



NEWS ROUNDUP

08 MARCH 2023 [08:00 am]

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By: Subel Rai Bhandari

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Official: Indonesia must push sustainable development in ASEAN

JAKARTA -- Sustainable development, including the energy transition and the development of electric vehicles and blue economy, should be encouraged during Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2023, an official from the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs has said.

RAPPLER

[Opinion] Not just any transition: On jeepneys and energy

By: John Leo C. Algo

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Opinion] Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, transition to renewable energy

The capsizing of the MT Princess Empress in Tablas Strait near Oriental Mindoro is the latest warning to the Philippines that we must urgently end the era of fossil fuel dominance.

UNITED NATIONS

Calling Climate Change Major Global Security Issue, President Tells Round Table 'No Country Is Immune, but Those Least Developed Suffer Most'

DOHA, 7 March — Stressing that there is no vaccine against climate change and disaster, speakers called for urgent action today to assist vulnerable States because “the ‘now’ is long overdue”, as the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries concluded its third day of high-level thematic round tables.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DBM to agencies: Identify environment-related programs in budget](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman has urged government agencies to identify environment-related programs and projects in the national budget as part of ongoing efforts to address climate change.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BENAR NEWS

[Southeast Asian, Pacific leaders applaud first-ever global ocean treaty](#)

By: Subel Rai Bhandari

Southeast Asian and Pacific leaders are hailing an ambitious United Nations treaty to protect ocean life by establishing protected areas in international waters.

About 193 countries agreed to the legal framework on Saturday night. It comes as ocean life faces growing threats from climate change, overfishing, shipping traffic and seabed mining on the high seas.

“Only 1% of the high seas is currently protected,” Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said on Twitter. This “is a timely achievement & major milestone in the conservation & sustainable use of biodiversity in our oceans. It will go a long way towards protecting our global commons.”

The treaty is a culmination of U.N.-facilitated talks that began in 2004. It’s also a crucial first step to meet a goal set in December at the Biodiversity COP15 in Montreal to protect 30 percent of the planet by the end of this decade in an agreement known as “30 by 30.”

Achieving this objective would have been “a fantasy” without the treaty, said marine conservation scientist Daniel Dunn, since there were no established legal processes for creating marine protected areas on the high seas.

The treaty establishes a global framework for sharing ocean resources and managing marine ecosystems, including thorough environmental impact assessments on the potential damage of proposed commercial activities, such as deep-sea mining, before the start of such projects.

The ocean is considered crucial in the fight against the climate crisis, as ocean temperatures continue to rise and threaten marine life. Scientists say ocean ecosystems create half the oxygen humans breathe and limit global warming by absorbing much of the carbon dioxide.

Nearly 10% of marine species are at risk of extinction, according to an International Union for Conservation of Nature report in December, while climate change affects 41% of these threatened species.

Slow, 'eye-watering' negotiations

For years, disagreements over funding and fishing rights have caused delays in the negotiations.

Dunn, who has been involved with the negotiations since around 2014, said it was an “eye-wateringly slow discussion about the blindingly obvious need for better mechanisms to protect, assess, and sustainably use the half of the planet beyond the control of any one country.”

The deal was reached following a non-stop two days meeting at U.N. headquarters in New York.

“The ship has reached the shore,” conference Chairwoman Rena Lee of Singapore announced on Saturday.

Official adoption will occur later at another U.N. session after technical editing and translations of the agreed pact. Nations then must ratify the treaty for it to take effect.

The Philippines said it “consistently underlined the principle of common heritage of humankind and importance of giving due regard to the rights & jurisdiction of adjacent coastal states and archipelagic states, which are heavily dependent on the sea.”

It “will provide holistic & equitable management of human activities impacting ocean life beyond national boundaries to safeguard global ocean health & contribute to climate resilience, increased food security for millions of people,” Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo said on Twitter.

Environmental group Greenpeace called it “a monumental win for ocean protection” that “provides a pathway to creating fully or highly protected areas across the world’s oceans.”

Smaller countries lead the way

Henry Puna, secretary general of the Pacific Islands Forum, also applauded the agreement.

Pacific Island nations, which occupy 20 percent of the world’s economic exclusive zones, have long advocated for an international, legally binding instrument to preserve marine life in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Laura Meller, oceans campaigner for Greenpeace Nordic, said the European Union, the United States and China among others “were key players in brokering the deal,” showing “willingness to compromise.”

But so was a coalition of developing nations known as the Group of 77.

“Small Island States have shown leadership throughout the process, and the G77 group led the way in ensuring the treaty can be put into practice in a fair and equitable way,” Meller said.

