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By: Lenie Lectura

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CLIMATE HOME NEWS

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By Laurie Goering

The newly appointed board of the climate finance world's latest entry – the hard-won UN "loss and damage" fund – will likely hold its first meeting in late April after delays in agreeing members. But despite soaring needs for help, the fund itself isn't expected to hand out any money until 2025 at the earliest, officials say.

ECO-BUSINESS NEWS

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By Rhick Lars Albay

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and a future-focused corporate purpose could spare enterprises from the worst that lies ahead.

FINANCIAL TIMES

UN climate chief pleads for funding as government budgets feel strain

The UN's climate change arm faces "severe financial challenges" that could leave the organiser of the annual global COP summit struggling to help governments tackle global warming, its chief said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

More spending on climate-resilient crops proposed

By: Jeannette I. Andrade

A party list lawmaker on Sunday called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) to invest more in research for climate-resilient varieties of major crops, particularly rice and corn, to reduce the impact of future El Niño phenomena.

THE MANILA TIMES

PH advances energy sustainability for greener future

By: Genivi Verdejo

THE Philippines is actively addressing environmental concerns associated with energy production and consumption while enhancing economic opportunities and climate change resilience.

UN NEWS

Earth Hour: Lights off, climate action on | UN News

The largest global environment movement is happening on Saturday, when the UN invites people around the world to shut the lights to remember the planetary crisis during Earth Hour as young partners find new ways to drive climate action.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

CCC: NAP 'critical enabler' to achieve global climate resilience goals

MANILA – The Philippines has underscored that National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are critical enablers to enhance adaptation action and support, emphasizing the need to strengthen collaboration and accelerate delivery of support for developing nations' adaptation planning and implementation.

POLITIKO

National Adaptation Plans are critical enablers to enhance adaptation and foster climate resilience, Climate Change Commission Secretary Robert Borje said.

By Prince Golez

During the recent Adaptation Forum 2024 held in Germany, Borje emphasized the need to strengthen collaboration and accelerate delivery of support for the adaptation interventions of developing countries.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

PHL saved 132.11MW via Earth Hour

By: Lenie Lectura

THE Philippines saved a total of 132.11 megawatts (MW) during the Earth Hour 2024, or 110 percent higher than last year's 62.69MW, according to the Department of Energy (DOE).

"We are pleased to see such an impact in electricity savings during last Saturday's Earth Hour. This only demonstrates our people's dedication to safeguarding our planet. By coming together for this symbolic gesture, we send a powerful message of unity and commitment to sustainable practices," Energy Secretary Raphael PM Lotilla was quoted as saying in a statement the DOE issued last Monday.

This year's electricity savings were recorded at 73.86 MW from Luzon, 53.30 MW from Visayas, and 4.95 MW from Mindanao. In comparison, last year's Earth Hour resulted in savings of 33.29 MW from Luzon, 20.50 MW from Visayas, and 8.90 MW from Mindanao.

The results, said the DOE, underscored the power of collective action in promoting energy efficiency and conservation. By turning off non-essential lights and appliances for just one hour, individuals and businesses have made a tangible impact on reducing carbon emissions and conserving valuable resources.

"But I hope our practice of energy conservation will go beyond the Earth Hour. As we enter the warm and dry season coupled with the El Niño phenomenon, let us sustain the momentum in order to prevent supply strain due to shifts in peak demand consumption brought about by increased cooling needs " Lotilla added.

Organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, the DOE has been consistently at the forefront of the Earth Hour to encourage citizens, communities, and businesses to take meaningful action against climate change.

Meanwhile, Philippine Energy Efficiency Alliance (PE2) President Alexander Ablaza urged the country to adopt energy efficiency policies.

"As co-chair of the Mission Efficiency Marketplace Taskforce, my role is to build a platform that identifies investment-worthy energy efficiency projects, de-risks them, and connects them with financiers. I invite you to join this energy efficiency ecosystem and harness the benefits of energy efficiency for both people and the planet," Ablaza said.

"Mission Efficiency" is a global coalition of countries and organizations working to accelerate the transition towards energy-efficient economies worldwide. Born as the Three Percent Club in 2019 and rebranded in 2022 as Mission Efficiency, Ablaza said the goal is to accelerate the transition towards energy-efficient economies worldwide.

“Mission Efficiency’ is committed to doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvement, recognizing that this requires a multi-faceted approach covering stronger policies, affordable technologies, and tripling investments in energy efficiency to over \$1.8 trillion per year by 2030,” Ablaza said during the 4th Energy Efficiency Day 2024 Conference last week.

This year’s theme tapping on the “Global Call to Double Energy Efficiency on the Road to 2030,” marks the fourth anniversary of the passage of Republic Act 11285, more known as the Energy Efficiency and Conservation (EE&C) Act.

CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

Expectations mount as loss and damage fund staggers to its feet

By Laurie Goering

The newly appointed board of the climate finance world's latest entry – the hard-won UN “loss and damage” fund – will likely hold its first meeting in late April after delays in agreeing members. But despite soaring needs for help, the fund itself isn't expected to hand out any money until 2025 at the earliest, officials say.

