



NEWS ROUNDUP

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By:Ruth Kamnitzer

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Establishing forests can capture carbon and boost biodiversity — but some biomes are a better bet than others, a recent study finds. Forest restoration has emerged as a top nature-based solution to mitigate climate change, with numerous high-profile initiatives launched over the past few decades. And while there's enthusiasm for replanting degraded forest areas, or reforestation, there's also a growing unease that establishing forests in ecosystems that historically had little of them, or afforestation, could harm biodiversity.

The question is, how can we pinpoint the best places for afforestation and reforestation, or AR, on a global scale? A number of studies have tackled this challenge. For example, a 2025 Nature Communications study found that 195 million hectares (482 million acres) of land is suitable for reforestation when climate goals, nature, and people were taken into account. Though this represents an area the size of Mexico, it's far smaller than previous estimates.

Now, a recent study in Environmental Research Letters describes a different way of gauging the potential of AR across 13 biomes. The study finds that overall, many areas within the tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forest biome offer the highest compatibility with biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration goals. However, there's significant variation between areas, even within the same biome. In contrast, the study finds that all grasslands, shrublands and savanna biomes are poorly suited to AR.

(a) Bivariate map of the spatial overlap between the habitat suitability index and carbon sequestration potential. Dark red areas have a high habitat suitability index and low carbon yield, and dark blue areas have a high carbon potential but low habitat suitability for afforestation or reforestation. Yellow areas have high habitat suitability and high carbon sequestration. Data is 0.5° raster data in the WGS 84 projection (EPSG geodetic parameter dataset: 4326). (b) Proportion of the area of each biome accounted for by areas that belong to the top 33% of carbon sequestration potential while excluding the bottom 33% of habitat suitability. On average, 9.8% (the vertical dashed line) of the global terrestrial area falls into this high-carbon-priority category (100% priority for carbon, 0% habitat suitability index for afforestation). Image courtesy of Wijenayake, et. al. (2026).

Areas with high carbon sequestration potential are attractive for climate change mitigation projects, but could be risky for biodiversity, says Pavithra Rangani Wijenayake, a research associate at the National Institute for Environmental Studies in Japan and the study's first author.

"[W]e need to detect these kinds of locations, especially on this global scale, to avoid massive plantation projects," Wijenayake says.

For their study, the researchers define afforestation as the establishment of trees in areas that were unforested for at least 30 years, while reforestation refers to the establishing trees on more recently cleared or degraded forested land. The analysis also assumed native species were used in afforestation and reforestation, something that isn't always the case on the ground.

To figure out how changes in forestation would affect biodiversity, the researchers used a global biodiversity model called AIM-BIO. The model includes 8,428 species across five taxonomic groups (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and vascular plants), and looks at the relationship between a species' occurrence and the environment.

First, the scientists selected species in the various biomes based on how sensitive they were to changes in forest land use. Then they looked at the distribution of each species under current and projected climate conditions, accounting for things like conservation status. Next, they created habitat suitability maps and combined these with data on carbon sequestration potential. That allowed them to see where habitat suitability, a proxy for biodiversity, and carbon sequestration potential aligned — or diverged.

The researchers found that within tropical and subtropical biomes, moist broadleaf forests offered the biggest win-wins for climate and biodiversity. There were also areas within coniferous forest that were suitable. However, establishing trees in tropical and subtropical savannas, shrublands and grasslands could displace existing biodiversity, while also disrupting existing pathways of carbon sequestration, the authors note.

In temperate biomes, coniferous forests had the highest habitat suitability index, and relatively high carbon sequestration rates. However this forest type covers a relatively small area. Temperate grasslands, savannas and shrublands were least suitable for AR from a biodiversity standpoint, though they offered moderate carbon sequestration potential.

The scientists also found considerable variation within biomes. For example, while 38% of subtropical dry broadleaf forest had a relatively high habitat suitability index, in other parts of the biome, they found that AR would put biodiversity at risk. Any AR initiatives would need to carry out more localized assessments and plan carefully, the authors note.

Relationship between the habitat suitability index and carbon sequestration potential (Mg C ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹) across biomes. Each point represents a biome, with bubble size indicating the biome area (Mha). Bubbles in green represent tropical biomes, pink represents temperate biomes, and all remaining biomes are shown in orange. Image courtesy of Wijenayake, et. al., 2026.

“These results align well with our previous understanding that natural climate solutions can only be successful in the long term if they are tailored to supporting native biodiversity,” writes Thomas Crowther, professor at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, by email.