The legally binding pact, called the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction treaty, represents the first common framework agreement on ocean protection since the adoption of the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, which established the high seas as an area where all nations can conduct fishing, shipping and research.

Undiscovered biodiversity

The “high seas” is outside of any country’s jurisdiction, beginning at the border of countries’ exclusive economic zones that extend up to 370 km (200 nautical miles) from coastlines. It makes up more than 60 percent of the world’s oceans by surface area and is home to millions of species and ecosystems.

Just 1.2% of these international waters, a vast reserve of undiscovered biodiversity, are protected.

Conservationists say sharing marine genetic resources derived from plants and animals in the ocean that could benefit society, including in pharmaceuticals, food and industrial sectors, was another point of contention.

The treaty “articulates a new regime for access and benefits sharing of marine genetic resources, which have already been used to develop extremely lucrative pharmaceuticals by corporations and countries who can afford to access these deep and distant areas,” Dunn, who teaches at the University of Queensland, said in a statement.

EIN PRESS WIRE

[Legarda: Place climate adaptation, disaster preparedness at the core of governance and development](#)

enate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda today urged national and local leaders to prioritize climate action and disaster risk management to safeguard Filipinos and avert further losses and damages from disasters and calamities.

Legarda made the statement following a report by the International Science Council, which revealed that countries are inadequately prepared to face increasing disasters, including floods and storms, setting back hard-won development gains in many parts of the world.

She also mentioned last month's devastating earthquake in Turkey, which claimed over 50,000 lives and displaced millions to seek shelter elsewhere.

"It's painfully clear that extreme weather events and disasters are becoming more deadly and destructive. The pandemic taught us that preparation is key to averting crises and saving lives. I stress the urgent need once again for our national and local leaders to adequately prepare for and manage these risks, and more importantly, to invest time and resources on resilience-building policies and measures," said Legarda who is cited by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as Global Champion for Resilience and by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as National Adaptation Plan Champion.

Legarda also noted that the Philippines has consistently ranked high among countries that are most at risk from disasters and climate impacts. In the 2022 World Risk Report, which calculated the disaster risk for 193 countries, the Philippines is the most disaster-prone country in the world due to its high risk, exposure, and vulnerability to disasters and calamities.

She also lamented the country's ranking in the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index, as the fourth most affected country by weather-related disasters like storms, floods, and heatwaves from 2000-2019. The index earlier noted the Philippines' particular vulnerability of "being recurrently affected by catastrophes," which made response and recovery more challenging for our country.

"We need systemic changes to our thinking and doing, especially when it comes to the growing threats and challenges from disasters and calamities. Climate adaptation and

disaster preparedness and management must be adopted in all governance and development processes and be embraced by all citizens as a way of life," Legarda said.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[NAC ramps up support for climate change mitigation efforts](#)

By: Jed Macapagal

Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC) has expressed support to the empowerment of Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

The TCFD, created by international body Financial Stability Board, aims to develop recommendations on the types of information that companies disclose in assessing and pricing a specific set of risks, especially those related to climate change.

NAC said part of the company's commitment to TCFD is the disclosure of its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as well as the assessment and management of its climate-related risks as the task force is also currently being supported by over 1,500 financial institutions across 99 countries, responsible for assets of about \$217 trillion.

"Our decision to support TCFD stems from our strong commitment to good governance and transparency, and is in line with our twin goal of becoming the premier ESG (environmental, social and governance) investment in the country and becoming one of the top 25 companies in the Philippine Stock Exchange in terms of market capitalization by 2025," said Martin Antonio Zamora, NAC president and chief executive officer, in a statement.

Zamora said with the TCFD, the company will be in "a stronger position" to help in preparing for and mitigating climate-related risks.

In line with the support for TCFD, NAC is currently working with experts from the University of the Philippines Los Banos to include land use change emissions in its GHG inventory to allow the company to track a more accurate and complete emission inventory, especially its direct emissions.

NIKKEI ASIA

[Philippines, Vietnam to import LNG, but long-term doubts loom](#)

By: Sayumi Take

TOKYO -- The Philippines and Vietnam are nearing their long-delayed debuts as importers of liquefied natural gas, even as competition from renewables and fears of future gas supply disruptions are heating up the debate over the fuel's role in supporting growing Southeast Asian economies.

Developing Asian countries like the Philippines and Vietnam currently rely on coal as the main source of cheap energy for their industries, but mounting pressure to decarbonize led them to look to gas as a less harmful alternative.

The two countries had hoped to begin operations at several LNG import terminals in 2022 or earlier, but those projects were delayed for months or years by coronavirus supply-chain disruptions and other obstacles.

