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By: Jag Lyra Costamero

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

AL JAZEERA

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Europe urgently needs stronger measures to respond to climate change risks, a new report has warned.

The 32-paged assessment, published on Monday by the European Environment Agency (EEA), asserted that the bloc is not prepared to respond to the increasingly severe risks that climate change poses. The policy adviser's first-ever report on the threats faced by the world's fastest-warming continent warns of "catastrophic" consequences.

"Hundreds of thousands of people would die from heat waves, and economic losses from coastal floods alone could exceed 1 trillion euros (\$1.1 trillion) per year," the report read.

Urgent policies targeting healthcare systems, farming and critical infrastructure are needed, it continued, noting that extreme heat and drought events, once rare, are becoming more common.

"If decisive action is not taken now, most climate risks identified [in the report] could reach critical or catastrophic levels by the end of this century," the analysis said, urging the EU to integrate climate risk into budgets and policies across sectors.

Those risks likely will not diminish even if the world meets the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping average temperatures no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, the researchers, who analysed five sectors ranging from business to health, noted.

An EU monitor recently noted that the world had crossed the 1.5C warming threshold last year, as 2023 broke records. However, the target has not been permanently breached because it depends on measurements taken over decades.

Climate-related hazards on food production are especially set to hit southern Europe hard, the report said, noting that less than 2 percent of EU farming subsidies are spent on helping farmers manage risks.

The report also recommended that the EU set requirements to protect outdoor workers in agriculture, construction and other industries from extreme heat or floods.

New “Eurocodes” for building infrastructure are also needed, because of mounting risks to critical infrastructure, such as floods damaging roads or extreme heat warping train tracks.

The report also called for the EU to design funding instruments to help countries prepare their healthcare systems to cope with climate change, which hits vulnerable and elderly people particularly hard.

Climate-related events accounted for 85,000 to 145,000 human fatalities across Europe over the past 40 years, according to the EEA. Extreme heatwaves in 2022 caused more than 60,000 deaths on the continent, researchers found separately.

Europe has faced a wave of severe climate events in recent years. In 2021, unprecedented floods swept across Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, leading to costs of 44 billion euros (\$48bn).

The same year, Italy saw more than 150,000 acres (60,700 hectares) of forest burned in severe wildfires, the largest number in at least a decade. In 2023, flash floods in Slovenia caused damage estimated at more than 10 percent of the country’s GDP.

Combined, economic losses from weather and climate-related extremes in EU countries exceeded 650 billion euros (\$711bn) from 1980 to 2022.

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[Be decisive in addressing climate change challenges, group urges government](#)

By: Aaron Recuenco

An environmental advocacy group urged the national government to decisively address the challenges of climate change and its impact to the environment, saying failure to do so may result in more landslides in different parts of the country.

Based on the assessment of the Makakalikasan Nature Party Philippines, the Philippine government's response in addressing climate change remains inadequate as some local government units remain generally blind as to the course of actions they can adopt and the amount of funds required for climate extreme proofing.

If this would go on, Makakalikasan Nature Party Philippines head Roy Cabonegro said this would result in climate change adverse effects not only to the environment but also to the lives of the Filipino people and the country's economy.

"The government appears to be not that serious despite the deaths of a number of people in Mindanao," said Cabonegro in an interview over dzRH, referring to the recent landslide that hit Davao de Oro.

He said Mindanao has become vulnerable to torrential rains and landslides caused by the extreme changes in weather patterns.

Of the local government unit in Mindanao, he said only Bukidnon province has an existing Local Climate Change Action Plan, which is a primary requirement to determine the amount of resources needed to mitigate the impact of climate change and its climate extreme manifestations.

A recent study made by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) showed that in the Southeast Asian region where countries like the Philippines are situated, climate change has resulted in extreme dry spells caused by El Niño and frequent torrential rains triggered by La Niña.

Because these extreme weather conditions have already altered soil integrity that caused land degradation, NASA warned of more landslides happening in different parts of the region.

"Climate change exacerbates this situation due to the extreme weather conditions and its impacts."

