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CLIMATE HOME NEWS

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By: Cecilia Keating

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PHILIPPINE STAR

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PHYS.ORG

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By: Eva Schissler

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JOURNAL ONLINE

Aboitiz Foundation Champions Sustainability at PDRF Climate Change Forum 2025

Aboitiz Foundation reaffirmed its dedication to sustainability and climate resilience through its active support and participation in the State of Climate Change 2025 Forum organized by the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) in partnership with the New Zealand Embassy.

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THE Philippine Rise is a natural carbon sink that could contribute to climate-change mitigation, according to a study led by scientists from the World Maritime University, IRD in France, Technical University of Denmark, and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Blue Green Future.

The researchers said 50-year carbon sequestration rates are highest in the tropics, making the Philippines and the broader Coral Triangle region “significant in this global picture.”

Carbon sinks are reservoirs that store more carbon than they release. Natural carbon sinks include oceans, forests, and soil.

The researchers said 27% of carbon sequestration happens in Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas, of which the Philippines has three.

In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has the most marine protected areas, where 7% of sequestration occurs, they added.

The study found that the ocean’s biological carbon pump (BCP), the natural process by which the ocean removes and stores carbon from the atmosphere, sequesters approximately 2.81 giga tons of carbon annually, equivalent to $1 trillion per year in climate-related economic value over 50 years.

The researchers valued the carbon storage provided by this ecosystem service at $545 billion per year in international waters and $383 billion per year within national exclusive economic zones, with the total value projected to exceed $2.2 trillion by 2030.

Despite its vital role in mitigating climate change, the BCP remains largely unprotected from human activities such as industrial fishing, pollution, and deep-sea mining, the study said.

“Sequestration time should be clearly stated and scientifically estimated to provide more transparency and confidence in investments in carbon sequestration projects,” lead author Fabio Berzaghi said.

The authors called for stronger conservation policy, enhanced financial incentives for lower-income countries, and increased international cooperation to protect carbon sinks.

“Strengthening protections and aligning ocean-based carbon storage with national and global frameworks will be key to enhancing climate adaptation while fostering sustainable economic growth,” according to Charina Lyn Amedo-Repollo, assistant professor and physical oceanographer at the Marine Science Institute – University of the Philippines Diliman. — Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza

CLIMATE HOME NEWS

Loss and damage fund proposes helping governments first, local communities later

The body running the new UN Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) caused by climate change has recommended that it should focus initially on helping governments rather than local communities deal with the aftermath of climate-driven disasters like floods and droughts.

A proposal by the FRLD’s secretariat, which will be debated at the fund’s board meeting in Barbados next week, says that its 2025-2026 start-up phase should prioritise government support and only later give small grants to communities – something activists have called for – and pay for insurance.

The secretariat aims to launch the fund’s start-up phase by the fourth quarter of 2025, with the first allocations of money for countries likely to be handed out in 2026, just over three years since the fund was agreed at COP27 in Egypt after years of resistance from rich polluting nations.

The FRLD secretariat, led by Senegalese-American banker Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, says its early activities should be “programmatic approaches for long-term needs”, “readiness support for country-led approaches” and “rapid disbursement via direct budget support”. These are all ways to help governments tackle loss and damage by preparing and bolstering their national systems.

Harjeet Singh, founding director of the India-based Satat Sampada Climate Foundation, welcomed the secretariat’s three priority areas, adding that they align with developing countries’ demands.

But he criticised the deferral of “critical” small grants for local people. “Delaying the operationalisation of small grants, as advocated by civil society, sidelines frontline communities who are already bearing the brunt of climate impacts. Their inclusion cannot be postponed,” he told Climate Home.

“The board must recognise that advancing climate justice requires frontline communities not only to be supported,” he added, “but meaningfully empowered as key actors in both immediate and long-term responses to loss and damage.”

Start with governments

Programmatic approaches are broader, longer-term partnerships with a government that address complex, systemic issues rather than project-based funding which is usually short-term and deals with a single situation.

Readiness support means improving governments’ abilities to respond to climate impacts. The FRLD’s proposal gives examples like conducting risk assessments, setting up early warning systems for extreme weather, making schools and hospitals more resilient to climate change, and educating people on slow-developing climate threats like sea level rise.