Now, with the Philippines and Vietnam poised to begin importing gas this year, some analysts are warning that the new LNG facilities will be "underutilized." Both countries are placing a greater emphasis on renewable energy sources like solar and wind, and neither has been able to lock in long-term purchase agreements for natural gas that would ensure price stability.

In the Philippines, Singapore-based gas infrastructure builder Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific is finishing up one of the nation's first LNG import terminals, scheduled to start operating in April, on the tip of a sandy coastal area in Batangas Bay.

The facilities can store and gasify up to 5 million tonnes of LNG per year and will supply industries including the power sector, where gas is expected to replace coal as the major fuel. The company hopes to add another 3 million tonnes of capacity at the terminal in the coming years to meet demand growth, CEO Joseph Sigelman told Nikkei Asia.

The Philippines will need nearly 9 million tonnes of LNG annually to feed its existing and approved gas-fired power plants after its current source of supply, the domestic Malampaya gas field, dries up by 2024, Fitch Solutions, the research arm of credit agency Fitch Group, said in February.

The government expects natural gas consumption to rise up to twelvefold by 2040, and is eager to prepare for imports. Two other terminals are due to start operating this year in the Philippines, with four more projects being developed.

Vietnam is expected to start importing gas this year at two long-delayed LNG terminals, with another five scheduled to begin operations by 2027. Their owners did not respond to requests from Nikkei for comment, but plan to supply the power sector.

The projects are coming on stream even as renewables have the wind at their backs.

Deployment of renewables in Southeast Asia "will accelerate in upcoming years" and increase by 51 gigawatts, or 56%, during 2022 to 2027, the International Energy Agency said in December. It said solar and wind are "rapidly becoming more competitive" with coal.

Countries in the region are conducting a "reassessment" of the long-term role of gas in their energy mix, according to a December report by research specialist Wood Mackenzie.

The Vietnamese government is "reworking" its latest draft national energy plan to reduce gas use in the power sector "in favor of offshore wind," the report said. Thailand is also working to attract more investment in renewables, as "its high reliance on gas-fired generation has meant an inability to pivot from gas during a period of high prices."

Fitch said Philippine policies, though "supportive" of gas-fired power generation, "lean more" toward renewables and could pose "significant downside risks" to gas consumption in the power sector. The research group also does not "rule out" long-term changes to "revive coal and accelerate energy production from renewables as key sources of affordable electricity over costly imported LNG."

While natural gas prices "moderated significantly" in January, they remain "well above historic averages" in Asia and Europe, the IEA said in its latest update. It said importers remain exposed to a "tight supply environment," and the impact of further cuts from Russia are "cause for concern."

The Philippines and Vietnam also have not been able to secure long-term purchase agreements that offer greater price stability; they will be relying on more volatile spot markets, according to multiple research companies.

Asti Asra, principal analyst at Wood Mackenzie, said new LNG facilities in the Philippines and Vietnam will "likely be underutilized" in the short term and some proposed terminals may be delayed or canceled, depending on demand.

In the longer term, her view is more nuanced. LNG importing facilities in the two countries could grow busier a few years from now, she said, as domestic supplies dwindle and renewables take time to develop.

Sam Reynolds, an energy finance analyst at the U.S.-based nonprofit Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, said last year's gas pricing volatility has cast "serious doubt" on the long-term LNG expansion plans of both countries, and expects they will "prioritize" alternative sources of energy like renewables and domestic fossil fuel resources.

Minimizing the role of LNG and maximizing domestic renewables in the national energy mix would provide the "greatest benefit" in terms of cost, reliability, and development, he said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Bill seeking evacuation centers in every city, town approved

By: Jeannette I. Andrade

The House of Representatives on Monday approved on third and final reading a measure for the setup of evacuation centers in every town and city across the country.

Aside from providing refuge to persons displaced by typhoons or earthquakes, the evacuation centers can also be used to temporarily shelter victims of fire, disease outbreak and other emergencies.

House Bill (HB) No. 7354, which includes Speaker Martin Romualdez and Tingog party list Representatives Yedda Marie Romualdez and Jude Acidre as principal authors, was approved during Monday's plenary session with 307 lawmakers voting in favor and one against.

HB 7354 provides, "It shall be the policy of the State to uphold the constitutional right of the people for the protection of their life and property and the promotion of the general welfare. Toward this end, the State shall establish and maintain a safe, fully equipped, and fully operational evacuation center, responsive to environmental or climatic events, in recognition of the vulnerability of the Philippines to climate change and hazards such as the occurrence of severe floods, typhoons and other natural or human-induced disasters, illnesses, diseases and other factors that affect the environment."

The measure will task the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and local chief executives to identify areas to be prioritized in establishing the evacuation centers.

