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The Department of Finance (DOF) is strengthening the Philippines' Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policy framework to lead in financing climate action and promote sustainable economic growth.

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By: Jiselle Anne Casucian

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By: Marita Moaje

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THE MANILA TIMES

[Climate change: A critical election issue](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

Standing on the precipice of the 2025 midterm elections, it is vital that we reflect on the pressing issues that shape our nation's future. In recent years, the Philippines has been recognized as the most at-risk country in the world for climate-induced disasters, a reality underscored by the World Risk Report, which has ranked us as the most vulnerable nation for three consecutive years (2022-2024). We never left the top 10 for the past 14 years (2011-2024). The Germanwatch Climate Risk Index 2025 has highlighted our location in the top 10 for the past two decades (1993-2022). These alarming statistics are not just numbers but represent the lived experiences of millions of Filipinos grappling with climate change's consequences.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

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GMA NEWS

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The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and GMA Integrated News (GMAIN) have reinforced their commitment to climate storytelling in a collaborative meeting focused on expanding media engagement and amplifying climate action initiatives.

MANILA SHIMBUN

[First Filipino scholar under JICA Climate Program pushes to strengthen PH climate action](#)

The Climate Change Commission's (CCC) legal division chief Carlos Borja, Jr., is the first Filipino scholar to receive Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) scholarship, Climate Change Policy Program.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Pinoys told: Contribute to climate resilience, conservation efforts](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) yesterday said that Earth Hour should not end with the switching off of lights as it asked the public to contribute to ongoing efforts toward conservation and climate resilience.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

[DOF ramps up bid to develop PHL voluntary carbon market](#)

By: Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

The Department of Finance (DOF) affirmed its focus on sustainable finance as it ramps up efforts to develop a voluntary carbon market framework to strengthen the Philippines' climate finance strategy.

In a statement on Friday, the DOF said the Interagency Task Force on Sustainable Finance (ITSF), which it is a part of, is creating a policy and legal framework for Carbon Markets on Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM).

Carbon markets are carbon pricing mechanisms allowing governments and non-state actors to trade greenhouse-gas emission credits.

Meanwhile, a voluntary carbon market allows companies and governments to buy and sell carbon credits to offset their greenhouse gas emissions.

"It is our priority to work in close coordination with other key government agencies to prepare the necessary institutional arrangements, infrastructure, registry, and robust monitoring, reporting, and verification measures to send clear policy signals to the domestic and international market that we produce high-integrity carbon credits," Finance Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati Dorotan-Tiuseco said.

The DOF added it continues to coordinate with the World Bank in its technical working group (TWG) on carbon pricing instruments.

In designing carbon policy, the DOF said the TWG considers its possible socioeconomic impacts to ensure that the policy will be non-inflationary, conducive for investment and suited for the Philippines.

Apart from this, the DOF said the ITSF is also working on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on "Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes" (ITMOs), allowing countries to collaborate and achieve their nationally determined outcomes by transferring emissions reductions.

The DOF also said it has been collaborating with other government agencies and the private sector to develop the Climate Finance Strategy (CFS).

This aims to help finance the Philippines' climate priorities, support its active membership in the global multilateral funds and scale up sustainable finance efforts, the DOF said.

Meanwhile, the government is updating its Sustainable Finance Framework to expand eligible bond-funded expenditures, integrate updated sustainability principles and adopt innovative finance structures.

The Philippines has issued a total of \$7.5 billion in sustainable global bonds as of 2025 to support the country's green agenda across clean transportation, climate change adaptation, sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, among others.

The DOF added the country has a reliable funding mechanism to help local government units implement climate change adaptation projects.

The Philippines was also renewed for another term in the Green Climate Fund Board as an Alternate Board Member under the Asia Pacific Group Constituency and was also appointed as a member of the Adaptation Fund Board for 2025 to 2027 last January 2025.

The DOF said it is advancing its application to be a national implementing entity of the Adaptation Fund to allow it to receive direct financial transfers to implement adaptation projects and programs.

