming.

Unfortunately, we are failing our pledges, and not just because COVID derailed progress. A tracker shows that even based on progress before the pandemic's disruption, politicians' food promises will not be met by 2030 but more than 80 years later, in the early 2100s. Indeed, the entire world will be late on all its major commitments. In 2023, we are now at the halftime mark for our grand promises, but we're nowhere near halfway. That's why my think tank, the Copenhagen Consensus, has been working with some of the world's best economists to identify the most effective policies for the remaining time. If we can't do everything, we should focus on the smartest solutions in every area—including agriculture and hunger.

Our researchers looked at many agricultural policies, like subsidizing fertilizer and increasing irrigation. These all deliver moderate benefits to society, but per peso invested, the effects are not amazing. However, there is one clear opportunity for humanity: a big increase in investment in agricultural research and development (R&D).

There is still significant underspending on agricultural R&D for poorer countries. Big corporations understandably spend most in rich countries, where large-scale farmers have deep pockets. That is why in 2015, 80 percent of global agricultural R&D funding went to rich and upper middle-income countries, while lower middle-income countries, like the Philippines, got only 20 percent, and the world's poorest countries got almost nothing.

This unequal investment has been persistent for more than half a century. It is a primary reason why the Green Revolution didn't help the poorest as much as wealthier countries. Cereal yields in high-income countries almost tripled from 1961 to 2018, whereas low-income countries saw a much smaller increase of 50 percent.

The untapped potential is huge. Research published this week by Copenhagen Consensus demonstrates that the world will only need to spend a small amount more each year to generate vast benefits. It estimates the additional cost of R&D this decade is about \$5.5 billion annually—a relatively small sum, less even than Americans spend on ice cream every year.

This investment will generate better seeds and high-yield crops that can also better handle weather changes like those we will see from climate change. Creating bigger and more resilient harvests will benefit farmers, and producing more food will help consumers with lower prices.

The total net benefit over the next 35 years for both farmers and consumers adds up to more than \$2 trillion. Every dollar spent delivers an astounding \$33 of social benefits, making this a spectacular investment.

By 2050, this additional funding will boost agricultural output by 10 percent, reduce food prices by 16 percent, and increase per capita incomes by 4 percent. The investment will increase the gross domestic product in developing countries by \$2.2 trillion by 2030 and \$11.9 trillion by 2050, a 2-percent and 6-percent increase in per capita incomes, respectively. And more efficient agriculture will reduce global climate emissions by more than 1 percent.

Agricultural R&D is a phenomenal investment because not only do we make agrarian workers more productive, but we enable more people to be productive and innovative in other sectors, too. It leads to fewer people being hungry, and lower costs of food for everyone.

We can't deliver on all our promises for 2030. But we should deliver on agricultural R&D for the poorest half of the planet because it's one of the best investments humanity can make.

This is part of an Inquirer-exclusive series from the Copenhagen Consensus Center on the Sustainable Development Goals.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

High time to develop PH innovation ecosystem: NEDA

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan believes it is “high time” to develop the country’s innovation ecosystem.

Balisacan made this remark following the National Innovation Council’s (NIC) first meeting under the Marcos administration on Tuesday.

It is also the NIC’s fourth meeting since its creation in 2019.

During the meeting, he said the NIC raised the need to establish an innovation ecosystem that will encourage and promote innovation as part of the country’s economic culture.

“Ang challenge natin (Our challenge) as a country is we have not paid much attention to innovation,” he said in a Palace press briefing.

“Ang gusto natin mangyari mayroon tayong (What we want to happen is that we have an) ecosystem that encourages, promotes, even triggers by funding them, helping them locate for their funds, access to credit para yung good ideas nila (so that their good ideas) can be supported,” he added.

He lamented that the Philippines continues to lag behind its foreign neighbors in terms of innovation.

“Titignan nalang natin yung investment natin sa (If we just look at our investment on) R&D [research and development] talagang (it’s really) almost at the bottom when you see what our neighbors are doing so it’s really high time we develop this ecosystem,” he said.

Citing South Korea as an example, Balisacan said the nation is so high in innovation that even their culture has become a global phenomenon.

“If you look at economic nations, ang pinaka (the most) enduring source ng productivity growth, ng growth ng ekonomiya (of economic growth) is improvements in processes, products, services. ‘Yun ay lahat manggagaling ‘yun sa (All of that will come from) innovation,” he added.

6 executive members

Meanwhile, Balisacan also announced the NIC approved selection of six executive members of the NIC for 2023-2026.

“I am pleased to announce that the council...has approved six executive members for 2023-2026. The remaining slot to be filled by a climate change expert. These members come from the ranks of businesses, entrepreneurs, academe, and the scientific community,” he said.

Balisacan did not name the said NIC members.

Likewise, he said the NIC also presented salient features of the RA No. 11293 or the “Philippine Innovation Act” and updates on the formulation of the National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Document (NIASD).

The NIASD outlines the country’s 10-year vision and long-term goals for innovation and serves a detailed roadmap towards improving innovation governance.