HB 7354 also tasks the NDRRMC to work with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the Department of Science and Technology on the design, cost estimates, and construction of the evacuation centers.

It provides that existing structures, which meet the minimum requirements in terms of location, structural capacity, amenities and accessibility or can be upgraded can be designated as evacuation centers according to the needs of the local government unit concerned.

The local governments will be responsible for the operation and management of the evacuation centers, which will be constructed and funded by the DPWH

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

National gov't urged to put Masungi under its care

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

MANILA – Senators urged the national government to recover the Masungi Rock Formation in Tanay town, Rizal province that is currently included in the 300-hectare property owned by the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor).

Senator Nancy Binay said on Tuesday that in order for the rock formation to be protected and preserved, it should stay under the ownership of the national government.

"Yung mga ganitong (These kinds of) assets should stay with the Republic of the Philippines, 'di ba? Hindi dapat nililipat to (right? It should not be transferred to) any government agency," said Binay, who presided over a public hearing of the Committee on Tourism.

Lawyer Norlito Eneran, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) legal affairs director, said regaining the rock formation only needs a presidential proclamation.

"Considering that it is titled in favor of the government, sa tingin ko hindi na kailangan ng legislation (I think legislation is not needed). It's through the act of the President. Pwede niyang i-set (He can set) aside for a specific purpose," Eneran said.

BuCor is still exploring its options and no final decision has been reached on whether it would relocate its headquarters in Muntinlupa City to the Tanay property.

"The plan to relocate its national headquarters to this site will be held in abeyance pending further studies to be undertaken, taking into consideration the impact on the environment with the construction of BuCor facilities in the area," Gregorio Catapang Jr., BuCor acting director general, told the committee.

It drew praises from Senate Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros.

"Mabuhay po para sa desisyon ninyo. At least, to hold in abeyance muna habang pinag-aaralan ninyo (I commend your decision. At least, it is being held in abeyance while you are studying it)," Hontiveros said.

Hontiveros is the author of Senate Resolution No. (SRN) 231 which prompted Binay's committee to discuss the various reported illegal activities affecting the Masungi Georeserve as a whole.

Previously, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said he has met with DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga about the Masungi Georeserve and agreed on a singular position.

"We will speak in one voice on this matter. There should be no problem. Pro-environment tayo, hindi natin kalaban ang environmentalists. May mga tao lang syempre na alarmist tungkol dito (We are pro-environment. Environmentalists are not our enemy. There may be people who are just being alarmists about this)," Remulla said.

Senators Pia Cayetano and Binay likewise filed SRN 495 and 500, respectively, questioning the construction of BuCor's headquarters in the ecotourism site.

"Masungi plays a crucial role in our conservation efforts. Being at the forefront of our efforts to conserve, restore, and improve the environment, Masungi provides us with a template of how we can tackle the very urgent issue of climate change," Binay said.

Binay and other senators are set to visit the Masungi Georeserve for an ocular inspection on March 27.

In September last year, the Masungi Georeserve bagged the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award over more than 2,000 other entries from over 150 countries.

Under the Inspire category, Masungi Georeserve Foundation won for its youth-led efforts in combating deforestation and climate change through the restoration and protection of the Masungi landscape and parts of the Upper Marikina Watershed.

Meanwhile, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda said the national government and local government units must prioritize climate action and disaster risk management following reports that several countries are ill prepared to face increasing disasters.

In a news release, Legarda noted that the Philippines has consistently ranked high among countries that are most at risk for disasters and climate impacts.

The 2022 World Risk Report said the Philippines is the most disaster-prone country in the world due to its high risk, exposure, and vulnerability to disasters and calamities among 193 nations.

Reports from the International Science Council, according to Legarda, showed that some countries cannot respond to disasters such as floods and storms, thus setting back their development gains.

"It's painfully clear that extreme weather events and disasters are becoming more deadly and destructive. The pandemic taught us that preparation is key to averting crises and saving lives. I stress the urgent need once again for our national and local leaders to adequately prepare for and manage these risks, and more importantly, to invest time and resources on resilience-building policies and measures," Legarda said in a statement.

Official: Indonesia must push sustainable development in ASEAN

JAKARTA -- Sustainable development, including the energy transition and the development of electric vehicles and blue economy, should be encouraged during Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2023, an official from the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs has said

"ASEAN is a promising region and has sufficient resources to develop the electric vehicle and blue economy ecosystems as the region's new growth drivers," Deputy for the Coordination of International Economic Cooperation at the coordinating ministry Edi Prio Pambudi said in a statement released on Monday.

The sustainable development issue was discussed at a meeting of the 43rd High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI) to prepare the region to face various global challenges, starting from the impact of pandemics, climate change, to geopolitical tensions.