DAILY GUARDIAN

[DOF Strengthens ESG Tools, Climate Finance Push](#)

The Department of Finance (DOF) is strengthening the Philippines' Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policy framework to lead in financing climate action and promote sustainable economic growth.

In collaboration with other government agencies and the private sector, the DOF is developing a Climate Finance Strategy (CFS) to fund the country's climate priorities, enhance its role in global multilateral funds, and expand sustainable finance initiatives through the Interagency Task Force on Sustainable Finance (ITSF).

The CFS will serve as a national blueprint to scale up climate-related financing through coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors.

Key strategic actions include accelerating the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan (NDCIP), and Sustainable Finance Roadmap (SFR).

The strategy also prioritizes strengthening stakeholder capacity for climate finance stewardship, maximizing domestic budget allocations, leveraging international finance mechanisms, enabling public-private partnerships, and increasing transparency and accountability.

Funding for CFS initiatives comes from the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office via the Climate Finance Network, and from the Government of Canada through its Accelerating Green and Climate Finance for the Philippines Project.

The ITSF is also working to develop a policy and legal framework for Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM) and Article 6 Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), and exploring green project financing opportunities under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Code.

The DOF is coordinating with the World Bank to support the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Carbon Pricing Instruments (CPIs).

TWG is evaluating the socio-economic impacts of carbon policies to ensure that measures remain non-inflationary, investment-friendly, and suitable for the Philippine context.

“It is our priority to work in close coordination with other key government agencies to prepare the necessary institutional arrangements, infrastructure, registry, and robust monitoring, reporting, and verification measures to send clear policy signals to the domestic and international market that we produce high-integrity carbon credits,” said DOF Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati Dorotan-Tiuseco.

To boost green infrastructure investments, the government is updating its Sustainable Finance Framework to widen the scope of eligible expenditures, incorporate new sustainability principles, and explore more innovative finance structures.

As of 2025, the Philippines has issued a total of USD7.5 billion in sustainable global bonds.

Proceeds from these issuances support projects in clean transportation, climate change adaptation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture.

The Philippines is also equipped with a funding mechanism to help local government units (LGUs) implement climate adaptation projects through the People’s Survival Fund (PSF).

In 2024, the PSF Board committed funds to 13 projects and six project development grants.

For fiscal year 2025, the PSF received its first-ever replenishment of PHP1 billion under the General Appropriations Act, which will be used for NAP-aligned projects.

The Philippines continues to demonstrate leadership in global climate finance, holding board memberships in key international funds through the DOF.

Undersecretary Dorotan-Tiuseco currently serves on the boards of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund (AF).

She said the DOF is leveraging financing from operating entities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In January 2025, the Philippines was reappointed to the GCF Board as an Alternate Board Member under the Asia-Pacific Group Constituency and named to the AF Board for the 2025–2027 term.

The AF supports adaptation projects that help vulnerable communities in developing countries.

The DOF is also advancing its accreditation as a national implementing entity for the AF, enabling it to receive direct financing for projects.

Additionally, the DOF co-chairs the Accelerating Green and Climate Finance in the Philippines: Nature-Based Solutions (AGCF) Board.

The AGCF, funded by the Government of Canada, has an approved budget of USD4.5 million and runs from March 2022 to December 2026.

It aims to strengthen the country's climate resilience through gender-responsive policies and nature-based solutions.

Among AGCF's projects is the Securities and Exchange Commission's SMILEES Roadshow, which supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and publicly listed companies in integrating sustainability into operations and reporting.

Another AGCF initiative, NEDA's SPACE app (Stakeholder Partnership Accelerator for Convergence and Engagement), acts as a one-stop shop to help public and private stakeholders identify and develop bankable, SDG-aligned projects.

GMA NEWS

[PH among Asian states that endured unusual heat from Dec. 2024 to Feb. 2025](#)

By: Jiselle Anne Casucian

The Philippines placed third among 51 Asian countries and territories that experienced unusual heat linked to climate change between December 2024 and February 2025, a new study released on Wednesday has found.

Non-profit organization Climate Central, which is made up of scientists and communicators that study and report on the facts regarding climate change and its effects on people's lives, said that the Philippines had a total of 74 days under Climate Shift Index (CSI) level 2 or higher.