The World Bank – the fund's expected host – said on its website last week that its own board anticipates approving a formal plan to become the fund's “financial intermediary” by mid-April, with a final operating deal due to be in place with the fund by the end of July.

But would-be recipients of the loss and damage fund's resources are already jostling for position in a growing queue of nations hoping for help – and its board faces an unenviable task: figuring out how to fairly divide very little money among too many people in desperate need of it, as climate impacts accelerate in a warming world.

Timetable of steps the World Bank plans to undertake to become host of the new UN loss and damage fund (Source: World Bank)

Pakistan, for instance, is still seeking about \$16 billion to rebuild roads, bridges, schools and more, after 2022 floods inundated a third of the country. In southern Africa, Zambia – hit by a severe drought that has ruined half of this season's staple maize crop – wants support to shore up its dwindling water supplies.

Vulnerable countries – from Pacific and Caribbean island nations to Bangladesh – are looking for money to cover growing losses as warmer seas drive stronger hurricanes and cyclones. And in Senegal, where higher oceans are accelerating coastal erosion, families watching their ancestors' skeletons float out to sea from flooded graveyards are asking for cash to rebuild crumbling coastal communities.

“The need is for trillions (of dollars) – and what we have is millions, not even billions,” said Ritu Bharadwaj, a climate finance and governance researcher at the UK-based International Institute for Environment and Development who has closely followed the new fund's evolution. So far, it has garnered about \$700 million in pledges.

With the residual costs from loss and damage projected to reach a total of \$290 billion to \$580 billion by 2030, according to a 2018 study, the loss and damage fund aims to ramp up its resources significantly, largely by persuading donor governments it can use their money effectively.

In partnership with a new taskforce on international taxation, it is also exploring how to harness innovative but politically tricky funding sources such as levies on fossil fuels, aviation, shipping and financial transactions.

UN's climate body faces "severe financial challenges" which put work at risk

To make limited resources stretch further, fund observers like Bharadwaj have urged the board to consider ways to reach vulnerable people directly, such as cash transfers when a pre-set trigger point is passed – for example, a top-strength hurricane hitting an at-risk zone.

That approach would cut out middleman delivery agencies that critics say now claim too much of climate finance flows and reduce the amounts getting to the frontlines.

Bharadwaj and some others also believe the fund should consider supporting so-far inadequate efforts to build resilience to worsening climate shocks, rather than just responding once they happen – in order to curb future demands for assistance.

That could include helping Zambia's farmers build community irrigation systems to avoid them coming back to the fund repeatedly to cover crop losses from warming-fuelled drought.

"We need to be more responsive to the comprehensive risks the communities are facing," said Bharadwaj.

Between relief and resilience

However, Avinash Persaud, a loss and damage fund board member from Barbados representing Latin American and Caribbean nations, said the fund should focus on its core mission – helping the worst-hit communities and countries recover and rebuild after climate impacts – rather than responding to well-intentioned pleas to expand its work.

"This fund is not replacing relief agencies. This is not a resilience-building fund," he told Climate Home. "This is doing the stuff in the middle – what happens the day after the relief agencies pack up and leave your people fed and watered but under blue tarpaulins."

The fund could support the reconstruction of devastated towns in a safer location, repairs to roads, bridges and schools – or anything else that "reboots the community", said Persaud, an economist noted for helping design the Bridgetown Initiative, which aims to reshape international finance flows to help debt-strapped countries boost climate protection.

Damage in a Miskito indigenous community called Wawa Bar, after being the epicenter of Hurricane Eta, on the Caribbean side of Nicaragua. The North Caribbean, one of the

poorest regions of Nicaragua, was plunged into uncertainty and despair after the double blow of hurricanes Eta and Iota, which sowed death and destruction in Central America, Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, November 23, 2020 (Photo: Katlyn Holland/CRS / Latin America News Agency via Reuters)

With the loss and damage fund's 26-strong board now in place – albeit several weeks late and yet to name one developing-world member with only an alternate from India listed for that seat – it is expected to start work in April to establish its operating rules.

The board is set to grapple with a range of contentious discussions, including whether a share of support should be given as concessional loans rather than simple grants.

Also up in the air is whether money should move straight to governments and local organisations or also through international partners – including development banks and UN agencies – and how much direct access to the fund vulnerable communities should have.

African dismay at decision to host loss and damage advice hub in Geneva

With the UN-backed Green Climate Fund, for example, about three-quarters of funding has been channeled to countries via international organisations and only a quarter has been delivered directly to developing countries and regions for projects.

Harjeet Singh, who has tracked efforts to establish the fund for more than a decade and is now global engagement director at the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, said he was hopeful “this fund is going to be different from the ones we’ve had so far”.

Fund with ‘a clean slate’

Michai Robertson, a climate finance negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States and a researcher at the UK-based Overseas Development Institution, said language in the agreement setting up the fund should help ensure it operates in new ways.

In making allocations, for instance, the board – which aims to disburse money far faster than existing climate funds – will have to balance the needs of countries that have sustained large climate losses with setting aside a basic floor of support for poorer or highly vulnerable nations where the overall bill is smaller but some communities are hit very hard.