The participants of the meeting expressed support for the development of the electric vehicle ecosystem from upstream to downstream and the improvement of investment in electric vehicles.

They also supported the establishment of an electric vehicle spare part supply chain, as well as the development of a battery waste processing facility.

Regarding the development of the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework, the members of the HLTF-EI on ASEAN agreed on a Concept Note on the Development of the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework.

The document is expected to become a guideline for the region to protect and generate added value from its marine potential.

Furthermore, the meeting participants agreed to support Indonesia's initiative to improve sustainable energy security through regional interconnectivity.

Several energy cooperation projects were also discussed on the occasion, such as the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines Power Integration Project (BIMP-PIP) as well as hydro energy cooperation between Laos and Singapore.

The meeting also discussed the ASEAN Guidelines on Good Regulatory Practices as well as the latest developments in the improvement of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF).

"The various issues discussed (in the meeting) will become the foundations for the establishment of the ASEAN Post-2025 Vision, which will also be supported by the Working Group on AEC Post-2025 Vision on the economic pillar," Pambudi added.

RAPPLER

[\[Opinion\] Not just any transition: On jeepneys and energy](#)

By: John Leo C. Algo

“Just transition” is one of those terms that is becoming more popular in climate and environmental discourse. It emerged in the 1980s as a call from American trade unions to protect laborers impacted by new regulations against air and water pollution.

Nowadays, its definition and scope has expanded beyond its labor-centric origins, to account for the well-being of all sectors in this process. From workers in systems to be phased out to communities nearby new structures to be built, everyone should be included in realizing the promise of a more sustainable society.

Yet as we now know, implementing a genuine just transition is never going to be easy.

Bumpy transition

In recent years, the Philippine government has struggled with designing policies and programs that are aligned with a genuine just transition. And based on our own experiences, it is the consumers who are hit the hardest by these flawed decisions.

Look no further than the ongoing week-long strike by around 40,000 jeepney drivers. This is in protest of the PUV modernization program, a move designed to provide a cleaner and safer mode of transportation for Filipino commuters.

Under its current terms, old public transport vehicles such as jeepneys and buses will be replaced with modern minibuses. However, the cost is P2.4 million per unit, with only a P200,000 subsidy per phased-out jeep, and drivers and operators being required to be a part of cooperatives to purchase them.

While the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has extended the deadline for phasing out old jeepneys to the end of the year, this is merely a reactionary move that does not resolve the major issues with this program.

First is the cost issue, which is not just reflected on the burden it places on many drivers that have small daily earnings to begin with. It is also seen in the increasing entry of big businesses, who can afford the high capital costs and could threaten the livelihoods of many in the sector.

Second is the inability of government officials to properly assure affected workers that they will not be left behind in a supposed just transition. This is not the first time a strike was staged against the PUV modernization program, with numerous transport groups voicing their opposition since its launch in 2017.

As much as the LTFRB or the Vice President wants to downplay the pressure from the ongoing strike, hundreds of thousands of commuters will still be affected all week long. For Metro Manila, which is recognized as one of the least commuter-friendly areas in the world, tactics like this only indicate a government that is tone-deaf to both drivers and commuters, even if the President wants to portray otherwise.

Third is the need for a modernization process that accommodates the socioeconomic realities of the jeepney sector. The program can be modified to make the terms of payment and government subsidies for the modern units more favorable for drivers and operators, who actually support the concept of modernization but not its current execution. Allowing impoverished drivers to transition to cleaner traditional jeeps first before going for the minibus models would still contribute to reducing pollution without burdening the sector.

Unclean transition

Not helping the situation of the public transport sector is the high energy prices, including those of petroleum oil and gas products. It is no secret that the Philippines's heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels, which is the cause of the climate crisis, has contributed to an outdated, inflexible, and expensive energy system that burdens Filipino consumers.

The narrative of gas as a "transitional fuel" has been pushed heavily by the current administration. Coal is currently the source of more than 50% of the Philippines's power generation, yet it is the very dependence on this imported fuel that has contributed to many energy issues in the country.

Proponents of gas claim it is a cleaner fuel than coal, which would make it an ideal energy source as the Philippines awaits for renewable energy (RE) technologies to mature. Yet they fail to emphasize that gas is also an imported fossil fuel, which makes its price highly volatile to trends in the global market. This volatility is observed with the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which affected the global energy supply and caused a spike in fossil fuel prices.

The fact is that this policy direction favoring gas expansion to replace coal is incompatible with climate action. The Philippines cannot reach its self-imposed target of 50% RE share in the energy mix by 2040 if this persists, especially with gas plants having a life span of two to three decades. The same applies for another self-determined target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% within the current decade, as pledged under its Nationally Determined Contribution.

