



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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### ECO BUSINESS

#### [Financing for development: Reforming global systems to drive progress](#)

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## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[GSIS, JICA hold 1st joint meeting on disaster resilience project](#)**

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) convened their first Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) meeting on Thursday to advance their technical cooperation project aimed at strengthening the financial resilience of public assets against natural disasters.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Health professionals: Advocate and collaborate about climate change](#)**

By: Ludwig Federigan

As we gather in this spirit of collective action and shared purpose, I want to address an urgent and existential challenge that affects us all: climate change.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[\[Opinion\] Women scientists championing Philippine sustainability](#)**

By: Daniel Maches

There are not many women scientists in the country, and even rarer are those who genuinely champion sustainability – a crucial yet often overlooked aspect in mainstream development discourses.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

## **DAILY TRIBUNE**

### **[Beyond Earth Hour: A lasting commitment to water security](#)**

By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

This Saturday, 22 March, marks an important event for our planet — Earth Hour 2025. Since 2011, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) has joined this global movement. After becoming part of CCC in 2022, I actively support and personally take part in this annual initiative.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **[CCC pushes science-based, data-driven climate resilience efforts in Lake Sebu](#)**

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has emphasized the importance of science-based, data-driven preservation and conservation efforts in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, as part of a key integrated, long-term strategy to build climate resilience in the community.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **[Olympians make climate plea to IOC presidential candidates](#)**

More than 400 Olympians from nearly 90 countries around the world have joined in a call for the winner of next week's International Olympic Committee presidential election to make climate their top priority.

The signatories to an open letter calling for IOC action on climate change range from Australia's most decorated Olympian, swimmer Emma McKeon, to Cyrille Tchatchet II, a weightlifter who represented the refugee team at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

"To the incoming President, we ask that over the coming years and the course of your presidency one issue be above all others: the care of our planet," the letter read.

"Rising temperatures and extreme weather are already disrupting competition schedules, putting iconic venues at risk and affecting the health of athletes and fans.

"Extreme heat is raising real concerns about whether Summer Games can be held safely in future years, and Winter Games are becoming harder to organize with reliable snow and ice conditions diminishing annually."

Seven candidates are vying to replace Thomas Bach as president in a ballot of IOC members at Costa Navarino, Greece, on March 20.

The Olympians called for an early meeting with the successful candidate after the election to discuss environmental concerns, and said the IOC must strengthen existing commitments on the cutting of carbon emissions.

They also want the IOC to advocate for "broader environmental action", champion sustainable practices with cities hosting Olympics, and "set a standard" on sponsorship deals with companies which have poor pollution records.

Sailor Hannah Mills was one of the British Olympians who initiated the letter and she said the recent wildfires in Los Angeles, the venue for the 2028 Summer Olympics, had illustrated that climate change was an immediate threat.

The IOC's existing "reduce, compensate, influence" climate commitment includes a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, compensating more than 100% of the residual emissions and encourages stakeholders and fans to act against climate change.

World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe, multiple Olympic swimming champion Kirsty Coventry, who is Zimbabwe's sports minister, and IOC vice president Juan Antonio Samaranch are among the favorites to succeed Bach.

International cycling chief David Lappartient, Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan, International Gymnastics Federation head Morinari Watanabe and Johan Eliasch, who heads the International Ski Federation, complete the list of candidates.

Prince Feisal said he welcomed the "powerful message from Olympians around the world", while Coe, who has been vocal on the impact of climate change on athletics, said he would be delighted to meet the athlete advocates to "share ideas and initiatives".

"We must use sport as an amplifying voice," Coe added. "I will go to my grave fundamentally believing that sport is a key vehicle for change. It doesn't always happen quickly. It doesn't happen overnight. But I've rarely seen a sport go into any political, cultural or national environment that hasn't actually flicked the dial socially or politically."

Kirst Coventry said: "I am very proud that so many of my fellow athletes have come together to campaign on this vital issue. The athletes have asked for a meeting with the new President, and I promise to prioritize this if I am given the honor of being elected IOC President on 20 March. Protecting our planet is fundamental to my values."

When interviewed by Reuters in January, Eliasch said that environmentalism would be at the heart of his presidency should he win.