Currently, small island developing states get just 2% of international climate finance and least-developed countries, largely in Africa, about 8-10%, Robertson noted.

“You don’t want one country to take up all the scarce resources,” he said.

In Somalia, Green Climate Fund tests new approach for left-out communities

The fund's agreement also says that vulnerable countries and communities should have a large say in deciding priorities for using its money – and that Indigenous and other community knowledge of local risks should be considered as a valuable source of information, especially when climate risk modelling is lacking in some countries.

The fund will also address some “non-economic” losses and damage – such as the disappearance of nature a community relies on, or cultural institutions – in the form of finance to help rebuild a ruined museum or replant lost mangroves, Singh said.

Bharadwaj said she hoped the fund can act in a way that is catalytic, helping countries fill the gaps in other funding streams – from climate adaptation and resilience, to development and humanitarian aid.

“When an existing institution or organisation does things in a certain way, it takes a lot of effort to change that. But the loss and damage fund is not carrying any baggage behind it. Here we have a chance for a clean slate,” she said.

ECO-BUSINESS NEWS

'A substantial threat': The impact of climate risks on different companies

By Rhick Lars Albay

There are few to no companies immune to climate risks today. This is forcing organisations to rethink business plans to weather climate-related shocks. Early action and a future-focused corporate purpose could spare enterprises from the worst that lies ahead.

As extreme weather events and natural disasters intensify due to climate change, there is increasing evidence that private enterprises must take climate risks into account or bear greater consequences down the line.

The impact of climate-induced extreme weather is costing businesses more each year, costing US\$280 billion worldwide in 2022 according to a United Nations study, with deadly weather events having also increased by over 80 per cent in the last two decades.

The potential disruption that extreme weather poses on companies today puts the onus on businesses to factor in climate risks, noted Andy Pitman, director of the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes.

“Every enterprise or organisation should be assessing risk, be it cyber, pandemic, or climate-related risks. Climate is simply one of many risks that every enterprise or organisation has to manage [moving forward],” Pitman said.

By 2060, business disruptions exacerbated by climate change could cause up to US\$24.7 trillion in global economic losses.

Asia is especially vulnerable to extreme weather led by climate change, with over 3,000 separate events stemming from the region over the 20-year period noted in the UN study. The United States, in comparison, saw almost 470 extreme weather events during the same period.

Threats such as typhoons, wildfires, floods, and droughts pose greater risks to all businesses, as they lead to supply chain disruptions and financial losses.

In the long run, supply chain disruptions negatively impact a company's ability to source, manufacture, and deliver its products or services, and can ultimately affect a business's bottom line.

Vegan entrepreneur Katherine Desbaillets Braha, chief brand officer and co-owner of SaladStop!, shared that the food chain aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. Image: SaladStop!

One industry at the mercy of climate-induced extreme weather is the food and beverage industry.

Katherine Desbaillets Braha is the chief brand officer and co-owner of SaladStop!, a Singapore-based restaurant chain that serves salads, grain bowls, wraps, and smoothies.

“Freshness is key for us as a food and beverage provider. All our produce is locally sourced and sent to us on the day itself,” Braha explained.

With a presence in seven countries across Asia, SaladStop! commits to a local procurement policy to not only empower farmers in their host countries but also lower their carbon footprint. While her company relies on fresh ingredients transported to its restaurants each day, usually from local farmers, weather can affect operations.

An average of 20 storms and typhoons hit the Philippines each year, leading to reduced agricultural yields, and destroyed crops. More recently, Super Typhoon Odette – one of the strongest recorded storms on Earth in 2021 – caused nearly US\$1 billion in damage in southern and central Philippines.

In Thailand, typhoon-induced floods can have an impact on rice production in various regions, and lead to reduced crop output and delays in harvests.

In Singapore, SaladStop! partners with indoor farming company Sustenir Agriculture for local produce. Image: Singapore Food Agency

One typhoon in the Philippines and Indonesia four years ago stalled operations in those countries, underscoring the logistical hurdles and agricultural damage wrought by tropical storms in the region.

While other restaurant operators may have resorted to importing produce when faced with local supply chain issues, Braha noted that her company, instead, also seeks the help of local indoor farms to keep their commitment to lowering emissions.

This, Braha said, also enables SaladStop! to continue operations despite weather-related disruptions, which she noted will likely increase over time due to climate change

“Over the years we have adapted and built a much stronger ecosystem of ethical and reliable suppliers in these countries. This ensures we can adjust quickly and get fresh produce to our customers daily, no matter the circumstance,” shared Braha. Among their partners are organic greenhouse farm Kalye Luntian in the Philippines and indoor farming company Sustenir Agriculture in Singapore.

The latter is supported by the Singapore Food Agency through an innovation grant, as the agency champions its ‘30 by 30’ goal – to build the city-state’s agri-food industry’s

capacity to sustainably produce 30 per cent of Singapore's nutritional needs by 2030. This goal is also featured in the Singapore Green Plan 2030.

Beyond fresh vegetables, climate-induced extreme weather will continue affecting the output of grains such as rice, leading to scarcity and price increases, with a report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation finding that rice prices worldwide reached a 15-year high in 2023.