Gas expansion is also incompatible with a just transition, as its role in causing the climate crisis alone triggers negative social and economic impacts on millions of Filipinos. The risks that constructing and operating multiple plants, terminals, and pipelines in nearby communities and ecosystems, especially if environmental compliance regulations are not properly implemented, only increases the burden on citizens.

The current government needs to get its policies coherent and be committed to ending the era of fossil fuel dominance. Proper implementation of key laws like the RE Act and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, and improving the market conditions for investments in RE development are among the priority measures that should be undertaken in the next few years.

Policymakers must avoid the mistake of thinking that these decisions can be made with traditional views and attitudes. Achieving a sustainable future that Filipinos truly deserve requires not just a transition, but a just transition.

By the way things are going, the current administration is missing that point.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, transition to renewable energy](#)

The capsizing of the MT Princess Empress in Tablas Strait near Oriental Mindoro is the latest warning to the Philippines that we must urgently end the era of fossil fuel dominance.

Not only was there a reported five-kilometer long oil spill from the ship's diesel fuel; containers holding 800,000 liters of crude oil also sank underwater, which is worsening the environmental disaster threatening even more vital marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

This is a stark reminder of the direct and indirect dangers brought by fossil fuels to natural and anthropogenic systems. Despite the well-established role of fossil fuels in worsening the climate crisis to which the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries, the current administration still openly advocates for the expansion of said energy sources' usage in the nation. Without the proper implementation of safety procedures to avoid these incidences, lives, and properties would continue to be placed at risk.

We call on the Philippine government to hold the owner of MT Princess Empress accountable for the damages this incident has inflicted on affected families and communities. It is a timely reminder of the state's mandate to uphold the right of Filipinos to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, among other rights exercised to safely pursue development.

We also reiterate the call for the Philippines to urgently reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and enact a just transition to a renewable energy-dominated economy and society. Further delaying this necessary and inevitable process due to the influence of profit-driven fossil fuel interests is an injustice that would cost us far more than what we have seen from this incident.

UNITED NATIONS

[Calling Climate Change Major Global Security Issue, President Tells Round Table 'No Country Is Immune, but Those Least Developed Suffer Most'](#)

DOHA, 7 March — Stressing that there is no vaccine against climate change and disaster, speakers called for urgent action today to assist vulnerable States because “the ‘now’ is long overdue”, as the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries concluded its third day of high-level thematic round tables.

Opening the meeting, Nataša Pirc Musar, President of Slovenia and Co-Chair of the Conference, stated climate change is not just a human security issue, but a major international security issue. No country is immune, but those least developed suffer most. In that regard, she hoped speakers would use this round table to discuss past mistakes, address current challenges, and identify obstacles to be effectively addressed so that the vision for the least developed countries as laid out in the Doha Programme of Action will materialize. There will be no progress without the involvement of everyone including those marginalized, including women and youth, Indigenous Peoples and different minorities. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres’s appeal for an “action plan for the early warnings for all” within the next five years is well placed, since 50 per cent of the world’s population is not protected. “Needless to say, the ‘now’ is long overdue,” she stressed.

Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu and Co-Chair of the Conference, stressed the grave importance of climate change to least developed countries, as climate-induced disasters present serious challenges to development, in particular to his State. Least developed countries aspire to drive high rates of economic growth, structural transformation, building productive capacity and increasing their share of global exports. But strong economic growth must be decoupled from emissions, and not erode their natural resource base, nor degrade often-fragile ecosystems. Above all, he stated, support is needed to secure climate finance and prepare adaptation plans and projects for financing. It is critical to move from potential to prosperity, as vulnerable atoll nations like Tuvalu are increasingly at risk. “The fact that there is no vaccine against climate change and disaster makes an even stronger case for greater investment in disaster risk reduction and adaptation,” he stressed.

Titled “Addressing climate change and supporting the environment”, the round table featured a keynote address by Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Minister for State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships of France, who stressed that least developed countries are on the front line of a crisis they did not cause.

Responsible for less than 0.5 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions since the industrial revolution, those States are home to one third of those affected by climate events. “Who cannot see this injustice?” she demanded. Europe and France are taking action by not giving up on the fight for attenuation, mitigation and holding to the limit of 1.5°C — crucial conditions for the future of least developed countries. Europe, she noted, is living up to its responsibilities, aiming to reduce greenhouse gases by 55 per cent by 2030. Further, mitigation is the responsibility for great emerging Powers, and Europe and the Group of Seven (G7) countries are helping South Africa, Viet Nam and Indonesia move away from fossil fuels.