## DAILY TRIBUNE

### [Loyzaga highlights Blue carbon initiatives, UK support for ocean conservation](#)

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga has expressed the Philippines' gratitude for the United Kingdom's support through its Blue Planet Fund (BPF), underscoring efforts to protect and develop the country's blue economy.

UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs David Lammy met with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and other Philippine officials during his visit on 8 March, resulting in a joint framework agreement aimed at strengthening cooperation in various areas, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and defense.

Secretary Loyzaga thanked the UK and other development partners in promoting regional and global stability, as well as long-term peace and prosperity. "Although we may be small in terms of land mass, both the Philippines and the UK are large ocean nations with some of the longest coastlines in the world," she remarked. The Philippines and the UK share the characteristics of being small, blue, archipelagic nations with vast ocean territories. For the Philippines, the development of the blue economy has enormous potential, as 86% of its territory is water.

During the Blue Horizon: Accelerating UK-Philippines Blue Economy Partnership panel discussion, Secretary Loyzaga and Secretary Lammy emphasized their countries' shared values and commitment to the inclusive, sustainable economic development of ocean resources, while upholding a rules-based international order and safeguarding critical ecosystems. Both the UK and the Philippines rely on the health and biodiversity of their seas and waterways for food, livelihoods and security.

Funded by the UK's Blue Planet Fund, initiatives in the Philippines focus on climate adaptation, combatting plastic pollution, and protecting crucial marine ecosystems. Among the programs supported are efforts to improve management of marine protected areas in the Verde Island Passage, the Calamianes Islands in Palawan, and the Tañon Strait between Negros and Cebu. Ecotourism, blue carbon measures, and fishery improvement activities are part of these plans to reduce coral reef degradation and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Secretary Loyzaga highlighted two out of eight significant programs supported by the BPF. The first program centers on enhancing sustainable livelihoods by improving the management of marine protected areas in the Verde Island Passage, the Calamianes Islands in Palawan, and the Tañon Strait between Negros and Cebu.

The BPF's Global Fund for Coral Reefs supports these initiatives involving ecotourism, community-based aquaculture, blue carbon, and fishery improvement projects. These efforts aim to mitigate coral reef degradation while alleviating poverty and generating long-term income for communities within these protected areas.

The second program, supported by the BPF, is the Philippines' National Blue Carbon Action Plan (NBCAP), launched on February 26. The NBCAP outlines the Philippine government's strategy for managing blue carbon ecosystems. Secretary Loyzaga emphasized the critical role of restoring mangrove forests, which have been lost to fishponds and brackish water fisheries since the 1950s.

"We need to accelerate the planting of the right species in the right areas and increase protection of our remaining mangrove stands," she noted in her keynote address.

Secretary Loyzaga also stressed that conservation and protection are integral to the country's economic development strategy, stating that these priorities are not afterthoughts or secondary concerns.

"The Philippines is committed to increasing investments in better mechanisms to observe, conserve, and protect our ocean environments," she said. In 2020, the Philippines joined the Global Ocean Alliance (GOA), an initiative launched by the UK to unite countries and organizations committed to achieving the 30x30 target set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This target aims to protect 30% of the world's land and marine areas by 2030 to prevent biodiversity loss and address the climate crisis.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [Financing for development: Reforming global systems to drive progress](#)

The global financial system is failing to meet the challenges of escalating debt, systemic inequalities and intensifying shocks of climate change. Developing economies are at a critical juncture as they strive to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

As the world looks ahead to the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Seville, Spain, in July, the need for systemic reform has never been clearer. Convened by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), a recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development explored actionable solutions.

Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan highlighted the human impact of financial decisions: “The financing gaps we are witnessing today are not just economic challenges; they are moral imperatives. Behind the numbers are billions of people waiting for solutions.”

Reforming the global financial architecture into a tool for equity and growth requires rethinking the roles of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), reshaping financial instruments and fostering innovative approaches to bridging these persistent gaps.

Drawing on perspectives from government officials, academics, leaders from MDBs, private bankers and credit rating agencies, the discussions centred on concrete strategies to close financing gaps, address unsustainable debt, and unlock new resources for development and climate resilience.