APAC countries, and by extension, businesses operating in these countries, are among the most vulnerable to hazard intensification from climate change. Therefore, it becomes even more crucial to take adaptation measures. Risk reduction through adaptation can help with insurability.

Wilfrid Goh, head of public sector solutions Asia, Swiss Re

Risk and opportunity

The insurance and reinsurance sectors are also affected by increasing climate risks.

Reinsurance is insurance for insurance companies. Reinsurance helps insurers to manage their risks by absorbing some of their losses.

Property reinsurance rates, for example, hit 20-year highs in 2023, revealed a Swiss Re report, highlighting the impact of nature and the need to future-proof value chains.

“Demand for [insurance] covers has grown as natural disasters continue to wreak property damage across the world,” said the study, noting that insurance covered less than half of the US\$275 billion total in global economic losses that resulted from natural catastrophes in 2022.

The economic impact of climate change on the world's interconnected supply chains has increased demand for insurance and reinsurance services, notes Wilfrid Goh, Swiss Re's head of public sector solutions, Asia excluding China. “No company or sector is immune from the impacts of climate risk,” he said.

Swiss Re is one of the world's leading providers of reinsurance, insurance, and other forms of insurance-based risk transfer.

“For us and the wider re/insurance industry, [however] climate change continues to be both a manageable risk and a growth opportunity. Natural catastrophe [insurance] and reinsurance demand is expected to grow strongly. Meanwhile, as countries seek to transition to net zero economies, opportunities are expected for renewable energy reinsurance and renewable energy infrastructure debt [financing].”

Swiss Re's Changing climates: the heat is (still) on report underscored that fast-growing Asian economies like China, India, the Philippines, and Thailand are the most susceptible to climate shocks.

"APAC countries, and by extension, businesses operating in these countries, are among the most vulnerable to hazard intensification from climate change. Therefore, it becomes even more crucial to take adaptation measures. Risk reduction through adaptation can help with insurability," added Goh.

Taking into account crop exposures from the last few years, Swiss Re estimates that the global protection gap – which measures the difference between economic and insured losses – currently stands at US\$1.8 trillion, marking a 20 per cent increase compared to six years ago.

To assess and mitigate the impact of climate risks on the company, Swiss Re refers to an "ESG Risk Framework", explains Goh, which helps the company with its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices and in preventing, mitigating, and managing risks through engagement, restrictions, and portfolio enhancements.

The firm also incorporates climate-related financial disclosures to help its investors and other stakeholders assess climate risks and opportunities, added Goh, noting that Swiss Re also engages with clients on identified sustainability issues to discuss remediation plans or gather input from external stakeholders to better understand clients' risks.

Companies can maintain their competitiveness by viewing climate-related risks as opportunities to maintain relevance and grow, adds Pitman. "It need not be a cost to manage [climate] risk. It can provide strategies for an enterprise or organisation to out-compete others," he said.

The role of insurance will increase in tandem with growing climate risks, Goh stresses. "As climate-related risks increase, so must our efforts in reducing these risks," he noted. "Insurance helps to absorb economic losses by providing compensation to enable the replacement of good and continued service after a damaging event. This helps communities and ecosystems recover quickly, and covers the costs of necessary actions."

Growing with purpose

SaladStop! and Swiss Re are both members of the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre's (NVPC) Company of Good community, which supports businesses as they adopt corporate purpose and create impact in the areas of People, Society, Governance, Environment, and Economic.

Braha shared that her company joined the Company of Good community "to be surrounded by like-minded people and to get ideas on what else can be done to be more sustainable."

SaladStop!, which has two net zero stores in Singapore, aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. It hopes to achieve this through utilising only zero-waste packaging – among them salad bowls made of biodegradable bagasse (sugarcane pulp) – composting food waste, avoiding ingredients that contain palm oil, and promoting consumer-facing incentive programmes like ‘bring your own’ (BYO) container discounts.

SaladStop! also allows customers to “offset” their meal and by supporting mangrove reforestation projects in Indonesia through donations.

With a core commitment to conscious consumption through its corporate mission of “bringing freshness back to the table”, the restaurant chain hopes to champion products that respect nature and have a controlled impact on the environment.

“We want people to realise that our food, our communities, and our environment are all connected,” said Braha, who is a vegan herself. “We believe that eating healthy is more than just being good to our bodies; it is also about being good to everything around us,” concluded the SaladStop! co-founder.

As for Swiss Re, Goh notes its corporate purpose continues to help the company create business value, all while offering care to vulnerable communities. “Swiss Re’s mission is to help make the world more resilient,” he said, highlighting the work of the company’s philanthropic arm, the Swiss Re Foundation.

“The Swiss Re Foundation helps strengthen resilience in targeted low-income communities and communities near Swiss Re locations,” he explained. “The Foundation offers its partners tailored grant financing, access to expertise, research and capacity building, as well as collaborative networks to create measurable, lasting impacts at scale.”

In addition to increasing value and lowering costs, a corporate purpose can help companies win favour with more customers, Pitman added. “A careful assessment of how a business can adopt a sustainable corporate purpose is good practice, as it can save considerable operating costs [down the line] and [effectively position] a business to customers.”