Direct budget support is sending money to governments after a climate disaster to fund their response, which they can spend how they choose. The FRLD says the money could be used for temporary housing for displaced people, cash-for-work schemes and reconnecting power supplies, water and sanitation.

The secretariat proposes that small grants for community-led initiatives may be considered towards the end of the two-year start-up period, when the capacity of the secretariat – whose executive director was only appointed in September – has expanded.

The same would apply to risk-sharing and insurance mechanisms, where the fund subsidises insurance against climate disasters, and performance-based payment initiatives where funds are handed out when milestones in minimising loss and damage are achieved.

The fund’s board has decided that decisions made about the start-up phase will not necessarily set precedents for how the fund works permanently. But Lien Vandamme, a campaigner with the Center for International Environmental Law, told Climate Home that “choices made during this phase will demonstrate where the Board’s priorities lie”.

How much for the most vulnerable countries?

Governments have already agreed that small island developing states (SIDS) and the world’s least developed countries (LDCs) should get a minimum share of the fund’s resources, with donor pledges currently standing at less than $800 million.

The secretariat proposes two options to ensure this. One is a floor for SIDS and LDCs together of somewhere between a quarter and a half of the money. The other is two separate floors – one for SIDS and one for LDCs.

After the start-up period, the fund proposes several options to ensure that one country or group of countries don’t take too much of the money.

One is a percentage cap per country or region, another is a percentage threshold above which the secretariat will monitor allocations, and the third has no percentages but agrees that the secretariat will try to ensure funding is allocated across regions in a balanced manner.

After the start-up phase, there could also be caps on the three different streams of funding – programmatic approaches, rapid disbursement and readiness support.

The secretariat proposes that the start-up phase will prioritise grants, with loans on better-than-market terms coming in later, and that 155 entities accredited to other UN funds like the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund will automatically be accredited to the FRLD.

Need billions, got millions

Despite pledging around $766 million to the fund, governments have so far only signed contribution agreements for $469 million and actually paid in $261 million. The United Arab Emirates has not turned its $100-million commitment – which made headlines at COP28 in Dubai – into a contribution agreement or made a bank transfer.

The US did pay its $17.5-million pledge before Donald Trump took office. Since Trump came to power, vowing to walk away from the UN climate process, the US has surrendered its seat on the FRLD board, which will now go to another developed country.

The Loss and Damage Collaboration, a network of NGOs working on the issue, has estimated that developing countries' loss and damage needs add up to around $400 billion a year. One climate disaster alone – the 2022 floods in Pakistan – inflicted $30 billion in damage and economic losses, with an additional $16 billion needed to rebuild, according to an international assessment.

Compared with these numbers, the initial amounts wealthy governments have offered to the FRLD fall far short of the rising costs of responding to and repairing the negative impacts of climate change on economies and people.

ECO-BUSINESS

Global soil moisture in 'permanent' decline due to climate change

By: Cecilia Keating

Combining data from satellites, sea level measurements and observations of "polar motion", the research shows how soil moisture levels have decreased since the year 2000.

The findings, published in Science, suggest the decline is primarily driven by an increasingly thirsty atmosphere as global temperatures rise, as well as shifts in rainfall patterns.

Consequently, the researchers warn the observed changes are likely to be "permanent" if current warming trends continue.

An accompanying perspective article says the study provides "robust evidence" of an "irreversible shift" in terrestrial water sources under climate change.

The drying out of soil "increases the severity and frequency" of major droughts, with consequences for humans, ecosystems and agriculture, explains Dr Benjamin Cook, an interdisciplinary Earth system scientist working at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University, who was not involved in the research.

He tells Carbon Brief:

“Droughts are one of the most impactful, expensive natural hazards out there, because they are typically persistent and long lasting. Everything needs water – ecosystems need water, agriculture needs water. People need water. If you don’t have enough water – you’re in trouble.”

Drying soil

Every year, around 6tn tonnes of water cycles through Earth’s land surface. When rain falls on land it gets held up in soil, wetlands, groundwater, lakes and reservoirs on its journey back to the oceans.