It also ties closely with the outcomes and strategies laid out in Chapter 8 of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, on Advancing Research and Development, Technology and Innovation.

"Together, these two documents aim at enabling a strong innovation governance to drive the innovation ecosystem towards our national innovation priority areas and long-term innovation goals of a smart and innovative Philippines that is productive, resilient and sustainable, as well as inclusive," Balisacan said.

Along with the NIASD, Balisacan said the establishment of the Innovation Fund, a revolving fund that aims to strengthen entrepreneurship and enterprises engaged in developing innovative solutions, is also one of the NIC's other major outputs.

To date, the NIC has approved 18 project proposals amounting to PHP115 million under the Innovation Grants—majority of which sought to address the pre-commercialization and commercialization requirements of innovative products or services, the enhancement of innovation facilities and services, and the conduct of capacity-building activities.

The NIC is a 25-member body tasked to develop the country's innovation goals, priorities and long-term national strategies.

Marcos serves as the NIC chairperson together with Balisacan as vice chairperson.

The rest of the members are composed of 16 ex-officio members and seven executive members from the private sector.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Marcos OKs 19 projects to boost PH innovation](#)

By: Catherine S. Valente

PRESIDENT Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. has approved 19 projects as part of his administration's efforts to promote and advance the culture of innovation in the country, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan announced Tuesday

Marcos, who heads the National Innovation Council (NIC), gave the nod for the projects during a meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday.

"The Council has approved 19 projects or project proposals amounting to P115 million under the Innovation Grants—majority of which sought to address the pre-commercialization and commercialization requirements of innovative products or services, the enhancement of innovation facilities and services, and the conduct of capacity-building activities," Balisacan said during a Palace press briefing.

"The Marcos administration is committed to promoting and advancing the culture of innovation in the country through increased collaborations with the private sector, especially as we prioritize the development of infrastructure, pursue digital transformation, and work towards creating a more attractive and enabling business environment and investment climate in this term," he added.

Balisacan pointed out that innovation "plays a critical role in our pursuit for sustained and accelerated economic growth and development, as it serves as a catalyst for raising overall productivity and elevating the quality of our goods and services."

"Only through a collective national effort can we truly pursue and attain these goals for our future," said Balisacan, who also serves as head of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

"The Marcos administration reaffirms its commitment and determination to turn these visions and plans into a reality, and build a strong economic foundation for the future generations of Filipinos. What we desire is to not only improve the way we do things today, but also to make us better-prepared for whatever outcomes the future may bring," he added.

During the meeting, Balisacan said the Council, which serves as the government's main coordinating body for innovation policies, has also approved six Executive Members for 2023 to 2026, with the seventh slot to be filled by a climate change expert.

These members, he said, come from the ranks of businesses, entrepreneurs, academe, and the scientific community.

Balisacan said the Councils also presented to the President salient features of the Republic Act 11293 or the Philippine Innovation Act, as well as updates on the formulation of the National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Document.

"This document outlines the country's ten-year vision and long-term goals for innovation and thus, serves as a detailed roadmap towards improving innovation governance," he said.

To recall, the National Innovation Council is a 25-member body tasked to develop the country's innovation goals, priorities, and long-term national strategy.

The President serves as the Council's chairman, with the secretary of the NEDA as vice chairman. They are joined by sixteen ex-officio members along with seven executive members from the private sector who were nominated during Tuesday's meeting.

[\[Opinion\] Climate action setbacks as countries go back to fossil fuels and nuclear energy](#)

By: Daphne Oseña-Paez

THE world is still struggling with the energy crisis as the global economy continues to slow down and the price of energy remains high. This was exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict which brought about the EU sanctions on Russian oil and gas in 2022.

This is according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report on surviving the energy crisis and the energy outlook in 2023. The Philippines has had an impending and ongoing energy crisis even before the Russia-Ukraine war, as the Shell oil refinery announced its plans to permanently close its Tabango refinery in 2020 and Malampaya natural gas forecast to run dry by 2027. We are a net energy importer even though our consumption remains low. We produce oil, natural gas and coal. In 2019, 88 percent of our energy consumption drew from fossil fuels. But before climate activists react, know that this is a drop in the bucket of overall global greenhouse gas emissions.

The EIU Energy Outlook 2023 is forecasting some global setbacks in climate action, namely the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the SDG targets to reduce carbon emissions, including the failed Paris Agreement, we will see a growth in the consumption of coal again to compensate for the need for gas supplies. Extreme weather conditions will also push many countries to rely on fossil fuels, delaying the commitment to transition to clean energy. We may see a surge in renewable energy consumption in Asia, but investment in this sector will weaken as funding countries will have to prioritize dealing with their domestic energy crisis. And interestingly, some governments will reconsider their efforts to phase out nuclear power.