NVPC seeks to recognise businesses in Singapore at a national level under its newly launched Company of Good Recognition System.

FINANCIAL TIMES

UN climate chief pleads for funding as government budgets feel strain

Organiser of global warming negotiations says body needs contributions totalling more than €150mn over 2 years

The UN's climate change arm faces "severe financial challenges" that could leave the organiser of the annual global COP summit struggling to help governments tackle global warming, its chief said.

Speaking as more than 30 countries met in Copenhagen for a two-day ministerial meeting, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Simon Stiell said its budget was less than half-funded.

The UNFCCC, which oversees the co-ordination of global efforts on climate issues, has said it needs €74mn over 2024 and 2025 for its so-called core budget, which is funded by national government contributions and was agreed at last year's COP28 summit in Dubai.

The proposed spending includes as much as €4.8mn on communications, €4.5mn for the running of the executive overseeing the framework, led by Stiell, and €3mn on its conferences.

The body also said it needs a further €78mn for its so-called supplementary budget, which comes from voluntary contributions but so far only has about €10mn in the pot. This extra funding is to cover mandates such as work on countries' climate plans and reports into how nations are meeting implementation of the 2015 Paris agreement, as well as activities linked to the COP28 accord.

The UNFCCC funding plea comes as concerns rise that dealing with climate change has fallen down the budget priorities of governments around the world as finances have been stretched by the Covid-19 pandemic and energy crisis.

At the same time, many countries are already grappling with the costly consequences of climate change, including extreme heat, wildfires and flooding.

"There is no doubt, climate change is multiplying the risks we face," said Ursula Woodburn, director of Corporate Leaders Group Europe, which organised the letter.

Stiell said the UN climate change arm was "attempting to meet an ever-growing mandate" to deal with climate change, but was at risk of being unable to do so because of a lack of cash.

Countries including leading polluters such as the US, Qatar and Korea, as well as many developing nations, are all in arrears for mandatory contributions from the period

2010-2023, the latest UNFCCC accounts show. Funds to help poor countries attend negotiations are also in deficit.

Last year, the UN's Green Climate Fund, the world's largest fund dedicated to assisting developing countries suffering from climate change, failed to draw as much funding as in previous financing rounds during its one-day pledging conference in Germany.

Developed and developing countries have also long been involved in clashes over a target of €100bn in financing that richer countries were meant to provide each year by 2020 to help poor countries cut emissions and manage climate change.

Finance is a key focus of the Copenhagen meeting this week, the first gathering of ministers since the agreement to "transition away" from fossil fuels at UN COP28 in Dubai.

Azerbaijan's Mukhtar Babayev, COP29 president-designate, told the gathering that finance would "lie at the heart of climate diplomacy" this year.

COP28 president Sultan al-Jaber echoed the push. "Everything we do in the lead up to COP29 must be centred around finance and finance, and making finance available, accessible and affordable," he said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

More spending on climate-resilient crops proposed

By: Jeannette I. Andrade

A party list lawmaker on Sunday called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) to invest more in research for climate-resilient varieties of major crops, particularly rice and corn, to reduce the impact of future El Niño phenomena.

AGRI party list Rep. Wilbert Lee cited DA reports placing at P1.75 billion the estimated cost of damage in 32,000 hectares of farmland due to the El Niño phenomenon currently being experienced in the country, which has also caused the displacement of tens of thousands of farmers.

There are eight regions currently most affected by the El Niño phenomenon, including Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, and Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos City).

Maximize technologies

In a statement, Lee pointed out in Filipino that it was time to focus on developing climate-resilient rice and corn to mitigate the effects of El Niño in the future.

He noted that the International Rice Research Institute (Irri) has developed climate-resilient rice that can “tolerate extreme climate conditions.”

“We just need to adopt and build on this technology in order for our farmers to benefit from it,” Lee pointed out.

Drought-tolerant rice varieties developed by the Irri have already been released, including the Sahbhagi Dhan in India; Sahod Ulan in the Philippines; and the Sookha Dhan in Nepal.

The Irri has also been studying flood-tolerant rice varieties, which have been released and are being planted, including Swarna-Sub1 in India; Samba Mahsuri in Bangladesh; and IR64-Sub1 in the Philippines.

Lee further noted a study by the United States Department of Agriculture on drought-tolerant corn, pointing out in mixed English and Filipino, “I suggest we propose a knowledge exchange of sorts so they could benefit from our rice research and we could obtain their corn technology.”

He noted that drought-tolerant corn varieties were made available to US farmers between 2011 and 2013 after decades of research by crop breeders and plant scientists.

“We need to utilize and maximize all available agricultural technologies so as to make our farmers—our food security soldiers—more resilient to climate change,” he said, stressing that having climate-resilient crops would ultimately help the country achieve food security and sufficiency. INQ

THE MANILA TIMES

PH advances energy sustainability for greener future

By: Genivi Verdejo

THE Philippines is actively addressing environmental concerns associated with energy production and consumption while enhancing economic opportunities and climate change resilience.