Wijenayake notes that the 5 degree scale used in study is relatively coarse, and more suited to analysis at a global scale. One next step would be to run a similar analysis with higher resolution, though that would entail acquiring additional data.

Still, biodiversity and carbon aren't the whole story, Wijenayake says. Many areas with potential for AR are in developing economies, where land is also needed for farming. Her next step is to add data on agricultural impacts, to see where carbon, biodiversity and agricultural opportunities align.

Paul Smith, secretary-general at the nonprofit Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) in the U.K., says the study is "useful" and that its findings confirm what we would intuitively expect: plant trees where forests once were, but not in non-tree biomes.

In 2024, BGCI and partners launched The Global Biodiversity Standard (TGBS), an assessment scheme that certifies land management projects, including reforestation, that show a boost for biodiversity.

"We have had instances of TGBS assessments that have failed to achieve net biodiversity uplift because native tree species were planted in grassland habitat, displacing grassland species," Smith says.

He also notes that the study assumes afforestation and reforestation use native species; whereas, in fact, many use nonnative species. This can displace biodiversity, disrupt water cycles, fail to maximize carbon sequestration, and more. Wijenayake has experienced that problem herself. As an undergraduate student, she interned and later worked on an U.N.-funded ecosystem restoration project in Sri Lanka's hill country, planting eucalyptus, pine and acacia seedlings with members of local communities. Projects need to show results quickly, she says, so they often rely on nonnative, fast-growing species, or plant trees in any seemingly available space, without fully considering the value of existing ecosystems. At the time, she says, she didn't realize the ecological implications.

"That's in our image since childhood, planting trees is beneficial," Wijenayake says, but the reality is more nuanced, and planting trees isn't always the same as ecosystem restoration.

"I want to change the mindset of the young[er] generation," she says.

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[Reimagining Education and Action: SDG Action Summit 2026 in review](#)

Reimagining education as a catalyst for real-world change, the International School for Better Beginnings (ISBB), a K-12 educational institution recognized by the United Nations & UNESCO, and Global Changemaker Schools, a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting education for sustainable development (ESD) successfully staged the SDG Action Summit at the Glorietta Activity Center last February 24, 2026, bringing sustainability education and citizen action to the heart of Makati. This event was supported by Glorietta and by the European Union-Philippines Green Economy Partnership.

The event gathered over 80 local & international NGOs, United Nations agencies, national and local government units, youth-led initiatives, social enterprises, and schools – making it the largest SDG-focused public engagement event ever held in the Philippines centered on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Now in its 9th iteration, this SDG Action Summit marks a major milestone for its organizers, with plans already underway to bring the initiative to more cities and municipalities nationwide. The event is a huge feat for the high school students who led in organizing the event.

Guided by the theme “Be the change for people & planet; Act now,” the summit aimed to mainstream the SDGs among Filipinos as a global blueprint for local action. It emphasized practical ways citizens can help address pressing issues such as climate change, poverty, and inequality through everyday acts of kindness, responsible consumption, volunteering, and community-based solutions.

Over 1,000 participants comprised of students, teachers and the general public attended the SDG Action Summit. The event featured:

- 80+ speakers across topics including AI and marine conservation, gender equality and social entrepreneurship, and cross-sectoral collaboration for the SDGs
- 40+ exhibitors showcasing SDG-centered initiatives
- Real-time volunteer sign-ups and engagement with organizations like iVolunteer Philippines, Good Neighbors Philippines, 350 Pilipinas, and more

During the Opening Ceremony, Mr. Matija Kovač of the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office in the Philippines delivered a message encouraging the youth to be confident, test bold and even unconventional ideas, and never underestimate the power of local action. He also challenged participants to apply pressure and remind the world that “good enough is no longer good enough” until the global goals are achieved by 2030.

In his keynote address, Mr. Edwine Carrie, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP Philippines, underscored the critical role of young people in advancing the SDGs. He highlighted

the energy, innovation, and community awareness of the youth, encouraging young Filipinos to begin SDG action within their own communities and harness technology and data to drive meaningful change. He noted the exceptional enthusiasm and commitment of Filipino youth, affirming that the future of sustainable development lies in how they choose to shape it.

Founder and CEO of the host organization, Global Changemaker Schools, Ilan Enverga echoed these sentiments by adding that “sustainable development can only be achieved with cross-sector and intergenerational collaboration. The best government policies and private sector innovations will fail without the activation and participation of civil society. The SDGs are not a single-sector project, but a whole-of-society transformation; and this transformation can only happen with the education and empowerment of Filipino society.”