Soil moisture forms a critical part of the Earth’s system, helping to irrigate soil, cycle nutrients and regulate the climate.

The amount of water contained in the soil is sensitive to a range of factors, including changes in rainfall, evaporation, vegetation and climate – as well as human activity, such as intensive agriculture.

The research points to a “gradual decline” in soil moisture levels in the 21st century, kickstarted by a period of “sharp depletion” in the three years over 2000-02.

Specifically, the researchers find the depletion of soil moisture resulted in a total loss of 1,614bn tonnes (gigatonnes, or Gt) of water over 2000-02 and then 1,009Gt between 2002 and 2016.

(For context, ice loss in Greenland resulted in 900Gt of water loss over 2002-06.)

Soil moisture has not recovered as of 2021, according to the research, and is unlikely to pick up under present climate conditions.

Joint-lead author Prof Dongryeol Ryu, professor of hydrology and remote sensing at the University of Melbourne, explains to Carbon Brief:

“We observed a stepwise decline [in soil moisture] twice in the past two decades, interspersed within a continuously declining trend in soil moisture. We haven’t seen this trend earlier, so that is why this is very concerning.”

Ryu explains the decision to analyse changes to soil moisture on a global scale meant the researchers could confirm trends difficult to see in smaller geographic datasets:

“The unique thing we found through analysing these larger-scale measures is that – even if we have seen widely fluctuating ups and downs in precipitation and increasing temperature – the total water contained in the soil, as soil moisture and groundwater, has been declining gradually from around the beginning of this century.“

The maps below illustrate soil moisture changes in 2003-07 and 2008-12 against a 1995-99 baseline, as estimated by the ERA5-Land reanalysis dataset. The areas marked on the map in brown saw a drop in soil moisture and the areas marked in blue an increase in soil moisture.

The top map shows soil moisture depletion across large regions in eastern and central Asia, central Africa and North and South America over 2003-07. The lower map shows that

“replenishment” in the years that followed occurred in relatively small parts of South America, India, Australia and North America.

Climate change

Ryu says the researchers “suspect that increasing temperature played an important role” in the decline in terrestrial water storage and soil moisture in the 21st century.

The study points to two factors driving gradual depletion of soil moisture over the last quarter century: fluctuations to rainfall patterns and increasing “evaporative demand”.

Evaporative demand refers to the atmosphere’s “thirst” for water, or how much moisture it can take from the land, vegetation and surface water.

Studies have highlighted how global evaporative demand has been increasing over the last two decades globally, impacting water availability, hurting crops and causing drought.

The new study notes that “increasing evaporative demand driven by a warming climate” suggests a “more consistent and widespread trend toward drying as temperatures rise”.

Ryu says the “very unusual” drop in water moisture observed over 2000-02 could be attributed to low levels of rainfall globally, which coincided with the “period when evaporative demand started increasing”.

Another – less pronounced – period of rapid soil moisture decline seen over 2015-16 can be attributed to droughts triggered by the 2014-16 El Niño event, Ryu notes.

Ryu says the study findings indicate that soil moisture can no longer bounce back from a dry year, as it has in the past:

“It used to be that when precipitation goes up again, we recover water in the soil. But because of this increasing evaporative demand, once we have strong El Niño years – which lead to much less rainfall for a year or two – it seems that we are not recovering the water fully because of increasing evaporative demand. Because of that – even if we have a wet year following dry years – the water in the soil doesn’t seem to recover.”

Cross-validation

Measuring changes in global soil moisture has historically presented a challenge to scientists, given the lack of comprehensive and direct observations of water in soil.

The researchers attempt to reduce this uncertainty by corroborating the ERA5-Land reanalysis dataset from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) with three geophysical measurement datasets.

ERA5’s land surface modelling system uses meteorological and other input data to estimate water within the upper few metres of the soil.

These figures were compared with data collected by the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission – a joint satellite mission between NASA and the German Aerospace Center.

Running since 2002, the GRACE mission tracks changes to the Earth's gravity by collecting data on groundwater depletion, ice sheet loss and sea level rise. These observations have revealed a persistent loss of water from land to the ocean.