#### Bridging the financing gap

Developing countries need US\$4.3 trillion annually to achieve the SDGs, including US\$1.8 trillion for climate action. Yet, the global financial system, rooted in post-World War II priorities, struggles to meet modern challenges. High debt costs and limited concessional financing leave nations unable to invest in essentials like healthcare, education and infrastructure.

MDBs are vital to closing this gap, offering long-term and affordable financing. Yet, strict risk policies and AAA credit rating priorities limit their impact. While innovations like local currency lending show promise, deeper reforms are needed to boost their capacity.

The upcoming FfD4 conference is a chance to reimagine MDBs as enablers of equitable and sustainable growth, beyond traditional lending.



## Breaking the cycle of the debt trap

In more than 25 countries, over 20 per cent of government revenue is spent servicing debt, diverting resources from investments and expenditures that could power the SDGs. High interest rates and currency risks exacerbate this burden, locking countries into cycles of unsustainable borrowing.

Solutions like sustainability-linked bonds and debt-for-nature swaps offer pathways to escape this trap. Egypt's recent debt-for-equity swap demonstrates how such tools can unlock fiscal space for critical development needs. However, their broader adoption depends on global cooperation and reforms to ensure scalability and impact.

These pressing issues will take centre stage at UN Trade and Development's 14th Debt Management Conference, set for 17 to 19 March in Geneva.

Participants from governments, international organisations, academia and civil society will dive deep into ways of innovative and resilient debt management to help developing countries mitigate risks amid rising uncertainty in the global economy.

## Reforming the international financial architecture

Reforming MDB governance has emerged as a priority leading up to FfD4. These institutions often reflect the interests of major shareholders rather than the borrowing nations they serve. Enhanced representation and equitable resource allocation are critical to ensuring effectiveness.

MDBs must embed climate resilience and social equity in their operations while expanding concessional financing to low- and middle-income countries. They also play a crucial role in supporting local currency lending to reduce exchange rate exposure and risks, assisting borrowing nations to manage their debt sustainably.

Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), reserve assets issued by the International Monetary Fund offer another way to boost liquidity. Rechannelling unused SDRs through regional banks, such as the African Development Bank, could provide critical support for cash-strapped nations. To maximise impact, SDR reforms should prioritise vulnerable economies and tie allocations to innovative mechanisms like climate resilience funds.

## Unlocking private capital

Private sector investment remains an underutilised resource for financing development. Perceived risks and weak credit ratings deter capital from flowing into developing

economies. To overcome these barriers, MDBs and governments must establish de-risking mechanisms, such as guarantees, to attract private financing for renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure.

Credit rating agencies also hold substantial influence over borrowing costs. Improving the quality of data and debt management systems is crucial for countries aiming to reduce the influence of credit rating agencies on borrowing costs.

While these agencies play a critical role in global financial markets, their methodologies are focused on credit risk assessment and are not designed to capture the nuanced challenges facing developing economies. This underscores the urgent need for a global regulatory framework that serves to limit the importance of credit rating opinions to new investment opportunities.

### Building climate resilience

Developing economies are bearing the brunt of increasingly frequent and severe climate shocks. To adapt, mitigate risks and transition to low-carbon economies, these nations require additional resources.

Developed countries must fulfil their US\$300 billion annual pledge agreed at the UN climate conference COP29 and complement traditional aid with green financing tools like sustainability-linked bonds.

### Towards Seville: A transformative agenda

The FfD4 conference offers a critical opportunity to lay the foundations for a more effective global financial system, by advancing MDB reforms, scaling innovative financial tools and ensuring climate finance builds resilience. The future of global development depends on the ability to deliver bold and inclusive solutions.

Key priorities at the conference will include:

- Reforming MDB governance and expanding their capacity to lend.
- Strengthening global financial governance to give developing countries greater representation.
- Scaling innovative financial mechanisms, such as debt swaps and blended finance.
- Attracting private capital through de-risking and regulatory reforms.
- Ensuring climate finance is additional and supports long-term adaptation.

The high-stakes conference will not just test political will but also our collective commitment to a more equitable world. The time for action is now.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [GSIS, JICA hold 1st joint meeting on disaster resilience project](#)

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) convened their first Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) meeting on Thursday to advance their technical cooperation project aimed at strengthening the financial resilience of public assets against natural disasters.