CSI measures how much climate change affects local daily temperatures globally. A CSI of level 2 indicates that climate change made temperatures at least twice more likely to occur.

Only Brunei (83 days) and Maldives (81 days) ranked higher than the Philippines.

In addition, Manila came in third place out of 38 megacities—areas with a population of 10 million or more—that experienced heat that was strongly influenced by climate change for at least 30 days or one-third of the season.

Together with Jakarta, Indonesia, Manila recorded a CSI of level 2 for 69 days. At 89 days, Lagos, Nigeria, came in first, followed by Tamil Nadu, India, at 81 days.

“Cities are hotspots of heat risk due to their high population density and land development patterns that intensify heat in urban heat islands. This is especially true for the world’s largest cities,” Climate Central said in the study.

Climate Central also said that the Philippines had a 0.7°C seasonal temperature anomaly, which pertained to the difference between the area’s average temperature and the current climate-change-induced temperature.

The study, which covers 220 countries and 940 cities, further said that the extreme heat felt all over the world for the past three months was an effect of human-induced climate change caused by burning coal, oil, and methane gas.

In response to the study, environmental group Greenpeace called on the Philippines to immediately pass the proposed Climate Accountability (CLIMA) Act, which provides a legal framework for climate loss and damage accountability.

“This report spotlights the fact that in the Philippines, when we’re not being battered by super typhoons, we’re being roasted by extreme heat. In order to secure Philippine communities from the worst impacts of the climate crisis, the onus is on the Marcos Jr. administration to ensure climate justice is the top agenda of the government... As a first step, the government should guarantee the swift passage of the Climate Accountability or CLIMA Bill,” Greenpeace Philippines Climate and Energy Campaigner Khevin Yu said on Friday.

“We’ve seen how the heat recently caused disruptions in schooling and the way it sent Filipinos to hospitals last year. It’s crucial for the government to ensure that the country is prepared for hotter months ahead—and potentially hotter years as we face the brunt of the climate crisis,” he added.

Yu said the national government should institute preparedness measures such as better weather forecasting systems that include early warnings for heat and grants for farmers and fisherfolk to protect their harvest.

He said local government units should focus on creating more green spaces, which could serve as a refuge for people, particularly sectors vulnerable to heat: senior citizens, children, and persons with disabilities.

Greenpeace also urged candidates in the May 2025 midterm elections to prioritize climate justice once they assume office.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[PH to host ASEAN Social Work Day 2025](#)

Recognizing the crucial role of social workers in disaster risk reduction and climate change resilience (DRRCR) across the ASEAN region, the Philippines is set to host a hybrid celebration of the ASEAN Social Work Day 2025 on Tuesday (March 25).

As the designated Philippine Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) Leader, the DSWD will spearhead the celebration which will be attended by ASEAN Member States and development partners, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, as the head of the lead social welfare agency of the Philippines and as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting for Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) Leader of the Philippines, emphasized the importance of acknowledging social workers' efforts in providing essential services to affected families and individuals during calamities such as typhoons, floods, and other emergencies.

"As we always say in the DSWD, being a social worker is more than a profession; it is a calling, and for many, a lifelong commitment to uplift the lives of those in need, yet their roles are rarely recognized nor integrated into climate change adaptation or disaster planning frameworks. It is high time we recognize their contributions to building resilient communities," DSWD Secretary Gatchalian said on Friday (March 21).

The event will carry the theme: "Recognizing the Vital Role of Social Workers in DRRCR", highlighting the role of social workers as one of the first responders during natural and human-induced disasters.

Launch of regional guidance on social workers' role in DRRCR

A key highlight of the ASEAN Social Work Day celebration will be the launch of the Regional Guidance for ASEAN Member States on the Role of Social Workers and the wider Social Service Workforce in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience (DRRCR).

Developed under the leadership of SOMSWD Philippines, DSWD Undersecretary for International Affairs, Attached and Supervised Agencies and SOMSWD Philippines Permanent Focal Point Emmeline Aglipay Villar said this framework is designed to help

policy makers and other key stakeholders in mainstreaming the involvement of social workers in disaster preparedness and response strategies.