These setbacks in climate action strategies may just be the reality check that Bjorn Lomborg of the Copenhagen Consensus has been alluding to. In many of his reports, articles and interviews, he stated that the panic on the apocalyptic forecasts from climate change has caused many governments to come up with bad and unrealistic climate policies. He is not a climate change denier, far from it. Climate change is real. Temperatures are rising. But Lomborg says more people die from extreme cold than from heat. He has numbers, after all, he runs a think tank. He advocates for smarter and saner policies and investment in research and innovation to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It cannot simply be solved by transitioning to renewable energy. Besides, this quest to switch to all renewables comes at a bigger cost to poor countries, such as the Philippines, which haven't had the benefit of building wealth from the Industrial Revolution.

The EIU forecasts an increase in coal usage due to extreme weather events such as droughts, heat waves and typhoons. Droughts will affect river systems such as the Yangtze in China, the Danube and the Rhine in Europe, and the Colorado River in the US. This may impact hydropower generation and force countries to fall back on coal. Heat waves could also lead to more blackouts as this increases power demand for air conditioning use. The EIU forecasts China and India to rely back on coal as hydro power accounts for 10 percent of their electricity generation.

As all countries in the Global North and South deal with their own domestic energy crises, this may set back any gains in pushing for climate finance. Again, it will be the developing countries that will be impacted. The Philippines has been clamoring for climate justice in the form of finance. We have been badly battered by typhoons caused by the La Niña and El Niño cycles, which are now generically referred to as climate change, for more than two decades. This brings me back to what President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said in his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2022: "The effects of climate change are uneven and reflect a historical injustice: Those who are least responsible suffer the most. The Philippines, for example, is a net carbon sink, we absorb more carbon dioxide than we emit. And yet, we are the fourth most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change." The President emphasized the need for nations to correct injustices by accepting their share of responsibilities. We may expect to see a shift in public sentiment in countries that initially committed to funding global climate mitigation solutions, as they deal with their own volatile economic and geopolitical environment domestically.

A very interesting point in the EIU report is the idea that some governments may rethink their plans to phase out nuclear power. Japan, whose Fukushima Daiichi disaster in 2011 prompted not just their own cancellation but many other countries' idling of nuclear plants, now plans to restart seven nuclear reactors by the summer of 2023. Japan has 23 commercially operable but offline nuclear reactors. We may also see Germany, which gradually shut down nuclear power plants since the Fukushima disaster, make a U-turn on its nuclear policy due to the energy crisis.

The Philippines continues its commitment to expand renewable energy sources like hydropower, geothermal, solar and wind, as promised by BBM in his July 2022 SONA. It'll be interesting to navigate through a world where both rich and poor, northern and southern countries are experiencing the energy pinch. We stay the course. After all, resiliency, a word that has been trivialized by the culture wars, is actually not a bad thing in the discussion on climate change policies.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Germany working on new immigration law to attract more Filipino workers](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Germany is hoping to attract more workers from the Philippines through a new immigration law, citing the profound contributions of Filipino workers to their local industries who have since relocated there.

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Baerbock, in a joint press conference with Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, said they are grateful that there are “many people in the past [that] traveled from the Philippines to Germany and stayed [there] in order to work.”

“Thousands [of] skilled and qualified personnel from the Philippines work in Germany as I’ve said and we felt the qualifications and expertise of these people,” Baerbock said on Monday.

In 2013, Berlin and Manila inked a deal called the Triple Win Program, which facilitates the deployment of workers in the healthcare industry to Germany.

More Filipino healthcare workers may be deployed to Germany as the two countries inked another deal that will open up more opportunities for Filipino healthcare workers, skilled workers, and other professionals.

“As a federal government, we are drafting and working on a new law on immigration, especially with an eye to attracting skilled labor and qualified labor,” Baerbock said.

“Thus, our cooperation with you in that area is of the greatest importance. It’s also very much about ensuring equal conditions and standards for skilled labor.”

Manalo was in Germany to attend this year’s Munich Security Conference. While there, Baerbock also underscored the importance of following international law when it comes to matters related to maritime claims.

Climate change support

Aside from labor and securing the rights of migrant workers, the two leaders also discussed the importance of climate change and its impact on the population.

“The Philippines, by virtue of its geographic circumstances and location, is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world, which is why making the country

climate-smart and disaster-ready is a priority of the Philippine government and we know we have a reliable partner in this regard with the German government,” Foreign Affairs Secretary Manalo said.

Berlin also pointed out that Manila, despite having “relatively low” CO2 and gas emissions, bears the brunt of its consequences. Baerbock noted the importance of putting up a loss and damage fund.

She also said the Philippines is already among the priority countries of its International Climate Initiative, Germany’s climate financing commitment to help countries adapt to the impacts of climate change and over €50 million has been allocated to support the Philippines.

“[The Philippines] also set out on an ambitious course in the field of energy transition and focus more on getting electricity from renewables,” Baerbock noted.

Both officials also recognized other aspects of the bilateral relationship, such as working with Germany on the peace process in Mindanao and in ensuring that international rules-based order is abided by parties in the West Philippine Sea, and in improving the human rights protections in the Philippines.

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