The meeting marks a milestone in the three-year project titled "Strengthening Financial Resilience of Public Assets to Natural Disasters by Improvement of Public Insurance," which was formally launched in May 2024 following a November 2023 agreement.

"This joint effort is not just about protecting the future of government assets. With a robust insurance framework, this collaborative mission is a proactive approach in demonstrating the GSIS commitment to build a stronger and safer nation through sustainable infrastructure practices," GSIS President and General Manager Wick Veloso said in a news release.

"Climate change makes disasters more frequent and severe. Old insurance models and archaic underwriting systems no longer serve our needs," he added.

The Philippines ranks highest on the World Risk Index for the third consecutive year in 2024, underscoring the urgency of the initiative. The country has incurred approximately USD23 billion (or about PHP1 trillion) in losses from natural disasters since 1990.

The technical cooperation project is designed to enhance GSIS's underwriting capabilities, improve the capacity of its Insurance Group to calculate replacement costs, and establish accurate insurance premium rates. This initiative will focus on developing an effective Information and Education Campaign (IEC) strategy to raise public awareness about the importance of insurance.

"There is a compelling need for us in the GSIS to harness advanced systems and innovative approaches. We are very happy and grateful to the Government of Japan and JICA for initiating this project. We believe that we can learn a lot from Japan's best practices in public insurance and their ability to inculcate widespread consciousness towards insurance among the general public," GSIS Core Business Sector Executive Vice President Jason Teng said.

The JCC meeting addresses key project components, including determining appropriate replacement costs for public assets, calculating risk-based premium rates, enhancing GSIS underwriting capacity, and promoting public insurance services.

Representatives from the Department of Finance and Bureau of the Treasury joined officials from the GSIS and the JICA in overseeing the project progress.

The project aligns with the Department of Finance's National Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance Strategy and the Bureau of the Treasury's National Asset Registry System. It also supports the administration's Build Better More infrastructure initiatives.

JICA Insurance Expert Team Lead Takeshi Kuwabara previously stated "We believe that this partnership with the Philippine Government opens up new avenues of collaboration. This will enable us to integrate Japanese know-how and expertise with the GSIS to help build its capabilities and processes—creating better products and services to its customers."

Japan is the third-largest insurance market globally, after the United States and China.

In contrast, the Philippines has a largely underdeveloped insurance sector due to limited awareness and affordability. However, the GSIS is helping to boost the sector's performance.

In 2024, it reported a net income of PHP136 billion, up 21.4 percent from 2023, with general insurance net income rising 43 percent to PHP10 billion. The GSIS remains the largest state insurer with a net worth of PHP62 billion.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [Health professionals: Advocate and collaborate about climate change](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

AS we gather in this spirit of collective action and shared purpose, I want to address an urgent and existential challenge that affects us all: climate change.

The Philippines is a nation vulnerable to climate risks, as evidenced by our geographical location in the western Pacific Ocean and the dreaded Ring of Fire. From 2022-2024, we have been ranked first in the World Risk Report as the most at-risk country from disasters. This distinction bears consequences that are not merely statistics but painful realities for millions of Filipinos who face the constant threat of typhoons, flooding and recent extreme heat conditions that qualify as a heat wave.

Last year, we were hit with six consecutive typhoons (Kristine, Leon, Marce, Nika, Ofel and Pepito) within a single month, an unprecedented event exacerbated by climate change. According to the World Weather Attribution, these severe weather patterns are not random occurrences but a testament to the escalating impact of a warming planet. Filipinos experience these calamities firsthand, losing their homes, livelihoods and lives. The financial and logistical burdens of responding to such disasters escalate with each event, straining our resources and stretching our communities thin.

For many, the impact of climate change translates into a daily struggle for survival: uprooted families and displaced communities. Children miss school as their families grapple with the fallout from these disasters and existing disparities in health access are exacerbated. The most vulnerable among us, those living in poverty, bear the heaviest burdens. They lack the resources or support necessary to withstand the shocks of climate-related events, making resilience a distant dream.