“We envision the Regional Guidance to be the basis for ASEAN Member States in crafting nationally relevant guidelines and action plans, tailored to each country’s unique context and challenges,” Undersecretary Villar pointed out.

The Regional Guidance not only seeks to enhance awareness of social workers’ roles but also advocates for stronger institutional support, ensuring that social workers are equipped to handle the growing complexities of disaster scenarios linked to climate change.

This celebration not only serves as a platform to honor the dedication and sacrifices of social workers but also reinforces the Philippines’ leadership role in advancing social welfare and development initiatives within the ASEAN.

“With the ASEAN Social Work Day 2025, the DSWD, as the lead social welfare agency in the Philippines, will continue to champion the empowerment and recognition of social workers as key pillars of community resilience, ensuring that they remain at the forefront of disaster response and recovery efforts,” Undersecretary Villar said.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DENR calls for urgent action vs. pollution, climate change](#)

By: Marita Moaje

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is calling for urgent and collective action against climate change.

In a video message on Saturday ahead of Earth Hour, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga emphasized that the observance should not only instill awareness but should also be a call to action to combat climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

“As we turn off our lights tonight, let this be a symbol of the power we hold when we act together,” she said as she enjoined the public to observe Earth Hour 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

“Every fraction of a degree counts. Every small action multiplied across millions of people becomes a force for change,” she added.

Loyzaga said the world remains at a critical juncture despite efforts to preserve the environment.

She said the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement, and the Global Biodiversity Framework, among others, have outlined a shared vision for a more equitable and sustainable future.

However, latest data show that such efforts still fall short of achieving goals and targets.

“Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate and pollution is infiltrating even the most remote ecosystems, from Arctic ice to the depths of the Philippine Trench,” Loyzaga warned.

She noted that the Philippines, as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, experiences the impacts of climate change firsthand, pointing to extreme weather events that have hit the country in recent years.

“We face what scientists call the triple planetary crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The impacts are undeniable,” she said.

Loyzaga cited the record-breaking typhoon season experienced in 2024, with six consecutive storm systems battering the Philippines in under a month, which serves as a stark reminder of how climate change is intensifying extreme weather.

She lamented the worsening state of the country's coral reefs due to rising sea temperatures, alongside the 2.7 million metric tons of plastic waste produced annually which pollute marine ecosystems and threaten food security.

Despite these challenges, Loyzaga expressed optimism, citing signs of reef recovery, active reforestation efforts, and the use of new technologies to monitor ecosystem health.

She likewise underscored the importance of collaboration among stakeholders and across sectors in building climate-resilient communities and transition toward a circular economy.

Small actions, when multiplied, lead to meaningful change, Loyzaga said.

“As we turn off our lights tonight, let this be a symbol of the power we hold when we act together. As I said in the beginning, every fraction of a degree counts. Every small action multiplied across millions of people becomes a force for change,” she said. “We broke this world. We must fix it. The time to act began yesterday.”

The Earth Hour, started by the World Wide Fund for Nature in Sydney in 2007, is a global movement where millions switch off their lights for one hour to show support for the planet.

It has since expanded to over 185 countries, inspiring environmental action and influencing policies while symbolizing a commitment to nature and sustainability.

THE MANILA TIMES

Climate change: A critical election issue

By: Ludwig Federigan

Standing on the precipice of the 2025 midterm elections, it is vital that we reflect on the pressing issues that shape our nation's future. In recent years, the Philippines has been recognized as the most at-risk country in the world for climate-induced disasters, a reality underscored by the World Risk Report, which has ranked us as the most vulnerable nation for three consecutive years (2022-2024). We never left the top 10 for the past 14 years (2011-2024). The Germanwatch Climate Risk Index 2025 has highlighted our location in the top 10 for the past two decades (1993-2022). These alarming statistics are not just numbers but represent the lived experiences of millions of Filipinos grappling with climate change's consequences.