Cabonegro said climate change and its impact have now evolved into a political issue as the situation puts more lives in danger from landslides and other climate change induced disasters.

He called on the public to reconsider electing leaders that will carry the Green Agenda, a policy direction on climate change that will redirect public consciousness into adapting measures and course of actions that are focused on the mitigation requirements of climate change, as well as its impact and outcome brought by climate extremes.

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[DENR, European Union unveil P3.65 B program to help Philippines combat climate change, adapt 'Green Economy'](#)

By: Martin Sadongdong

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and European Union (EU) launched on Monday, March 11, a P3.65 billion program that would help mitigate environmental degradation and combat climate change while fostering economic growth and social inclusivity in the country.

The "Green Economy Programme for the Philippines" (GEPP) aims to accelerate the country's transition towards a greener and more sustainable economy, said Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

By transitioning towards a "Green Economy", Lozaga said the country will be able to reduce its waste and plastic usage, ensure water supply and wastewater treatment, promote energy efficiency, and deploy renewable energy to address the impacts of the climate crisis .

"Embracing green practices fosters resource efficiency, waste reduction, energy conservation, and optimizes natural resource use. This not only supports the conservation of our environment but also enhances our global competitiveness while fostering self-reliance and sustainability," Lozaga explained.

"Transitioning to a Green Economy creates a wealth of opportunities for job creation as well. From renewable energy to sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism, new avenues for employment will emerge as part of a truly just transition that can address unemployment while fostering innovation and skills development aligned with the trajectory of the emerging global market for the Green Economy," she added.

The GEPP is designed to run from 2023 to 2028 with a budget of €60 million (P3.67 billion) in the form of a grant. The program operates on three distinct levels: the national government, local government units (LGUs), and private sector.

At the national level, the DENR and EU will mobilize expertise to facilitate policy formulation and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.

At the LGU level, they will drive a circular economy transition and introduce innovation in order to accelerate the implementation of the program. The circular economy is a model of production and consumption which implies reducing waste to a minimum.

"We recognize that LGUs are pivotal in driving the circular economy,

providing fertile ground for innovative and scalable solutions across the landscape," Loyzaga said.

There will be 60 LGUs that will be covered by the program, including 10 identified pilot LGUs namely Baguio City, Caloocan City, Quezon City, Pasig City, Puerto Princesa City in Palawan, Metro Manila, Ormoc City in Leyte, Davao City, Island Garden City of Samal in Davao del Norte, and Siargao Islands.

Meanwhile, the GEPP also requires collaboration with the private sector as it "creates better conditions for private sector investment."

"It also addresses the development and stabilization of our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). It supports waste reduction strategies and circular solutions," Loyzaga noted.

The project will also carry out initiatives to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy technologies and enhancing energy efficiency measures to mitigate climate change impacts.

"A Green Economy provides us with both adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the impacts of climate change. For a country facing extreme weather events and the potential for environmental degradation, enhancing resilience is fundamental," Loyzaga said.

The environment chief said that by working in these areas, the Green Economy Programme aims to achieve, amongst others, the following results over the next five years:

- an estimated 25,000 tonnes plastic recycled and reintegrated into the productive chains;
- at least thirty (30) LGUs to introduce sources of separate collection systems for plastic waste for recycling;
- at least 6,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to apply sustainable production practices through circular supply chain management; and
- creation of at least 2,500 new 'green' jobs in businesses linked to the circular economy.

The implementers of the Green Economy Programme will include Germany's development agency GIZ, and Expertise France.

Notably, Spain, Finland, Germany, and France have also made financial contributions to make the program a reality. Other European Member States including Austria, Netherlands, and Sweden will contribute their expertise to ensure the success of the initiative.

The program will also help in achieving the goals of various international climate commitments and national environmental policies of the Philippines. These include the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production, and the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law.

"The successful launch of the Green Economy Programme for the Philippines is part of the EU's new Global Gateway Strategy and shows our commitment worldwide to combating climate change while promoting inclusive economic development," EU Ambassador Luc Véron said.