What then is the role of health professionals in addressing the climate crisis? As health professionals, you stand at the forefront of this struggle as healers of physical ailments and advocates for social justice and environmental sustainability. Your expertise places you in a unique position to contribute to climate resilience and public health in profound ways.

First, we must acknowledge the intersection of climate change and health. Extreme weather events have a cascading effect on health outcomes, leading to increased incidences of waterborne diseases, heat-related illnesses, respiratory issues due to deteriorating air quality and mental health challenges as communities face the trauma of relocated lives. It is essential to prioritize health education about the risks associated with climate change and prepare for potential disease outbreaks. By integrating climate awareness into health programs and community outreach, you empower individuals to be proactive in protecting their well-being.

Voices and initiatives

Second, and most important, you can utilize your voices as health professionals to advocate for policies that promote environmental sustainability and climate action. Support initiatives that encourage green practices within health care systems like reducing waste, conserving energy and implementing sustainable sourcing for medical supplies.

Be leaders in your communities, demonstrating the vital link between a healthy environment and public health. Engaging with local stakeholders, including government officials and nongovernmental organizations, can amplify these efforts, ensuring that health perspectives are embedded in disaster response and climate mitigation policies.

Your role in raising awareness cannot be overstated. Educate your patients and communities about climate change impact, providing them with the tools to understand how they can adapt and build resilience. Simple actions like preparing emergency plans for families during severe weather can empower individuals and foster a culture of preparedness.

Last, collaboration is key. In building a sustainable future, we must recognize that systemic change requires collective action. Collaborate and align your medical expertise with various sectors including education, environment and urban planning to create comprehensive approaches to community resilience. The health sector must play a vital role in disaster risk reduction and mitigation strategies, ensuring that robust health systems are capable of responding to climate-related challenges.

Climate change presents us with formidable challenges, but it also beckons us to act decisively. As health professionals, you are not merely observers but vital participants in the struggle for a sustainable future. Through education, advocacy and collaboration, you can help us build resilient communities, empower individuals and pave the way for a healthier planet.

Let us stand united in this fight, transforming our shared vision into tangible actions. Together, we can build a sustainable future, one where every Filipino has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of the changing climate. Thank you for your commitment, passion and resilience. Together, we can build a better tomorrow.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [\[Opinion\] Women scientists championing Philippine sustainability](#)

By: Daniel Maches

There are not many women scientists in the country, and even rarer are those who genuinely champion sustainability – a crucial yet often overlooked aspect in mainstream development discourses.

I am privileged to have met and worked with two distinguished advocates who have also inspired me with my grassroots initiatives. They are Dr. Lourdes J. Cruz and Dr. Rhodora V. Azanza, both celebrated scientists.

The National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines (NAST PhI), the country's premier agency that advises the President and Cabinet members on science and technological concerns, has recognized Cruz and Azanza as National Scientist and National Academician, respectively.

Now, let us get to know more about them and how they are shaping a sustainable future for every Filipino.

In 2018, National Scientist Cruz launched the Future Earth Philippines (FEP) program, which aims to increase the country's sustainability and resilience through the creation of Philippine Knowledge-Action Programs for Sustainability (PKAPS). It also seeks to link the country with regional and global initiatives on sustainability.

To realize this, FEP has been engaging with experts on sustainability issues adversely affecting the country, including the deterioration of watersheds, marine and terrestrial ecosystems and the worsening impacts of climate change. This engagement seeks to unpack each issue and co-create concrete solutions and recommendations.

This is important because the solutions from these engagements can then be transmitted to the government for implementation, ensuring that science-based sustainability inputs take centerstage in development programs and policies.

For example, local government units (LGUs) can refer to the PKAPS as a reference for creating science-backed ordinances to strengthen their efforts in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Private organizations or advocacy groups can also use these as a baseline for their campaigns.

Today, FEP has evolved into a learning platform by organizing weekly webinars with sustainability experts.

As FEP strengthens both its offline and online engagements, the country sees more hope for resilience and sustainability, largely thanks to Cruz's uncompromising dedication. Complementing this is a growing collaboration among educational



institutions joining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action Network for a transdisciplinary, inclusive and systems approach to solutions to complex problems.