The scientists also cross-reference the ERA5 reanalysis data with a century-old dataset that measures fluctuations in the rotation of the Earth as the distribution of mass on the planet changes.

(The redistribution of ice and water, such as melting ice sheets and depleting groundwater, causes the planet to wobble as it spins and its axis to shift slightly. This is known as "polar motion".)

The third set of measurements the scientists use is global mean sea level height, which is collected by satellites.

To extract soil moisture changes from this set of data, the researchers subtracted other components of sea level rise from the overall total – including Greenland ice melt, Antarctica ice melt, the impact of increasing sea surface temperature (which expands water volume) and the contribution of groundwater.

This process of elimination left researchers with an estimate of the contribution of soil moisture to global sea level rise.

The study notes that both the sea surface height and polar motion observations "support the conclusion that the abrupt change in soil moisture is genuine".

Ryu says using global average sea level rise and "Earth wobble" to track water redistribution on land is the "main innovation" applied in the paper.

He adds the value of "reverse engineering" the ERA5 dataset is to understand how to enhance land surface modelling in the future:

"By explaining all the contributing factors to this measurement, you can understand the process. And if you understand the process, you can actually predict what's going to happen in the future if any of these factors change in a certain manner."

NASA's Dr Cook says the "corroborating evidence" supplied by the paper offers a "really strong case that there has been a large-scale decline in soil moisture in recent decades".

However, he says the relatively short reference period of the study means that identifying the cause of the decline is less clear cut:

"Whether [the decline] is permanent or not is much more uncertain…On these timescales, internal natural variability can be really, really strong. Attributing this decline to something specific – either climate change or internal variability – is much much more difficult."

Sea level rise

A notable finding in the study's sea level rise analysis is that terrestrial water storage may have been the dominant driver of sea level rise in the early 21st century.

Specifically, the paper notes that the decline in terrestrial water storage over 2000-02 – when soil moisture plummeted – led to global average sea level rise of almost 2mm annually.

The researchers note this rate of sea level rise is "unprecedented" and "significantly higher" than the rate of sea level rise attributed to Greenland ice mass loss, which they note is approximately 0.8mm a year.

Prof Reed Maxwell, a professor at the High Meadows Environmental Institute at Princeton University, who was also not involved in the study, says the researchers' efforts to compare soil moisture with other global water stores was "novel" and "opens the door to future study of a more holistic global water balance".

'Creeping disaster'

The paper notes that land surface and hydrological models require "substantial improvement" to accurately simulate changes in soil moisture in changing climate.

Current models do not factor the impacts of agricultural intensification, nor the ongoing "greening" of semi-arid regions – both of which "may contribute" to a further decline in soil moisture, it states.

Writing in a perspectives article published in Science, Prof Luis Samaniego from the department of computational hydrosystems at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research says that it is "essential" that next-generation models incorporate human-caused influences such as farming, large dams and irrigation systems.

The study posits that the "innovative methods" for estimating changes in global soil moisture presented in the study provide opportunities to "improve the present state of modelling at global and continental scales".

More broadly, advances in scientific understanding of changes to soil moisture can help improve the world's preparedness for drought.

Drought is often described as a "creeping disaster" – because by the time it is identified, it is usually already well under way.

Paper author Ryu explains:

"Unlike a flood and heatwaves, drought comes very very slowly – and has prolonged and delayed consequences. We better be prepared earlier than later, because once drought comes you can expect a long period of consequences."

Dr Shou Wang, associate professor at the Hydroclimate Extremes Lab and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who was not involved in the study, says the research findings are "crucial" for advancing understanding of the "potential drivers and dynamics" of "unprecedented hydrological extremes in a warming climate". He tells Carbon Brief:

"This is breakthrough work that uncovers the drivers of hydrological regime changes, which are leading to unprecedented hydrological extremes such as compound and consecutive drought-flood events."

PHILIPPINE STAR

‘Trump 2.0 poses risks to energy transition in Asia’

MANILA, Philippines — The firm stance of US President Donald Trump against renewables could slow the energy transition in Asia, but Philippine energy executives are seeing a silver lining in these emerging challenges.