In February 2024, Swiss RE, a leading global insurance provider, underscored the gravity of our situation by identifying typhoons and flooding as the top hazards Filipinos face. These hazards will intensify as global temperatures continue to rise, leading to extreme weather events that threaten our lives, livelihoods and local economies. In preparing for the elections, it is imperative that we prioritize climate action as a critical electoral issue, alongside other concerns such as poverty alleviation, job creation and livelihood preservation.

The voices of the Filipino people resonate unmistakably with this sentiment. The Social Weather Station survey, commissioned by the Stratbase Group in January 2025, reveals that 87 percent of Filipinos express their intention to vote for candidates committed to addressing climate change and enhancing disaster preparedness. This marks a pivotal moment in our democratic process, where the electorate acknowledges that climate resilience is intrinsically linked to the quality of life, safety and well-being of our communities.

Why is climate action an essential election issue? First, addressing the impact of the global climate crisis is not merely an environmental concern but a social and economic imperative as well. The World Bank estimates substantial economic and human costs of as much as 13.6 percent of the country's gross domestic product by 2040 if no action is undertaken. Climate change's adverse effects disproportionately affect our society's most vulnerable members, including the poor, marginalized communities and displaced populations. The increasing frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters create a vicious cycle, trapping the latter in poverty and hindering economic growth.

Candidates must embrace climate action as part of their platforms, recognizing that effective disaster preparedness and resilience-building fortify our economy. Investing in

sustainable infrastructure, efficient urban planning and innovative disaster response systems can minimize damages caused by extreme weather events. This proactive approach protects lives and reduces the long-term economic costs associated with disaster recovery, contributing to national stability and growth.

Political landscapes

The potential for job creation within the green economy is immense. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, implementing sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing disaster-resilience initiatives require a workforce equipped with the skills needed for a sustainable future. The government must aggressively implement the Green Jobs Act of 2016 to empower a new generation of Filipinos, provide meaningful employment opportunities and stimulate local economies. Every investment in sustainability fosters an environment where livelihoods can flourish while safeguarding our natural resources.

Around the world, climate change is transforming political landscapes, influencing trade dynamics and reshaping geopolitics. Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum, who won a landslide victory in 2024, has a strong track record on environmental issues. South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, who secured a second term in May 2024, has been a strong proponent of climate action. Countries that prioritize climate resilience in their governance frameworks are better positioned to thrive in an increasingly competitive and resource-constrained world.

It is crucial that candidates do not view climate action as an isolated agenda item but rather as an integral component of a comprehensive policy framework that encompasses economic development, social equity and environmental stewardship. Addressing climate change should intersect with efforts to combat poverty and stimulate economic growth, fostering a sustainable future for all Filipinos.

Candidates, policymakers and engaged citizens must join hands in advocating for policies that prioritize climate action as a central piece of the electoral debate. Together, we can elevate the discourse around climate change and compel our leaders to articulate clear, actionable strategies that respond to the urgent needs of our communities.

Embarking on this election season, let us recommit ourselves to the pursuit of a sustainable future where the well-being of every Filipino is put at the forefront of our collective efforts. By placing climate action at the heart of our electoral agendas, we can forge a path toward resilience, empower our communities and honor our responsibility

as environmental stewards. Every vote must be cast with the future of our planet and our people in mind.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Carbon tax seen as climate funds boost](#)

By: Kathryn Jose

The government should help quickly create rules on global carbon tax to support climate efforts, including the government-issued sustainability bonds worth \$7.5 billion.

Asian Consulting Group founder and chief executive officer Mon Abrea said over 140 countries now support the global minimum carbon tax on corporations.

“In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, it’s only the Philippines which has yet to adopt the global minimum carbon tax,” he said in a recent media conference in Taguig City.

To implement the carbon tax, the government must set a price per metric ton of carbon emissions while companies must pay in forcing them to shift to cleaner energy and other environment-friendly resources.

The Philippine Climate Change Commission warns the country could lose P645 billion each year in damaged resources if weather conditions become extreme.