Cruz has also engaged with indigenous peoples (IPs) to ensure that their perspectives on sustainability and their lived experiences are considered. She recognizes that IPs have long championed sustainability with a way of life harmonized with the natural world.

Proof of this is the fact that more than 75 percent of the country's remaining forests are within IPs' ancestral domains, according to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA).

Given her blend of scientific and grassroots experience, Cruz continues to be a voice for sustainability, reaching various audiences – from policymakers to LGUs and the youth.

Supporting the FEP program from its inception is National Academician Azanza.

Dubbed the “Red Tide Lady,” Azanza is renowned for her pioneering research on seaweeds, harmful microalgal biology, coastal environment management and seafood safety.

Her research has contributed to responsive solutions to the country's frequent red tide occurrences, which not only cause health problems but also impact the livelihood of small-scale fisherfolk.

One of her recent projects focused on studying the harmful toxins and bacteria produced by algal blooms. She worked on creating guidelines and tools to help protect food safety and the environment. This demonstrates how scientific innovations can ensure a safe food supply chain.

Thanks to her, more Filipinos can now enjoy sustainable seafood, while more attention is being given to addressing coastal-related issues.

As part of FEP's roster of experts, Azanza provides important input on marine resource conservation.

Cruz and Azanza are indeed eco-heroes deserving recognition. They are not just accomplished women in their fields; they represent a growing number of Filipino women scientists committed to ensuring a more sustainable and resilient Philippines.

Truly, they are the embodiment of Gabriela Silang in our modern times.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### DAILY TRIBUNE

#### [Beyond Earth Hour: A lasting commitment to water security](#)

By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

This Saturday, 22 March, marks an important event for our planet — Earth Hour 2025. Since 2011, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) has joined this global movement. After becoming part of CCC in 2022, I actively support and personally take part in this annual initiative.

Earth Hour has become much more than a symbolic act of turning the lights off for 60 minutes. This year, we invite you to participate, not only by switching off the lights but by engaging in global conversation on the most pressing issues of our time.

At the heart of this year's Earth Hour is water security. Water is fundamental to human survival and a basic human right. It is also vital to the Philippine economy, particularly in major industries such as agriculture, tourism, and semiconductors. According to the World Bank, 42 percent of the country's jobs are in sectors that use water intensively.

Despite being surrounded by water, the Philippines faces profound challenges. Water stress levels in the country are now twice the global average. In 2015, there were 12.4 million Filipinos who lacked basic access to drinking water, while 26 million had no access to basic sanitation. In 2022, the Department of Health estimated that out of 25.5 million households, 11.26 percent or 2.87 million still had no access to basic water supply while 16.36 percent or 4.17 million households had no basic sanitation facilities.

These challenges go beyond access to clean and safe water. They also include other risks posed by too much or too little of it.

Our country experiences around 20 typhoons annually, with approximately eight of such making landfall. Stronger typhoons and floods damage water infrastructures, including irrigation systems. Meanwhile, changing rainfall patterns reduce river flows and cause water shortages, as groundwater is usually replenished when rainfall is evenly distributed throughout the year.

On the other hand, prolonged or extreme dry seasons such as those caused by El Niño limit water absorption into the ground and cause more water lost to evaporation, leading to longer and more severe droughts.

These climate conditions result in growing struggle and competition for water resources among households, industries and agriculture.

Recognizing the urgency of these challenges, the Philippine government has prioritized water security in the Philippine Development Plan (2023 to 2028). The plan outlines strategies aimed at strengthening water security, ecological integrity and resilience to hazards by improving water governance through integrated water resource management.

Under the leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the government steps up efforts to secure water for all, allocating P3.5 billion from the 2025 national budget to ensure that safe, affordable water reaches every Filipino household.

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) identifies water resources as one of the eight key sectors prioritized for climate adaptation. The theme for the water sector is to “Safeguard Water Security: Secure and Sanitary Water for All,” highlighting three priority adaptation outcomes.

The first focuses on developing inclusive and resilient water and sanitation infrastructure. This entails updating building codes, enhancing water infrastructure standards and introducing early warning systems to decrease potential water shortages or contamination. Water infrastructures, such as dams, reservoirs and sanitation facilities, must be retrofitted and upgraded to withstand the changing climate.