Least developed countries criticize the developed countries’ ability to implement previous commitments — and rightly so — demanding where the money is. However, she stated that lack of solidarity is not to be found with France, which is providing €6 billion in climate financing per year, one third of that for mitigation. France is responsible for 3 per cent of cumulative emissions since the nineteenth century, but is providing 10 per cent of current international adaptation financing. Nature is a crucial ally for vulnerable populations in developing countries, she observed, as a source for food, income and resources and a bulwark against climate change. Citing the creation of a loss and damage fund at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, she urged for its implementation. “We are not starting from scratch,” she stressed. Noting Africa holds 60 per cent of solar power potential and citing resources of cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and copper in Zambia, she called for a transition from aid to financing.

The round table then featured panellists Dan Jørgensen, Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy of Denmark; Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment; Caroline Gennez, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Mr. Jørgensen stated that the current situation is totally unjust, with least developed countries generating 4 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gases but being hit hardest by the effects of climate change. “These are not theories”, he stressed, but what is happening now — and even from a moral perspective, developed countries must act. There is no sense in talking about development policy and the Sustainable Development Goals if the international community does not put fighting and adapting to climate change front and centre. When drought hits Ethiopia, even for a dry country, the effects are extraordinary and far-reaching — affecting water and food production. This leads to fewer children being educated — a luxury when your livestock are dying.

However, he noted the good news is that many solutions also interlinked. He noted that the European Union is going forward with a 55 per cent emissions decrease, “but to be honest, that’s probably not even enough”.

Ms. Sacko stated that despite accounting for only 3.3 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, least developed countries are among the most vulnerable nations on the planet to the adverse impacts of climate change. Given their geographic location, small island developing States are highly exposed to floods and storms, while African countries, especially in West and Central Africa, are very vulnerable to drought. These States have limited fiscal space to adapt to the consequences of extreme weather events. Least developed countries, she noted, account for 65 per cent of the global population lacking access to electricity; hence, nowhere is the need for a “just energy transition” more important than in these States. Citing the Green Climate Fund, the largest dedicated climate fund, she noted that by July 2022, total funding for least developed countries has reached only \$3 billion, or 28 per cent of the Fund’s global portfolio.

Ms. Gennez noted that civil society is campaigning around two words: climate justice. This is also a global concept, as least developed countries are not to blame for what is happening today. She cited an article in Nature magazine in October 2022, signed by the ministers of forests and the environment of Gabon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and the Congo, arguing for additional funding to study and protect the Congo Basin rainforest — noting that Africa’s rainforests annually absorb the same amount of carbon as was emitted each year by fossil-fuel use across the entire African continent in the 2010s. In other words, Africa is carbon neutral. Young people are taking to the streets worldwide, she observed, and it is up to politicians to listen. Belgium prioritizes financing and will add €12.5 million. Her Government fully supports the Bridgetown Initiative and is also investigating the potential of debt-for-climate swaps.

Mr. Stiell called for more national adaptation plans, more support for least developed countries to devise them and clear targets for delivery of that support. The plans reflect a shifting conversation to harnessing the rich diversity of natural and human resources to build more resilient communities, more secure cities and create a safer and more prosperous region for those who call those nations home. The Paris Committee on Capacity-building published a paper with several key recommendations, including: strengthening international, regional and domestic knowledge networks; building on local capacity and indigenous knowledge; and developing national and regional rosters of experts on relevant issues to access available expertise more easily. “We know these ideas work,” he stressed. One example is the establishment of the “Tomai Pacifique”, a registered network of preapproved experts that respond to assistance

requests from Pacific island countries, developing project concepts and proposals and preparing reporting requirements.

The Conference then turned to its lead discussants: Isobel Coleman, Deputy Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and Selwin Hart, Special Adviser and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Change.

Ms. Coleman noted that in 2021, damage caused by weather-related disasters was around \$30 billion in developing countries; and according to the World Bank, damages and economic losses from last year's floods in Pakistan alone have exceeded \$30 billion. Yet, the total of all global humanitarian assistance is around \$31 billion a year — most of which addresses humanitarian needs stemming from conflict, not climate. The United States Agency for International Development has nearly doubled its investments into climate-related activities since President Joseph Biden took office. She further noted that Bank of America estimates the climate adaptation market could become a \$2 trillion industry over the next five years. Today, the world invests about \$50 billion in climate adaptation — but needs are projected to grow beyond \$300 billion by the end of the decade. With just 2 per cent of current adaptation finance coming from the private sector — a significant gap — she noted the call to action has already seen corporations like Google, Mastercard and Microsoft helping to expand access to climate information and early warning systems.