Through the carbon tax, the World Bank reported governments have collected a total of \$95 billion in additional revenues in 2022. This was after the world’s seven richest nations announced their proposal for a global minimum carbon tax of 15 percent in 2021.

Computation must be accurate

However, Abrea said government must carefully calculate the carbon tax rate to ensure sustainable economic growth.

“It might shy away foreign investors if the Philippines start implementing carbon tax and our competitors will not impose the same carbon tax,” he said.

For example, Singapore, which became the first ASEAN member that adopted carbon pricing in 2019, currently imposes 25 Singaporean dollars per metric ton of carbon emissions covering 80 percent of the country’s carbon emissions. The environmental charge is targeted to rise to 80 Singaporean dollars by 2030.

The Department of Finance said the government has created a technical working group to determine the sufficient carbon pricing.

Iloilo seeks support to increase rice yield

By: Mariela Angella Oladive

The Iloilo provincial government is turning to the private sector to help boost rice production and enhance agricultural resilience in the face of climate challenges.

Provincial Administrator Raul Bantias, representing Gov. Arthur Defensor Jr., introduced the SERBISYO Program (System Enhancement for Rice to Boost, Increase, and Sustain Yield Onwards) during the National Adaptation Plan Investment Forum on 21 March at the SMX Convention Center in Taguig.

The SERBISYO program aims to increase rice yields to six metric tons per hectare by promoting climate-resilient rice varieties and improving irrigation through small-scale reservoirs and infrastructure rehabilitation.

Bantias referenced data from the Provincial Agriculture Office, which showed a drop in rice production from 3.79 metric tons per hectare in 2023 to 3.64 metric tons in 2024.

Iloilo, known as the rice granary of Western Visayas and the fifth-largest rice producer in the country, faces rising food security concerns.

“An average of 7 percent of total rice production could be lost as early as 2030. In the worst years, this loss could reach up to 25 percent. This inaction could cost the value chain of rice P11 billion,” Bantias warned. “These numbers reflect what will happen if we don’t take action.”

To address these challenges, the province is seeking collaboration with agricultural input manufacturers, irrigation firms, and water service providers to scale up climate-resilient farming initiatives.

Bantias explained that the plan includes distributing climate-resilient rice varieties and implementing crop-scale solutions. Additionally, they aim to partner with water service providers to develop small-scale reservoirs across 30,000 hectares of rain-fed farmland to combat water shortages.

The investment forum, titled “Adaptation in Action: Mobilizing Finance for Climate-Resilient Food and Water Systems,” was co-presented by the United Kingdom Government through the British Embassy Manila, along with the DENR, Climate Change Commission, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Department of Finance, and Boston Consulting Group.

Negotiate tomorrow, today

Diplomacy is not born in grand halls or behind closed doors — it begins in rooms like these.

In the hum of debate, in the careful crafting of resolutions, in the passionate arguments of those who believe the world can be shaped by the words they choose and the compromises they make.

For three days at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, the 26th Benilde Model United Nations turned students into diplomats, classrooms into negotiation tables and conversations into blueprints for the future.

More than just an academic exercise, it was a masterclass in international relations, with ambassadors, diplomats and thought leaders guiding young minds through the intricate dance of diplomacy.

“With the current geopolitical environment, there is no time more critical to get involved than now,” declared Benilde Chancellor Benhur Ong, setting the tone for the conference.

The world, as it stands, is complex, fraught with conflict and in desperate need of innovative thinkers — precisely the kind that BenildeMUN seeks to nurture.

At the helm of this year’s discussions was Malaysian Ambassador Dato’ Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino Anthony, who framed Asean’s role as both an economic force and a diplomatic bridge.

Asean, he emphasized, is not just a bloc of nations but a testament to what can be achieved through cooperation, inclusivity and consensus.

“Foreign relations is acutely important in this current world and age,” he said. “It is where we can iron out differences and try to find a common ground.”

The art of negotiation — delicate, necessary and often frustrating — was further dissected by French Ambassador Marie Fontanel, who laid bare an uncomfortable truth: diplomacy rarely leaves everyone happy.