The second outcome focuses on protecting water supply, quality and services from the growing unpredictability of weather patterns. With climate change already disrupting rainfall patterns and water availability, there is an urgent need to diversify water sources and promote rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment initiatives. The NAP highlights the necessity for government and private sector partnerships to ramp up investments in alternative water supply infrastructure, particularly in remote and upland areas where water access remains a challenge.

The third key outcome emphasizes the protection and proper management of watersheds and surrounding ecosystems to ensure long-term water security. Deforestation, improper land use, and urbanization continue to weaken these natural systems. The NAP calls for comprehensive watershed management plans that account for climate risks, supported by updated regulations to safeguard these critical ecosystems.

Local government units (LGUs) play an important role in the effective implementation of these adaptation strategies. Programs such as the installation of rainwater harvesting systems, enhanced sewerage systems, and the comprehensive management of river basins must align with LGUs' development plans to strengthen community resilience.

However, the problem of water security needs more than just national government interventions and localized efforts — it calls for a collective approach that spans borders. To build lasting resilience, financing for water infrastructure projects must be prioritized. This includes tapping into the private sector and securing international funding.

This Saturday, I encourage you to join millions around the world in switching your lights off for Earth Hour. But let's not stop there.

The World Wide Fund also invites us to "Give an Hour for Earth" by dedicating an hour to do something positive for the planet. Whether it's reducing water consumption, planting trees or advocating for sustainable practices, every action counts. You can log your contributions on the Hour Bank via the Earth Hour website and be part of a global movement dedicated to securing the future of the planet.

Yet, Earth Hour is just the beginning — concrete gains and progress go beyond 60 minutes. The real impact comes in the hours, days and years we commit to protecting our planet. Let's use this event not only to reflect but also to call for and take long-term, sustained action: conserve water, support climate policies and initiatives and raise awareness.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [CCC pushes science-based, data-driven climate resilience efforts in Lake Sebu](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has emphasized the importance of science-based, data-driven preservation and conservation efforts in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, as part of a key integrated, long-term strategy to build climate resilience in the community.

Lake Sebu, a designated protected area covering 102,350 hectares, is home to three major lakes: Lake Sebu, Lake Seloton, and Lake Lahit. These bodies of water are vital for the local economy, tourism industry and ecological stability of the region.

During a recent stakeholder meeting organized by the Local Government of Lake Sebu under Mayor Remie Mann Unggol, the municipality's potential for growth and development, natural beauty and cultural richness were discussed while the urgent ecological concerns and impacts of climate change were highlighted.

Despite its economic potential, Vice Mayor Liezel Tupas-Isuga said Lake Sebu faces critical ecological threats such as fish kills, deforestation, siltation, overcrowded fish cages, poor waste management, and climate-related vulnerabilities. These challenges underscore the need for immediate and long-term efforts to significantly lower climate risks.

The event gathered key partners, including representatives from the academe, the local government unit (LGUs), and ecologists to develop a comprehensive conservation and protection plan with a climate change lens.

While discussions focused on ecotourism and the carrying capacity of tourism destinations, climate-proofing Lake Sebu against ecological threats, and resilience-based rehabilitation of its coastal and riparian habitats became an area of overarching focus.

Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director, acknowledged the concerns of Lake Sebu officials and reiterated the importance of data-based, science-driven approach as part of a key integrated, long-term strategy to build climate resilience.

“Climate resilience can be seen as both an object and instrument of policy, and this approach can help further bolster community efforts to preserve and conserve Lake Sebu,” Borje stated.

In this regard, he also assured that the CCC would provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to help LGUs enhance their local climate change adaptation plans, as well as improving capabilities to access climate funding.

Meanwhile, Ms. Lenly Gula, a writer and advocate for cultural work, stressed the need to integrate climate action into social media platforms.

“We need to mobilize and maximize social media for call-to-action campaigns, particularly in promoting care for our ecosystems. Creating one- to two-minute reel content backed by scientific knowledge and clear calls to action can help raise awareness and inspire action for Lake Sebu,” she stated.

The CCC remains committed to collaborate with various stakeholders to further mainstream climate resilience and conservation efforts in Lake Sebu and beyond.

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