The nation is forging ahead on a path toward energy sustainability through governmental policies, private sector initiatives and strategic partnerships.

The Department of Energy (DoE) has signed Wind Energy Service Contracts with Mainstream Renewable Power (Mainstream) to develop two onshore wind projects in Luzon and the Visayas with a combined capacity of 440 megawatts. These projects in Cagayan Province and Leyte signify Mainstream's pioneering entry into onshore wind development in the Philippines.

Mainstream is a leading pure-play renewable energy company with wind and solar assets across global markets, including Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific.

"The awards of these contracts represent an important milestone for Mainstream as we continue to grow our development footprint across the Philippines. We are committed to the Philippine market and well-placed to be part of the country's energy transition and assist the government in reaching their targets of 35 percent renewable energy by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050," Karlin says.

The signing of the contract has been witnessed by DoE Secretary Raphael Lotilla and Norwegian Ambassador to the Philippines Christian Lyster. The signing of these onshore wind contracts further accelerates the implementation of the thrust of the Marcos administration to develop indigenous and renewable sources of energy, following the lifting of foreign ownership restrictions.

Energy efficiency and conservation

The Government Energy Management Program (GEMP), supported by Administrative Order (AO) 15, seeks to intensify energy conservation efforts within governmental entities. Lotilla emphasizes the importance of these measures, particularly in mitigating energy demand amid challenges such as El Niño.

The accelerated implementation of GEMP has yielded substantial savings; both in terms of electricity and fuel consumption. With over 1,210 audited government offices participating, the program has achieved significant cost savings while advancing energy sustainability goals, outlined in the Philippine Energy Plan 2020 to 2040.

"The President wants the entire government to embrace energy conservation measures. AO 15 will intensify our efficient utilization and conservation efforts in the use of electricity, and fuel to help mitigate energy demand, especially with the onset of El Niño," Lotilla says.

It advocates a shift to a sustainable energy lifestyle with the government setting a strong example.

In parallel, private sector entities such as the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) and Shell are spearheading sustainability initiatives, aimed at promoting renewable energy adoption and resilience across various sectors.

Meralco's ambitious sustainability agenda, "Powering the Good Life," outlines targets for clean energy sourcing, electrification of its vehicle fleet, and gender diversity promotion within its workforce.

Meralco's commitment to sustainability extends to partnerships with companies such as Spectrum, facilitating solar panel projects and the energization of communities through solar-powered microgrids.

Similarly, MGen Renewable Energy, aims to bolster its green energy portfolio with initiatives such as the construction of a solar farm in Bulacan. These endeavors underscore Meralco's commitment to becoming a significant player in the renewable energy sector while advancing sustainability objectives.

Meralco President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ray Espinosa says, "We, in Meralco, will continue to advance our drive [toward] sustainability not only by intensifying our efforts to keep the lights on for our customers and communities, but also by heightening our initiatives to protect and preserve the planet."

"As we forge ahead, we are committed to accelerating our sustainability transformation while meeting the needs of our recovering nation. We, likewise, set our vision [toward] co-creating a society with all the hallmarks of enduring and meaningful progress as we provide and power more life to sustain the Filipinos," Espinosa says.

BPI is solidifying its position as the leading Philippine bank, supporting renewable energy expansion and environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) principles in the country.

BPI Securities President and CEO Haj Narvaez emphasizes, "BPI invests in the future. We aim to promote sustainability and resilience across various sectors. This aligns with BPI's support for the country's transition [toward] the use of more sustainable energy resources in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement."

Through partnership with ACEN, a prominent renewable energy company in the Philippines, BPI seeks to expedite investments in renewable energy and ESG initiatives.

BPI's Sustainable Development Finance program complements the country's shift toward sustainable energy resources by backing projects such as renewable energy development and green building initiatives.

ACEN's recent sustainability-linked loan facility with BPI and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) showcases the collaboration between financial institutions and renewable energy developers to promote sustainability. These initiatives bolster the Philippines' overarching goals of energy sustainability and environmental stewardship by fostering partnerships and facilitating investments.

ACEN is striving to become the largest listed renewables platform in Southeast Asia with a target of reaching 20 gigawatts (GW) of renewables capacity by 2030.

Jonathan Back, ACEN Group chief finance and strategy officer, says, "ACEN is committed to transition the company's generation portfolio to 100-percent renewable energy by 2025 and to become a net zero greenhouse gas emissions company by 2050."

"We have approximately 4.7 GW of attributable capacity across our major markets: the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia and India with a renewable share of 99 percent, [which is] among the highest in the region," Back says.

Shell's commitment to becoming a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050 underscores the significance of private sector engagement in the energy transition.

Through investments in low-carbon energy solutions and advocacy for policies supporting national net-zero ambitions, Shell is positioning itself as a leader in the global energy transition.

Shell will continue to transparently report its progress against its targets and ambitions every year. Between 2023 and the end of 2025, Shell plans to invest \$10 billion to \$15 billion in low-carbon energy solutions, making it a significant investor in the energy transition. These investments encompass electric vehicle charging, biofuels, renewable power, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage.