Energy Undersecretary Rowena Cristina Guevara, alongside top executives from some of the country’s renewable power firms, highlighted how Trump’s policies have created headwinds in the region’s energy landscape.

“It is possible that there is an impact with the Trump administration and the decisions the United States is making these days,” Guevara said at the Asia CEO Renewable Energy Forum yesterday.

Trump, who consistently denies the climate crisis, continues to make headlines with his push for more fossil fuel extraction, staunch opposition to clean energy sources and controversial tariffs targeting some countries.

On his first day in office, Trump even signed an executive order pulling out the US from the Paris Agreement, an international treaty on climate change mitigation adopted in 2015.

ACEN Corp. president and CEO Eric Francia said Trump’s “drill, baby, drill” campaign has caused “ much uncertainty in the mid- to long-term global supply demand.”

“There is a risk of stranded assets if you overbuild gas resources and so forth,” Francia said.

According to Francia, the sentiment and rhetoric have “clearly turned,” saying that some investors are now leaning on fossil fuels rather than clean energy.

Amid a potential slowdown in energy transition, Francia remains optimistic about the growth prospects in the Philippines on the back of investor-friendly energy policies and the “attractive” green energy market.

“We need to look at the impact of local and regional policies, and that is where we have a great silver lining and an opportunity to unlock opportunities in these challenges for the Philippines,” he said.

To achieve the country’s targets, Francia said the Philippines would need to “step on the gas pedal.”

“And the Philippines, today, is a very compelling investment thesis for funds that eventually will come,” he said.

For Guevara, global challenges could be an opportunity for the Philippines and other countries in Asia to “flourish.”

“We can have partnerships among us, and we do have leaders in Asia like China, Japan, Korea, and India already leading the renewable energy market,” she added.

Under the Philippine Energy Plan, the government wants to scale up the share of renewables in the energy mix to 35 percent by 2030 from the current 22 percent.

Meanwhile, Oliver Tan, president and CEO at Citicore Renewable Energy Corp., said US investments in energy transition had been “flattish” even before Trump returned to the White House.

While government policies can influence capital flow, Tan said “smart money” would still find its way to areas where there are promising investment opportunities.

PHYS. ORG

Climate change and prehistoric human populations: Study finds eastward shift of settlement areas at end of last Ice Age
By: Eva Schissler

A new study sheds light on how prehistoric hunter-gatherer populations in Europe coped with climate changes over 12,000 years ago. Led by scientists from the University of Cologne, a team of 25 prehistoric archaeologists from twenty European universities and research institutions revealed significant shifts in population size and density during key periods at the end of the last Ice Age, specifically during the Final Paleolithic between 14,000 and 11,600 years ago.

The study has been published in PLOS One under the title "Large scale and regional demographic responses to climatic changes in Europe during the Final Palaeolithic."

The results reveal that the first establishment of a larger human population in north-eastern central Europe during the Final Paleolithic was followed by a dramatic population decline during the last cold period (Greenland Stadial 1) of the Ice Age. This decline reduced the total population of Europe by half.

However, the study found that some areas in central Europe show stability or even a slight increase in population size against the general trend. The team interprets this finding as evidence of human migration towards the east in response to worsening climate conditions.

By compiling a comprehensive database on archaeological sites from this period and using a cutting-edge geostatistical method called the Cologne Protocol, the researchers estimated population sizes and densities of prehistoric humans across different regions of Europe. The protocol provides a standardized procedure to estimate prehistoric demographic data, allowing for diachronic comparisons. The identified shifts in regional population sizes provide new insights into how early humans responded to the environmental challenges of their time.

The study focuses on two key periods: Greenland Interstadial 1d-a (GI-1d-a) and Greenland Stadial 1 (GS-1). During GI-1d-a, a warmer period of the Final Paleolithic, humans continued to repopulate and expand into northern and north-eastern central Europe, making this region the center of demographic dynamics in Europe for the first time in prehistory. Populations in south-western Europe, particularly in Spain and France, began to decline compared to population estimates for the preceding periods of the Upper Paleolithic.