"By working hand in hand with DENR and other key stakeholders, we aim to foster a more resilient and prosperous future for the people of the Philippines," he shared.

MANILA STANDARD

[Europe must do more against 'catastrophic' climate risks: EU](#)

Europe could suffer “catastrophic” consequences from climate change if it fails to take urgent and decisive action to adapt to risks, a new EU analysis warned Monday.

Areas in southern Europe are most at risk, the European Environment Agency (EEA) said in its first report on the climate risks the continent faces.

The dangers include fires, water shortages and their effects on agricultural production, while low-lying coastal regions face threats of flooding, erosion and saltwater intrusion.

“Many of these risks have already reached critical levels and could become catastrophic without urgent and decisive action,” the agency said.

That doesn't mean northern Europe is spared the negative impact, as floods in Germany and forest fires in Sweden have demonstrated in recent years.

“Extreme heat, drought, wildfires, and flooding, as experienced in recent years, will worsen in Europe even under optimistic global warming scenarios and affect living conditions throughout the continent,” the EEA warned.

The report lists 36 risks related to climate in Europe, 21 of which demand more immediate action and eight were “particularly urgent.”

At the top of the list were risks to ecosystems, mainly relating to coastal and marine ones.

For instance, the combination of heat waves as well as acidification and oxygen depletion of the seas and other human-caused factors such as pollution and eutrophication — meaning an excess of nutrients which collapses aquatic ecosystem — and fishing, threaten marine ecosystems, the report noted.

“This can result in substantial biodiversity loss, including mass mortality events, and declines in ecosystem services,” it said.

European governments and populations unanimously recognising the risks and agreeing to do more, faster should be the priority, according to the EEA.

“We need to do more, to have stronger policies,” Yla-Mononen stressed.

Despite the alarm, the agency also acknowledged “considerable progress” made “in understanding the climate risks they are facing and preparing for them,” among member states.

“These events are the new normal,” EEA director Leena Yla-Mononen told a press briefing ahead of the report’s release.

“It should be the wake-up call. The final wake-up call,” she added.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[DENR, EU unveil 'Green Economy Program' to tackle waste, climate](#)

By: Faith Argosino

To help the Philippines transition to a more sustainable economy, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the European Union (EU) recently launched a program on circular economy and waste prevention.

In a statement on Monday, the EU said the Green Economy Program aims to “mitigate environmental degradation and combat climate change while fostering economic growth and social inclusivity.”

“At the core of the Green Economy Program for the Philippines is our collective commitment to promote circular economy practices and waste prevention initiatives. Through collaborative efforts and strategic partnerships, we are determined to pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient future for our nation,” DENR chief Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said.

According to the EU, the program is expected to run until 2028 with a budget of €60 million (P3.65 billion). The initiative includes the following interventions:

- Building partnerships, enhancing policy frameworks, and establishing a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform, which the German Agency will implement for International Development;
- Local government action and stakeholder engagement: In collaboration with the private sector and civil society, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will help empower local government units to take proactive measures towards sustainable waste management and circular economy practices;
- Private sector engagement and financial innovation: France’s technical assistance agency will help engage the private sector and financial industry in promoting sustainable business practices and innovative financial mechanisms that support circular economy objectives;
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency deployment: the project will also carry out initiatives to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy technologies and enhance energy efficiency measures to mitigate climate change impacts.

Through these interventions, the program aims to recycle and reintegrate 25,000 tons of plastic into productive chains, help 30 local government units introduce sources of separate collection systems for plastic waste recycling, assist 6,000 micro, small, and medium enterprises in applying sustainable production practices, and generate 2,500 “green” jobs linked to the circular economy within the business sector.

The EU defines the circular economy as “a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible.”

“The program will also help Philippine authorities to achieve the goals of a number of the country’s international climate commitments and national environmental policies,” EU said.