The SDG Action Summit reaffirms that lasting change is driven by collective effort and youth leadership. Through continued collaboration and action aligned with the SDGs, Filipinos have the opportunity to shape a future that is equitable, resilient, and sustainable—ensuring that no Filipino is left behind.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Marcos: Climate crisis 'greatest existential test for all'](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Tuesday (New York time) warned that climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity, especially for vulnerable nations.

“For the Philippines, the climate crisis is not a future risk, it is for us a present reality. It reshapes our coastlines, our communities, and even the Filipino psyche,” Marcos said during the special plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters here.

Marcos also emphasized the mental health impact on youth, citing a 2022 survey which showed that young Filipinos have the highest vulnerability to climate anxiety.

Standing by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, Marcos renewed his call on developed and industrialized nations to fulfill their obligations to cut greenhouse gas emissions and provide new, additional financing for climate adaptation and loss and damage.

Marcos emphasized that the Philippines was chosen to host the Board of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, in an effort to address loss and damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change.

“And as host country of the Board, we commit to ensure the Fund’s governance maintains equitable, transparent, and needs-based allocation of resources,” he said.

Marcos said the Philippines also joined the movement for the International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) issuance of an advisory opinion on the obligation of states in respect to climate change.

“And we were gratified by the ICJ confirmation that States have a legal obligation under international law to prevent climate harm,” he said.

The opinion confirms that states have an obligation to protect the environment from greenhouse gas emissions and act with due diligence and cooperation to fulfill this obligation.

Marcos noted that in 2025, the Philippines allocated 18 percent of its national budget to climate-related expenditures, adding that the country established the Climate Change Expenditure Tagging system to track and to align budget priorities with the National Climate Change Action Plan.

Marcos also cited the Philippines’ hosting of the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and first International Conference on Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution in 2024 to address climate crisis.

“And as my country confronts its climate vulnerability directly, we extend our hand to other countries. The Philippines welcomes South-South or triangular cooperation, capacity-building arrangements, and the exchange of knowledge and technology,” he said.

“The climate crisis knows no borders. And it is by standing together, uniting in purpose, that we shall survive and overcome.”

Marcos: No real progress without women's full participation

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday (local time) emphasized that meaningful progress can only be achieved if there is women's participation in development efforts and decision-making processes.

Speaking at the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York City, Marcos said the status of women remains one of the most fundamental measures of a nation's progress.

"We gather here to discuss what is, in truth, one of the most fundamental measures of a nation's progress: the status of its women," he said.

Marcos noted that countries often measure development through economic growth, infrastructure, technology, and trade.

He, however, said there is a "human measure" that determines whether a society is really moving forward.

"We often speak of development in terms of economic growth, infrastructure, technology, or trade. But there is a simpler and more human measure: How are the women doing," Marcos said.

Marcos said societies advance when women are educated, safe, and able to lead and participate.

"If women are educated, safe, able to work, able to lead, able to decide the course of their own lives — then a society is moving forward. If they are not, then no level of prosperity can truly be called progress," he said.

He stressed that women must be present whenever important decisions are made, including in government, business, science, diplomacy, and peacebuilding.

He also cited the many contributions of Filipino women in shaping the Philippines' democracy, economy, and national identity.

Marcos said women in the country have long served as leaders in government and business, as innovators, educators, health workers, entrepreneurs, and as the steady strength within families and communities.

"In the Philippines, we are proud to say that we have long believed that empowering women is not merely a matter of fairness — it is a cornerstone of nation-building," he said.

Marcos also emphasized the women's crucial role in addressing global challenges such as conflict, climate change, economic uncertainty, and rapid technological advancement.

"We cannot hope to solve the great challenges of our time if half of our humanity is excluded from shaping those solutions," he said.

The CSW serves as the UN's principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment.

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MANILA STANDARD

[CCC, MMDA join forces to boost climate resilience in Metro Manila](#)

By: John Lester Naguna

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) have begun talks to align metro-wide operations with national climate policies, aiming to bolster the resilience of the National Capital Region (NCR) against increasing environmental threats.

The agencies met at the MMDA Central Office last month to identify priority areas where urban management programs can be integrated with the country's long-term climate frameworks, specifically the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023–2050 and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

The meeting focused on the NCR's status as one of the country's most densely populated and climate-vulnerable areas, facing chronic risks from extreme rainfall, flooding, sea-level rise and urban heat.

"We recognize MMDA's central role in managing drainage systems, flood control facilities, transport networks, solid waste operations and disaster response mechanisms that are increasingly affected by climate change," said CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje.