Shell aims to scale new technologies to make them an affordable choice for customers and focuses its advocacy on key areas critical to the energy transition: policies supporting national net-zero ambitions, supplying secure energy, driving changes in demand and growing low-carbon solutions.

To prioritize value over volume in power, Shell will concentrate on select markets and segments, including selling more power to commercial customers and less to retail customers. This shift toward prioritizing value has led to an update in Shell's net carbon intensity target, aiming for a 15-percent to 20-percent reduction by 2030 in the net carbon intensity of the energy products Shell sells, compared with 2016 against the previous target of 20 percent.

Shell CEO Wael Sawan says, "Energy has made an incredible contribution to human development, allowing many people around the world to live more prosperous lives. Today, the world must meet the growing demand for energy while tackling the urgent challenge of climate change. I am encouraged by the rapid progress in the energy transition in recent years in many countries and technologies, which reinforces my deep conviction in the direction of our strategy."

"Shell has a very important role to play in providing the energy the world needs today and in helping to build the low-carbon energy system of the future. Our focus on performance, discipline and simplification is driving clear choices about where we can have the greatest impact through the energy transition and create the most value for our investors and customers. We believe this focus makes it more — not less — likely that we will achieve our climate targets. By providing the different kinds of energy the world needs, we believe we are the investment case and the partner of choice through the energy transition," Sawan says.

Meanwhile, Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), operated by Aboitiz Infracapital GMCAC, has achieved Level 1 Airport Carbon Accreditation from Airports Council International (ACI), marking a significant milestone in the Philippines' commitment to environmental sustainability.

The airport aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and global targets, aiming to preserve resources for future generations through sustainable projects. This recognition not only highlights Mactan-Cebu's responsible approach to carbon emissions, but also positions it as a frontrunner in promoting eco-friendly practices within the aviation sector.

Airport Carbon Accreditation, a globally endorsed certification program for carbon management in airports, evaluates and recognizes airports' efforts in managing and reducing carbon emissions.

Stefano Baronci, director general for Asia-Pacific and the Middle East at ACI, commended MCIA for its dedication to sustainability, emphasizing the importance of achieving Level 1 certification in the Airport Carbon Accreditation program.

Julius Neri, CEO at MCIA, emphasized the airport's commitment to sustainability, aiming to set a precedent for the Philippine aviation industry. The airport is implementing innovations to enhance sustainability such as reducing nonbiodegradable waste, implementing energy-saving infrastructure projects, integrating renewable energy sources and minimizing water consumption.

Neri believes the airport's recent achievement will inspire the Philippines' aviation industry to adopt sustainable practices, highlighting the potential for a net-zero outcome due to technological advancements. He emphasizes the need for a collective positive

impact on the planet and the airport's sustainability journey toward higher accreditation levels.

PEP 2020 to 2040

Under the Philippine Energy Plan 2020 to 2040, the conduct of the Philippine Conventional Energy Contracting Program (PCECP) makes the oil and gas sector a dynamic investment opportunity for energy players in the country.

PCECP aims to award eight service contracts (SCs) with a minimum investment of P8.4 billion once players complete the required exploration stage.

Approval for Nominated Area 1 and Predetermined Areas 6 and 7, located in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao areas, could generate a potential investment of P1.7 billion. The sustainable implementation of the PCECP could attract additional investments of P492.4 billion, divided between oil production (P94.4 billion) and natural gas production (P398 billion). This total investment of P502.5 billion aims to support the government's "bring back better" initiatives.

Approved service contracts can employ around 300 personnel, creating over 2,000 job opportunities for technical and support services to meet the manpower requirements of eight SCs.

Renewable energy not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions and improves air quality, but also creates economic opportunities for local industries and communities by creating jobs in manufacturing, installation and maintenance sectors. The government has implemented programs and incentives to encourage investment in renewable energy projects.

The World Health Organization states that 99 percent of people worldwide breathe air that exceeds air quality limits, causing over 13 million deaths annually due to environmental causes such as air pollution. Fossil fuel burning contributes to unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, causing \$2.9 trillion in health and economic costs in 2018.

According to the United Nations, fossil fuels — including coal, oil and gas — are the largest contributors to global climate change, accounting for over 75 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and 90 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions. To mitigate the worst impacts, emissions need to be reduced by almost half by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 with the science indicating a need for urgent action.

Renewable energy is currently the most affordable power option globally with prices rapidly decreasing. Between 2010 and 2020, solar power costs have fallen by 85 percent while onshore and offshore wind energy costs have fallen by 56 percent and 48 percent, respectively. This makes renewable energy more attractive globally, especially in low- and middle-income countries from where the majority of new electricity demand

will come. This presents an opportunity for low-carbon sources to provide much of the new power supply in the future.

Switching to clean energy sources such as wind and solar can help address climate change, air pollution and health. Fossil fuels still dominate over 80 percent of global energy production, but renewable sources are gaining ground, accounting for 29 percent of electricity currently.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says, "It's time to stop burning our planet and start investing in the abundant renewable energy all around us."

UN NEWS

Earth Hour: Lights off, climate action on

The largest global environment movement is happening on Saturday, when the UN invites people around the world to shut the lights to remember the planetary crisis during Earth Hour as young partners find new ways to drive climate action.