“These include the Philippines’ Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plan, Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production, and the Extended Producer Responsibility law,” it added.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

Kapampangan youth urged to contribute to biodiversity conservation

By: Jag Lyra Costamero

The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) regional office in Central Luzon has partnered with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the conduct of Kilos Kabataan para sa Saribuhay [Biodiversity] forum which is meant to encourage the youth to do their fair share in pushing for biodiversity conservation and natural resources management.

About 90 students from National University Clark, Holy Cross College-Pampanga, City College of San Fernando Pampanga, and Our Lady of Fatima University Pampanga Campus participated in the first leg of the forum.

Threats to the Philippines' biodiversity

The Philippines is one of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world. It plays an important part of the global biodiversity.

It ranks fourth in the world in bird endemism, fifth in mammal endemism, fifth in number of plant species, and eight in reptile endemism.

Central Luzon makes a huge contribution to the country's rich flora and fauna.

The province of Aurora is home to the Northern Sierra Madre forest monitor, and the Philippine Eagle.

Found in the forests of Subic Bay and Bataan are the world's largest bats including the giant golden crowned flying fox and the large flying fox.

The Pantabangan-Carranglan watershed in Nueva Ecija province is a habitat to *Rafflesia consueloae*, the smallest among the giant *Rafflesia* flowers.

In addition, Mount Arayat, in Pampanga is home to 49 species of trees and plants, 86 species of birds, 14 species of mammals, and 11 species of reptiles.

Mount Tapulao in Zambales, the second largest mountain in Luzon, has 305 species of plants and 141 species of animals. Found in it are seven insectivorous bats, three of which are endemic in the country including the yellow-faced horseshoe bat, large-eared horseshoe bat, and orange-fingered myotis.

Bird species that are also seen in the region's forests are Philippine Eagle-owl, Luzon bleeding heart pigeon, and ashy thrush.

In terms of marine biodiversity, the coasts of Bagac and Morong in Bataan, and the beaches of Aurora are known nesting grounds of three out of five species of marine turtles in the country. These are the olive ridley, hawksbill, and green sea turtle.

Tridacna gigas, one of the world's largest shells, can be found in Bataan and Zambales waters.

DENR communications development officer Joshua Rei Ubaldo highlighted that most of these species are threatened due to climate change.

"Climate change is one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss. We don't just realize but animals and even plants are moving poleward, meaning from the equator, they are climbing, going to the North pole, or going down to the South pole in order to escape the heat. With climate change, most of our plants and animals are dying," he said.

Other reasons for damage to biodiversity include illegal human activities such as poaching, wildlife trade, and fishing.

The grave effects of climate change on the country's biodiversity call for collaboration among stakeholders in protecting the planet.

Ubaldo underscored that the youth sector can make a big contribution on biodiversity conservation as it comprises about 30 percent of the country's population.

"What does this mean is that you [the youth] have a voice and you need to use it. You need to use your voice to speak up for our biodiversity that can't speak for itself, literally," he stated.

He encouraged the young population to plant trees and mangroves, participate in river and coastal cleanup and rehabilitation, and conserve energy and water.

The youth can also do their part in reducing, reusing, and recycling; refusing potential waste sources; and participating in environmental dialogues.

Promoting and mainstreaming the country's biodiversity

The country's struggle with biodiversity loss due to climate change and illegal and irresponsible human activities should not stop within oneself. The advocacy for biodiversity conservation and natural resource management should be reverberated.

Eco-defender and storyteller Celine Murillo emphasized that the youth may become young storytellers by utilizing the Internet and social media to promote and mainstream the country's biodiversity.

“Start by knowing... Ang pagkilala sa ating sariling saribuhay ay isang paraan ng pagpaparangal at paglaban. Sa pamamagitan nito, maaalala natin at maipagdiriwang ang malalim na ugnayan natin sa ating tinubuang lupa, at ang pagkadakila ng ating mga ninuno[Knowing our own biodiversity is a way of honoring and fighting. Through this, we will remember and celebrate our deep connection in our native land, and the greatness of our ancestors,” she pressed.

Given that humans are part of it, Murillo further pressed that knowing biodiversity is a way of reclaiming and repelling the narrative of Filipino identity despite the country's history of colonialism.