Mr. Hart bluntly stated that every indicator on climate change is headed in the wrong direction, with the world on the pathway to witness an increase in global temperature of 3.2°C. Warning that citizens in least developed countries are 15 times more likely to die from climate-related impact, he called for ensuring that those people and their countries not only survive but thrive. The international community must urgently address the root cause of crisis: carbon pollution. Given the massive fossil fuel expansion currently being witnessed, he stressed that there is no such thing as clean fossil fuel: “Less dirty is still dirty.” Renewables offer the best chance to limit warming to 1.5°C. — and least developed countries must not be left behind with old fuel models. He called for reducing the high cost of capital investment in renewables and scaling up investment in loss and damage. He noted the Secretary-General is mobilizing the United Nations system to ensure everyone on Earth has early warning systems within the next five years.

When the floor opened for discussion, Heads of State, ministers and delegates emphasized the urgency of moving from talk to action in the face of an escalating crisis.

Jeremiah Manele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Solomon Islands, observed that sadly, the world is spending more on wars than on saving

humanity. As a least developed and small island developing State, the Solomon Islands are located in a climate hot spot, and the 2021 World Risk Report notes it is the second most exposed country to natural hazards. “Our countries are in a constant recovery mode from extreme weather events,” he stressed: “Climate change remains a threat multiplier.”

Wavel Ramkalawan, President of Seychelles, noted that his country is considered a small island developing State, but has “graduated”, so to speak. Regardless, it remains as vulnerable to climate change as before, but has been punished by a lack of assistance because it has protected the environment with its limited resources. He said those on the road to graduation should not be deserted — with a transitional means to access to concessionary financing.

Philip Mpango, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, noted losses to floods alone in his country amounted to \$33.7 million over 10 years. The country is engaged in tree planting, use of clean energy and building dams to store rainwater; however, the key issue remains limited access to key funding and technology.

Looking towards solutions, the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that least developed countries hold incredible promise — not least because they are home to over 1 billion people, including many youths. In its 64 Biosphere Reserves established in 28 least developed countries, UNESCO will provide nature-based solutions at the local level to facilitate adaptation to climate change by restoring and preserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

Also speaking were ministers and delegates of Timor-Leste, Singapore, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Greece, Netherlands, Romania, Maldives, Monaco, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria and Gabon.

Representatives of the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the World Fund for Development and Planning also spoke, as did a youth activist from the Sudan.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DBM to agencies: Identify environment-related programs in budget](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman has urged government agencies to identify environment-related programs and projects in the national budget as part of ongoing efforts to address climate change.

Pangandaman made this call during the Annual Climate Change Expenditure Tracking (CCET) Virtual Orientation on Tuesday.

Citing the World Bank Group's Country Climate and Development Report for the Philippines published in November 2022, she said mainstreaming climate considerations in public financial management is "crucial" in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

"While we are on track with our Agenda for Prosperity, our efforts will be futile if we are unable to address climate change, as it continues to pose significant risks to our economic development," Pangandaman said.

She also enjoined all planning and budget officers and climate change technical representatives to provide climate change expenditure tracking "efficiently and effectively."

"May we keep in mind that we are doing all these to ensure that our economic progress is moving towards a truly inclusive and sustainable economy -- one that will be felt by every individual, family, and entity in the country, and will benefit not only citizens in the world today but also in the generations to come," she added.

In a news release, the DBM said the national government has allocated a budget of PHP464.5 billion this year, equivalent to 8.8 percent of the total national budget to address climate change.

This figure is significantly higher by 60.1 percent compared to the 2022 allocation of PHP289.7 billion.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation programs aligned with the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) are also among the government's priorities.

The government is also prioritizing water sufficiency projects, with almost 80 percent of the total climate change budget, followed by sustainable energy, food security, ecosystem and environmental stability, climate-smart industries and services, human security and knowledge and capacity development.

Disaster resilience is also being given importance, including the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (NDRRMF) with PHP20.50 billion; Quick Response Fund, PHP17.15 billion; and Flood Management Program, PHP182.99 billion.

The National Greening Program was allocated PHP2.39 billion, of which PHP1.86 billion will be for the Protected Areas Development and Management Program; PHP1.56 billion will be for the Manila Bay Rehabilitation; and PHP246 million will be for the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program.

The CCET Virtual Orientation, organized by DBM and the Climate Change Commission, is in support of the Marcos administration's 8-point Socioeconomic Agenda and the implementation of climate change provisions in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028.

It explained to government agencies the necessity of intensified climate change planning and programming, and provided clear, concise and up-to-date information for national government planning and budget officers, and for climate-change technical representatives to understand climate change and CCET as an integral part of the national budget preparation.

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