Borje added the goal is to "institutionalize a climate lens" across metro systems to ensure current infrastructure investments remain viable against future climate risks.

The NAP, developed under President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s administration, serves as the primary blueprint for these efforts.

The CCC urged the MMDA to adopt a systemic, risk-informed approach to urban governance that considers both immediate disaster reduction and long-term low-carbon development.

The collaboration seeks to consolidate high-impact initiatives into a "climate-smart metro framework."

By synchronizing efforts, the agencies hope to protect critical infrastructure and safeguard communities through a unified "whole-of-metro" approach.

CCC: Systemic change vital in anti-plastic bid

By: Marita Moaje

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is expanding its anti-plastic advocacy from periodic awareness campaigns to a sustained push for behavior change and systemic reform.

CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje said through its “Bawal Plastik Dito” (plastic is banned here) online campaign, the agency wants to reduce reliance on disposables and point out that it is essential to strengthening climate resilience, particularly in the Philippines, which remains highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters.

He said the campaign underscores the need to treat plastic pollution as part of the broader climate agenda.

“Single-use plastics are not just a waste issue, they are a climate issue. From production to disposal, plastics contribute to emissions, degrade ecosystems, and place additional burdens on communities already exposed to climate impacts,” Borje said.

Riding on the momentum of January’s Zero Waste Month, and on its earlier “Bawal Plastik Dito” sticker-pack initiative, the CCC has transformed the campaign into a year-long digital information drive.

The initiative aims to move public engagement beyond clean-up activities and toward concrete, everyday actions that reduce dependence on single-use plastics (SUPs).

The agency, through a series of informational and interactive materials on its online platforms, seeks to reinforce message recall, encourage responsible consumption, and promote sustainable alternatives to disposable plastics.

“Reducing our dependence on disposability is a necessary step toward building climate resilience,” Borje said.

The expanded campaign also supports the implementation of existing plastic waste policies by translating national commitments into practical and actionable guidance for individuals, communities and institutions.

The CCC stressed that addressing the worsening plastic pollution ultimately requires rethinking consumption patterns and redesigning systems that currently depend on disposability, aligning development pathways with long-term environmental sustainability.

These solutions, Borje said, are within reach but require collective action.

“By encouraging practical choices and supporting systemic change, we can reduce plastic pollution while advancing climate adaptation and ecological protection,” he said.

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[CCC joins PH–UK officials to advance climate resilience at 6th Climate Change and Environment Dialogue](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) joined key government officials from the Philippines and the United Kingdom (UK) at the 6th UK–Philippines Climate Change and Environment (CCE) Dialogue, which reinforced both countries' commitment to advancing climate resilience, sustainable growth, and green finance.

The dialogue featured several sessions covering key areas of climate and environmental action. Participants explored the partnership of two island nations working as one and discussed science-based localization and resilience building, including opportunities in the blue economy. Other topics also addressed nature and sustainable growth that highlighted the potential of biodiversity credits, as well as mobilizing climate finance to support a just transition.

Meanwhile, the CCC presented updates on the implementation and localization of the Philippines' National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which underscored the importance of translating national adaptation strategies into concrete actions at the local level. Developed under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr, the NAP outlines the country's long-term roadmap for strengthening climate resilience across key sectors and communities.

“Localization is essential to ensure that the National Adaptation Plan delivers meaningful outcomes for communities on the ground,” said CCC Deputy Executive Director Romell Antonio Cuenca on behalf of CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje. “By aligning national priorities with local realities, we can help local governments identify risks, develop practical adaptation solutions, and strengthen resilience in vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, water, and coastal ecosystems.”

The Commission also highlighted ongoing efforts to support provinces in translating climate risk assessments into locally driven adaptation initiatives and investment-ready projects. Through localized climate analytics and partnerships with national government agencies, development partners, and local institutions, the CCC continues to strengthen risk-informed planning and programming across the country.

“This shows how much we can achieve together; we bring the data and expertise and share the purpose of the table, and today we found that ultimate partnership which is really strong,” UK Ambassador to the Philippines Sarah Hulton said, expressing her appreciation for the strengthened collaboration with the Philippines and highlighting her keen interest in advancing joint efforts as she wrapped up the discussions. “We remain firmly committed to working with you and to turning today's agreements into concrete action in the years ahead.”

The dialogue concluded with the signing of the Partnership Statement between the Philippines and UK, reaffirming that climate action is not the responsibility of a single nation but a shared

commitment that requires collaboration, partnerships, and coordinated efforts across countries and communities.

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