The youth may produce content and stories, join organizations, or even form their own organizations and champion biodiversity against the odds.

Filipinos are highly dependent on the country's rich biodiversity and natural resources.

Biodiversity is a source of timber, food, fiber, and medicine. It also provides water for irrigation, drinking, energy, and industrial uses.

It is likewise a source of livelihood and food for everyone's tables.

Given these, PIA Assistant Regional Head Carlo Lorenzo Datu urged the youth to heed the call for biodiversity conservation and natural resource management.

“Let's make a commitment today to educate ourselves and others about the importance of preserving our environment. Let's use our online and offline platforms to promote biodiversity and join hands as advocates for our planet,” he said.

The youth's pledge

For students, responding to the call for the conservation of biodiversity should go beyond the campus. For campus journalists, stories about the environment should serve the community and society at large.

Campus journalist Patrick Bryan Porras pledged that he would continue writing stories to educate and mobilize the youth to take care of the environment and biodiversity.

“This should serve as a reminder that we, the youth of this generation, can do so much even in our little ways to help our environment regain its original features. Our publication as well is posting a call for action to take care of our biodiversity and our environment, and we go to far-flung communities to showcase their stories related to our environment,” he shared.

Named as the Most Outstanding Campus Journalist in Luzon for 2023 during the Outstanding Campus Press Awards of the University of the Assumption, Porras encouraged other journalists to be catalysts of change by participating in the preservation of biodiversity through journalism.

“Behind our commitment to campus journalism is our responsibility to preserve our biodiversity and our planet at large so that the next generation will still benefit from what we are enjoying on our planet right now,” he stated.

Everything in this world is connected to everything else. Humans must recognize that they are not only living on the planet, but they are also part of it. Hence, each individual must do their share in protecting biodiversity and natural resources as that is what keeps everyone alive.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines, EU team up to drive circular economy, tackle climate change](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the European Union (EU) on Monday launched a P3.67 billion program that aims to reduce waste and combat climate change.

The Green Economy Programme in the Philippines (GEPP) aims to improve waste management and support the country's transition to a circular economy, or the model for production and consumption that minimizes waste and extends the life cycle of products.

The program also seeks to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy technologies and enhance energy efficiency measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The Philippines is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. It also faces a significant plastic waste problem.

"By prioritizing sustainable practices and being mindful of the utilization of natural resources throughout their life cycles, we can co-generate prosperity and resilience that benefits both present and future generations," Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said during the launch.

"Ultimately, the benefits extend beyond the economy, impacting our own public health and well-being," she added.

EU Ambassador to the Philippines Luc Véron said that the five-year initiative will enhance the capacity of the Philippines to live up to climate commitments, such as the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

Under this pledge, the Philippines aims to slash its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030. However, a significant portion of this ambitious commitment relies on foreign funding and assistance.

Collab with gov't, private sector

GEPP is designed to work with all levels of government and the private sector.

A policy dialogue platform will be established at the national level to facilitate the formulation of policies, support the development of a natural circular economy roadmap, and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.

EU experts will work with local government units (LGUs) to help define and implement a circular economy, incorporating human rights and gender-responsive perspectives.

The pilot areas of the program include Baguio City, Caloocan City, Quezon City, Pasig City, Puerto Princesa City in Palawan, Metro Manila, Ormoc City in Leyte, Davao City, Island Garden City of Samal in Davao del Norte and Siargao Islands.

By 2028, GEPP will recycle and reintegrate into productive chains around 20,000 tons of plastic waste and have at least 30 LGUs implement separate collection systems for plastic waste for recycling.

The program also aims to create better conditions for investment and support waste reduction strategies and circular solutions of micro, small and medium enterprises.

“We will be looking at technologies that can address our waste or garbage through technologies on recycling, repurposing, upcycling. These are the technologies that can support our efforts towards a circular economy,” Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones said.

GEPP will also support the creation of around 2,500 green jobs in businesses linked to the circular economy model.

The financing agreement for GEPP was signed in October 2023.

The project is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Expertise France with Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

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