“Multilateral diplomacy is about compromise,” she stated bluntly. “We have to balance, share our views and find a common denominator. And it means indeed sometimes that it makes everyone unhappy. It doesn’t matter if in the end, we have made a step.”

Diplomacy, more than politics, is about survival. Nowhere was this clearer than in the side event *Converging Tides: Enhancing Global Maritime Sustainability through Innovation*, where Climate Change Commission Vice Chairperson Robert Borje reminded the audience that for an archipelagic nation like the Philippines, the ocean is more than geography — it is identity, economy and fate.

“The ocean is the lifeblood that sustains communities, economies and ecosystems worldwide,” he said. And with climate change at the forefront of global crises, the need for action has never been more urgent.

The most striking gesture of diplomacy came not in words, but in action.

BenildeMUN was held for the benefit of The Hapag Movement, a program dedicated to feeding and empowering Filipino families suffering from hunger.

Because at its core, diplomacy — real diplomacy — is not just about policies and negotiations. It is about people. It is about ensuring that the words spoken in conference rooms translate into change where it matters most.

The real challenge begins for the students: To take what they have learned and carry it into the world, to question, to collaborate, to lead.

In a world as fractured as ours, it is not the loudest voices or the strongest armies that will shape the future. It is those who can sit across from an opponent, extend a hand and find a way forward.

'When Juana is prepared, community is safer'

A 2024 Philippine Resilience Awards recipient from the ranks of firefighters has urged women to lead in building disaster-resilient communities.

Senior Fire Officer 3 (SFO3) Daisy Leal-Cabauatan, chief and operations program director of the Nueva Vizcaya Bureau of Fire Protection office, made the call during the kick-off ceremony for the 2025 National Women's Month Celebration (NWMC) at the SM Mall of Asia on 4 to 6 March.

"When Juana is always prepared, the whole community is safer," Cabauatan told attendees of the event.

She highlighted how women are often at the forefront of disaster response, using their knowledge of local resources and community networks to ensure safety during emergencies. She emphasized the importance of equal participation and leadership in disaster resilience efforts as part of adapting to climate change.

Cabauatan underscored the importance of mentorship and networking for women. She called for more leadership opportunities in the disaster management sector and encouraged women to continue leading the way in building resilient communities.

PCW chairperson Ermelita Valdeavilla also emphasized the importance of gender equality in resilience efforts.

"Climate change disasters do not sit down and negotiate; they do not choose who you are. They can strike whenever they want," Valdeavilla said. "We cannot win against them, so our fight is about resilience. Let us teach our women and our communities how to strengthen resilience."

CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje praised the active leadership of women in building climate resilience.

"Women have always played a key role in shaping the resilience of our communities. Their insights and actions in disaster response and climate adaptation are indispensable in building a better, more prepared nation," Borje emphasized.

The NWMC kick-off was led by the Philippine Commission on Women and SM Cares. In attendance were women leaders from various sectors, including government, business and civil society.

GMA NEWS

[CCC strengthens climate journalism partnership, lauds GMA Integrated News](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and GMA Integrated News (GMAIN) have reinforced their commitment to climate storytelling in a collaborative meeting focused on expanding media engagement and amplifying climate action initiatives.

During the meeting, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje presented a Plaque of Appreciation to GMAIN in recognition of its outstanding contributions to climate reporting. The recognition highlights the GMAIN's impactful programs such as "Banta ng Nagbabagong Klima," which have played a crucial role in informing the public about climate change.

GMAIN, one of the longest-running news organizations in the Philippines, has been at the forefront of climate journalism, leveraging its TV, digital, radio, and regional platforms to deliver in-depth and impactful stories.

The meeting served as a platform to explore potential collaborations, including creating dedicated spaces for climate information exchange, hosting discussions on critical but underreported issues, and launching joint initiatives to raise awareness and drive action.

"We share a common mission to address the challenges of climate change through informed storytelling and impactful journalism," Borje said. "GMA Integrated News has consistently demonstrated excellence in climate reporting, ensuring that climate information reaches a wider audience and inspires action."