“Turn off the lights, and move the world towards a better future for all,” UN Secretary General António Guterres said in a message for the event.

The UN chief recalled that 2023 was the hottest in history, and this year’s celebration is a global demonstration of solidarity to follow a different path.

“On Earth Hour, millions of people around the world switch off the lights to shine a light on the plight of our planet; this year, I invite you to be one of them,” Mr. Guterres said. “The need is urgent.”

UN Headquarters switches off

The UN Secretariat will be in the dark from 8:30pm New York time on Saturday, when all the lights in the 40-storey on the East River will be turned off for 60 minutes.

“Our climate is collapsing,” Mr. Guterres said, and Earth Hour “demonstrates the power each of us has in the fight for our future”.

“Together, let’s turn off the lights and turn the world towards a brighter future for us all,” he said.

CCC IN THE NEWS

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

CCC: NAP ‘critical enabler’ to achieve global climate resilience goals

MANILA – The Philippines has underscored that National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are critical enablers to enhance adaptation action and support, emphasizing the need to strengthen collaboration and accelerate delivery of support for developing nations’ adaptation planning and implementation.

Following its 25th meeting in Bonn, Germany on March 12-15, the Adaptation Committee of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) brought together countries and stakeholders in the Adaptation Forum 2024 to address opportunities for action and collaboration across the NAP process, promoting solutions towards achieving the global goal on adaptation.

As a member of the Adaptation Committee, Secretary Robert E.A. Borje of the Philippines’ Climate Change Commission (CCC) served as facilitator and rapporteur on the sessions regarding impact, vulnerability and risk assessment for NAPs, and adaptation planning.

Borje recognized the urgent need for accelerated support in terms of finance, capacity, and technology, and emphasized enhanced collaboration and cooperation to enable developing countries and particularly vulnerable nations to formulate and implement their NAPs.

“National Adaptation Plans are critical baselines for individual and collective efforts of Parties. Towards the achievement of the global goal on adaptation and the new global climate resilience objectives, we must drive developing nations towards NAP formulation and implementation. In this case, support for the whole NAP process must be provided, with least to no conditionalities, and in the most urgent manner,” Borje said.

The NAP process includes risk assessment, planning and development, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

According to the NAP Central, 53 developing countries have submitted their NAPs, which accounts for only 25 percent of all developing country Parties under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

The Philippines is in the course of finalizing its first NAP, developed based on a whole-of-nation and whole-of-society approach, in collaboration with bilateral partners,

government agencies and institutions, civil society and non-government organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders.

Primary challenges in NAP formulation are data availability and accessibility, data quality and quantity, and local capacity to analyze these towards determination of national priorities and strategies.

“We must make data and information more available and accessible, and ensure that developing nations are provided with the capacity to analyze data to determine fit-for-purpose adaptation measures. Support must be provided to enable developing nations to formulate NAPs with least domestic budget and resource implication as possible,” Borje said.

“Developed states must exert more and ramp up cooperation with and assistance for developing states to address key data challenges. In this regard, Annex 1 Parties must ensure that Means of Implementation are provided urgently,” he added.

While there are support windows such as through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, and UN4NAPs, among others, participants said accessing these remains a challenge due to stringent procedures.

Consistent with the directives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the Philippines actively participates in international climate change negotiation process, and has been calling for simplified and streamlined processes in accessing means of implementation and support, and need to further strengthen collaboration, such as through south-south, north-south, and triangular cooperation for both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Under the leadership of the President, and consistent with the Philippine Development Plan, the CCC, in coordination with relevant agencies and stakeholders, is finalizing the Philippines’ first NAP, outlining country’s priorities and strategies towards national climate resilience.

The Adaptation Forum 2024 held in Bonn will be followed by the NAP Expo in Dhaka, Bangladesh where a series of knowledge-sharing activities and experts training on adaptation planning and implementation will take place. (PR)

POLITIKO

Nat'l Adaptation Plans 'Critical Baselines' To Enhance Climate Adaptation, Support: Borje

By Prince Golez

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are critical enablers to enhance adaptation and foster climate resilience, Climate Change Commission (CCC) Secretary Robert Borje said.

During the recent Adaptation Forum 2024 held in Germany, Borje emphasized the need to strengthen collaboration and accelerate delivery of support for the adaptation interventions of developing countries.

He also highlighted the urgent need for immediate financial, capacity, and technological assistance.

“National Adaptation Plans are critical baselines for individual and collective efforts of Parties,” the CCC official said.

“Towards the achievement of the global goal on adaptation and the new global climate resilience objectives, we must drive developing nations towards NAP formulation and implementation,” he added.

Borje reiterated that support for the whole NAP process must be provided, with least to no conditionalities, and in the most urgent manner.

“We must make data and information more available and accessible, and ensure that developing nations are provided with the capacity to analyze data to determine fit-for-purpose adaptation measures. Support must be provided to enable developing nations to formulate NAPs with least domestic budget and resource implication as possible,” he furthered.

The NAP process includes risk assessment, planning and development, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

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