When the climate turned much colder during the subsequent GS-1, a climatic period known in the northern hemisphere as the "Younger Dryas," the total population of Europe decreased by half. But the new study shows that regional dynamics varied considerably: The estimates indicate an increase in population density in some areas of Europe (e.g. northern Italy, Poland and north-eastern Germany) as well as a general shift of populated areas from west to east.

"These observations probably reflect the eastward movement of people in response to the very abrupt and pronounced climatic cooling during the Younger Dryas," explains Dr. Isabell Schmidt from the University of Cologne's Department of Prehistoric Archaeology. "Humans during the Final Paleolithic apparently responded by migrating to more favorable areas."

The Cologne researchers are familiar with extreme population declines in prehistory, such as during the late Gravettian (29,000 to 25,000 years ago), when cooler temperatures reduced populations in western and central Europe by up to two-thirds, leading to the extinction of regional populations.

Although demographic dynamics, particularly in these early phases of human prehistory, are still poorly understood, the new study adds to a growing body of evidence on how prehistoric humans responded to climate change, investigated at the University of Cologne in the framework of the Collaborative Research Center 806—Our Way to Europe.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

Sustainable success: How CCC is shaping women-led climate action

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is ramping up efforts to integrate gender-responsive strategies into climate action, emphasizing the critical role of women-led enterprises in building resilience against climate change. In a recent workshop and networking event, discussions centered on equipping micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the capacity to adapt to climate-related challenges.

CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera underscored the importance of the Nationally Determined Contribution Gender Action Plan (NDC GAP) as a framework for fostering inclusive approaches to achieving the country’s climate targets. The Philippines aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, and gender-inclusive policies are seen as key to reaching this goal.

She noted that traditionally male-dominated sectors such as agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and energy must open doors for women to thrive not just as workers but as leaders. "With livelihoods and infrastructure as key focus areas of NAP, MSMEs, which comprise 99% of

businesses in the Philippines, need to be equipped with the capacity to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, technology, and adaptation measures," Herrera mentioned.

To bolster MSMEs' resilience, the CCC is advancing two key initiatives under the TRANSCEND Project in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and with support from the German Government. "The development of a Climate-Smart Industry Roadmap will guide MSMEs in enhancing energy efficiency and climate resilience," Herrera explained. Additionally, small-scale manufacturing and food processing enterprises will receive direct support to improve energy-efficient operations, complemented by policy support at the national level.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is also reinforcing its commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs. Undersecretary Blesila Lantayona of DTI's Regional Operations Group highlighted the pivotal role of women in advancing sustainable businesses. "I stand with you to affirm the Department of Trade and Industry's unwavering dedication to this cause, alongside the broader efforts of the Philippines to champion climate resilience," she said.

Women's Business Council Philippines, Inc. (WomenBizPH) President Rhoda Castro-Caliwara emphasized how climate change affects the business sector, citing extreme weather events as significant disruptors of operations. She pointed out that the event fostered knowledge-sharing and collaboration to promote sustainability, empower women, and strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Secretary Robert E.A. Borje reinforced the importance of such partnerships, stating, "Strengthening partnerships creates opportunities to put women at the center of climate action. This not only empowers women but also fosters a unified and collaborative approach to building a climate-resilient business sector."

Held under the theme "Kababaihan, Kalikasan, Kabuhayan – Building Climate-Resilient Livelihoods for Women," the event was organized by the DTI, WomenBizPH, and UN Women. Supported by the governments of New Zealand, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland through the UN Women-led EmPower Program, the event gathered representatives from business and industry, national government agencies, and civil society groups advocating for gender equality, sustainability, and enterprise development.

With climate change posing a growing threat to businesses, particularly MSMEs, the integration of gender perspectives into climate policies and economic strategies is increasingly recognized as a necessity. The CCC and its partners remain steadfast in ensuring that women are not just participants but leaders in climate action and resilient enterprise-building.

JOURNAL ONLINE

Aboitiz Foundation Champions Sustainability at PDRF Climate Change Forum 2025

Aboitiz Foundation reaffirmed its dedication to sustainability and climate resilience through its active support and participation in the State of Climate Change 2025 Forum organized by the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) in partnership with the New Zealand Embassy.