As part of its broader engagement strategy, the CCC is strengthening collaboration with journalists through initiatives such as media interface sessions and training programs. These efforts aim to enhance climate reporting, encourage informed public discourse, and mainstream climate action in news coverage.

Queenie Santos-Dimapawi, Assistant Vice President and Deputy Head for Integrated News Operations, stated, "We believe awareness is the first step towards action. We have made climate change reporting a core part of our mission. Through this, we aim to turn information into inspiration and inspire Filipinos into action."

Discussions also delved on potential collaborations in producing compelling climate stories that highlight the realities of climate change and resilience efforts. Additionally, the CCC is exploring innovative platforms and strategic partnerships to expand the

reach of its advocacy and ensure that climate awareness translates into concrete action at all levels of society.

“High-quality journalism is essential in driving climate awareness and accountability,” Borje emphasized. “GMA Integrated News has set a high standard in climate reporting, producing stories that not only inform but also empower communities to take action. Our partnership is a powerful step toward a more climate-informed and resilient Philippines.”

Through strengthened partnership with stakeholders including the media, the CCC is committed to their mission to elevate the conversation on climate change, drive public engagement, and inspire meaningful action toward a more resilient and sustainable future.

MANILA SHIMBUN

[First Filipino scholar under JICA Climate Program pushes to strengthen PH climate action](#)

The Climate Change Commission's (CCC) legal division chief Carlos Borja, Jr., is the first Filipino scholar to receive Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) scholarship, Climate Change Policy Program.

He will be taking Master of Laws in Comparative Studies of Politics and Administration in Asia at Kyushu University in Japan starting April.

Focused on making a lasting impact on climate governance in the Philippines, he aims to contribute to the updating of the Philippines' National Determined Contribution (NDC) by evaluating, identifying gaps, and providing recommendations to enhance its implementation. His studies in Japan will equip him with critical knowledge on climate governance, policy development, and international best practices that can strengthen the Philippines' efforts in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Borja views this opportunity as a way to advance how climate policies are developed and implemented. "My work at the CCC has exposed me to the complexities involved in translating international climate frameworks into effective national policies. Studying in Japan will enhance my analytical capabilities, broaden my global perspective, and equip me with practical strategies to address climate change challenges effectively," he said.

Borja hopes to use his education to develop policies that are practical, effective, and aligned with global climate goals. He envisions a future where the Philippines is at the forefront of climate action and believes that fostering collaboration between sectors and continuously improving climate policies will strengthen the country's position in global climate governance.

Through the two-year study program, he hopes to gain a better understanding of Japan's robust environmental governance and commitment to sustainable development. Specifically, Borja looks forward to learning community approach in environmental stewardship, as this offers practical insights that can be effectively applied in the Philippines.

JICA's Climate Change Policy Program focuses on helping developing countries like the Philippines address climate challenges through developing core human resources for

the formulation and implementation of various policies and plans align with Paris Agreement.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Pinoys told: Contribute to climate resilience, conservation efforts](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) yesterday said that Earth Hour should not end with the switching off of lights as it asked the public to contribute to ongoing efforts toward conservation and climate resilience.

“This movement does not end here, but rather serves as a reminder for us to take daily steps to promote conservation and build resilience,” CCC Vice Chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje said.

The global observance of Earth Hour on Saturday night coincided with World Water Day.

Borje cited the critical role of water in human survival and economic stability.

He cited the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) as a key strategy for strengthening conservation efforts, with a particular focus on innovative climate adaptation measures.

The NAP identifies water resources as one of eight key sectors crucial for climate adaptation, underscoring the need for comprehensive and sustainable water management strategies.

This year’s Earth Hour highlighted the critical link between energy conservation and water security.

According to Borje, the Philippines continues to face significant challenges in water access as he cited data from the Department of Health where 2.87 million households or 11.26 percent had no access to basic water supply in 2022, while 4.17 million households or 16.36 percent had no basic sanitation facilities.

“Water is a fundamental 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,” Borje said.

He also noted that based on the report of the World Bank, 42 percent of the country’s jobs are in sectors that use water intensively.

Borje said switching off lights for an hour served as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for stronger conservation efforts.

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