Themed “Advancing Private Sector Engagement and the National Adaptation Plan”, the forum convened key stakeholders from government, business, and civil society to strengthen collaborative efforts in addressing climate change and disaster resilience in the Philippines.

As a leading advocate for sustainability, Aboitiz Foundation joined other corporate leaders such as Coca-Cola Philippines, First Philippine Holdings Corporation, and San Miguel Corporation in supporting the forum, underscoring the private sector’s vital role in shaping national climate strategies.

New Zealand’s Climate Change Ambassador H.E. Stuart Horne acknowledged the role of the private sector and other stakeholders in driving climate action, expressing support for the country’s efforts to build climate resilience through innovation and investment.

“Through cooperation and innovation, we can create solutions that not only protect communities but also drive economic growth and investment,” he said.

In his keynote address, Climate Change Commission (CCC) Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Secretary Robert E.A. Borje underscored the importance of collaboration in addressing climate challenges. “Accelerating climate action and resilience demands the strong participation of the private sector and international partners,” he said.

The forum highlighted the significance of public-private cooperation to achieve the Philippines’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Discussions centered on how to integrate sustainable business practices with national climate policies, leverage technology, and mobilize private sector resources to facilitate large-scale climate action.

“Achieving climate adaptation requires a unified effort. The private sector must be a driving force in climate adaptation, spearheading innovative solutions and collaborating with government and international partners to build resilient and sustainable communities,” said Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar, Aboitiz Foundation president.

Aboitiz Foundation’s support for the PDRF Climate Change Forum demonstrates its commitment to sustainability through climate action, recognizing that collaboration between the private sector, government, and civil society is essential for creating lasting solutions that protect communities, drive innovation, and secure a climate-resilient future for the Philippines.

RAPPLER

Be The Good: Will the Philippines finally get a good active transport system?

By: Pia Ranada

Be The Good: Will the Philippines finally get a good active transport system?
Watch this panel discussion on April 7 at 7 pm with Palafox Associates, Department of Transportation, climate experts, commuters and accessibility advocates on the government's plan to create a cohesive nationwide active transport network

MANILA, Philippines – The Marcos government is embarking on an exciting initiative this year, 2025: formulating an Active Transport Strategic Master Plan (ATSMP).

ATSMP intends to "create a comfortable, accessible, safe, sustainable, and affordable active transport system" — more pedestrian walkways, bike lanes, end-of-trip facilities for cyclists and other active transport users, and better standards and policies, according to the Department of Transportation.

The department is now calling on the public to participate in the process of gathering insights and data that will be the basis of this nationwide plan. It has tapped Palafox Associates, an architectural firm founded by Architect Felino Palafox Jr., a well-known advocate of urban planning, to conduct interviews, focus group discussions, field works, and consultations for the plan for the entire 2025.

Palafox Associates has identified the following gaps in our current active transport system, according to their website: inadequate infrastructure like dedicated bike lanes and safe pedestrian crossings, unsafe sidewalks and a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists, a car-centric transportation system, and lack of shade and weather protection that discourages active transport.

Meanwhile, 350 Pilipinas, a group that advocates for lowering carbon emissions through transformative changes in structures and systems, says promoting active transport helps decarbonize transportation. The transport sector contributed 14% of the Philippines' greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, according to the Climate Change Commission (29 teragrams of carbon dioxide equivalent, out of the total of 204.33 Tg CO2e).

On Monday, April 7, at 7 pm, watch a panel discussion about how Palafox Associates is gathering insights for the ATSMP and how the government will ensure the plan is implemented, amid challenges like changes in administration and budget constraints.

We'll also hear from commuters, accessibility advocates, and sustainable transport advocates about what they think the plan should consider. The discussion will be moderated by Rappler head of community Pia Ranada.

The following resource persons will comprise the panel:

Architect Felino Palafox Jr., founder of Palafox Associates
Eldon Dionisio, Department of Transportation Active Transport Office program manager
Abner Manlapaz, co-founder of Life Haven Center for Independent Living
Alyssa Belda, coordinator for Make It Safer Movement

Jheny Dabu, sustainable transport campaigner for 350 Pilipinas
The discussion will be streamed on this page and on Rappler's YouTube and Facebook pages. Bookmark this page and share with your network!

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