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Global average temperatures are likely to continue at or near record levels this year and for the next four years afterwards, the United Nations warned Thursday.

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By: Robin Hicks

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By Othel V. Campos

The Philippines has committed to joining the International Horticultural Expo 2027 in Yokohama, Japan to promote its climate-resilient agriculture and expand high-value crop exports to its second-largest agricultural market.

[In Colorado, Trump climate science policy ‘threatens US interests’](#)

In a vast Colorado laboratory nestled at the foot of the Rockies, a US scientist waits and wonders if President Donald Trump’s administration will dismantle his acclaimed institute.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Beyond crop losses: Super El Niño and the ‘hidden hunger’ risk](#)

By: Dr. Teodoro Mendoza PhD

The immediate impacts of Super El Niño events on agriculture and water resources are well documented. But the “hidden hunger” scenario — driven by less-visible consequences on food quality, dietary imbalances, microbial risks, public health crises and environmental pollution — remains underexplored.

[PH again seeks seat in UN Security Council](#)

By: Gabryelle Dumalag

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is again seeking a nonpermanent seat in the UN Security Council, banking on its record of service and commitment to the United Nations and international law.

[When trees get in the way of ‘progress’](#)

By: Michael Lim Ubac

The public uproar over the cutting of mature trees along Quirino Avenue in Manila is not going away soon, despite repeated assurances from government authorities that the environmental assault was legally permitted and complied with strict environmental regulations.

THE JAPAN TIMES

[Fund for climate-exposed Pacific nation invests in fossil fuels](#)

By Steven Trask

SYDNEY – A trust fund set up to help a South Pacific nation gravely threatened by climate change has invested in coal mining, gas exploration and the world’s largest crude oil refinery, an investigation has revealed.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Congress urged to pass National Coastal Greenbelt Act for climate protection](#)

NEARLY a year after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered an investigation into corruption-ridden flood control projects, the intensity of floods, storms and storm surges is already projected to worsen due to climate change. The fast-approaching rainy season also threatens to bring about massive, persistent flooding across the country again.

[JICA commits support for PH development projects](#)

By: Catherine Valente

The Philippines and Japan will further strengthen cooperation on infrastructure, healthcare, climate action, and peace and development initiatives in Mindanao, President Ferdinand Marcos said on Thursday after meeting with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) president Dr. Tanaka Akihiko at the Okura Hotel in Tokyo.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DIALOGUE EARTH

[The Philippines is failing to include Indigenous people in climate decision making](#)

By: Judy Anne Egay

As the Philippines moves to make a long overdue update on its climate commitments, Indigenous people – whose territories are crucial to climate efforts – must be central to the conversation. Yet a lack of representation in climate conversations and policy frameworks suggest that they remain on the margins.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[CCC, UN Women, New Zealand Embassy strengthen collaboration on gender-responsive climate action](#)

MANILA, Philippines – The Climate Change Commission (CCC), led by Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje, met with New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines, Catherine McIntosh, and representatives from UN Women Philippines to explore areas of cooperation supporting inclusive and gender-responsive climate action.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Temperatures likely to remain at record levels in 2026-2030: UN

Global average temperatures are likely to continue at or near record levels this year and for the next four years afterwards, the United Nations warned Thursday.

The 11 hottest individual years ever recorded all happened from 2015 onwards and the UN's weather and climate agency said the trend was set to continue, with a new hottest-ever year "likely" before 2031.

There is a 75 percent chance that the 2026-2030 five-year mean temperature will surpass the key threshold of 1.5C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average, the World Meteorological Organization said.

The WMO outlook comes as western Europe swelters under a "heat dome" of warm air, breaking temperature records for May in Britain and France.

"Global average temperatures are likely to continue at or near record levels in the next five years," the agency said.

"It is likely (86 percent chance) that one year between 2026 and 2030 will surpass 2024 as the warmest year on record."

EL NINO IN 2027

"There is an El Nino predicted for the end of 2026, which increases the chances of the following year, 2027, being the next record-breaking year," said Leon Hermanson, lead author of the WMO's Global Annual-to-Decadal Update.

The last El Nino contributed to making 2023 the second-hottest year on record and 2024 the all-time high at around 1.55C above the pre-industrial average.

El Nino is a natural climate phenomenon that warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns.

It typically takes place every two to seven years and lasts around nine to 12 months.

1.3C TO 1.9C RANGE

The 2015 Paris climate accords aimed to limit global warming to well below 2C above pre-industrial levels -- and preferably below 1.5C.

The targets are calculated relative to the 1850-1900 average, before humanity widely began industrially burning coal, oil and gas, which emit carbon dioxide -- the greenhouse gas largely responsible for climate change.

"Annual global mean near-surface temperatures during 2026-2030 are predicted to range between 1.3C and 1.9C above the 1850-1900 average," the WMO update said.

The WMO said there was a 91-percent chance that global average temperatures will temporarily exceed 1.5C above the pre-industrial baseline for at least one year between 2026 and 2030.

Furthermore, there is a 75-percent chance that the entire 2026-2030 five-year mean will exceed 1.5C above the 1850-1900 average.

However, it is considered exceptionally unlikely -- less than one percent -- that any single year will exceed 2C above the pre-industrial baseline in the next five years.

ACTIC HEAT WARNING

The 1.5C barrier is expected to be broken with increasing frequency.

The 1.5C and 2C limits in the Paris accords refer to sustained long-term warming -- typically over 20 years -- so temporary breaches do not necessarily mean the long-term goal is out of reach.

Last year was one of the three warmest years on record, with the globally averaged near-surface temperature estimated at more than 1.43C above the 1850-1900 baseline.

The report was produced by Britain's Met Office national weather service and the WMO's lead center for annual to decadal climate prediction. It compiles forecasts from 13 different institutes.

The report said Arctic temperatures over the next five northern hemisphere winters (November to March) were predicted to be 2.8C above average temperatures for 1991-2020 -- more than triple the global temperature anomaly for the same period.

Predicted precipitation patterns for May to September from 2026 to 2030 forecast wet anomalies in the Sahel, northern Europe, Alaska and Siberia, as well as dry anomalies over the Amazon.

ECO BUSINESS

[Impact investing in Asia 'small but accelerating' as Iran war fuels climate and food resilience](#)

By: Robin Hicks

After a brutal period that hurt startups and companies with exposure to the US, green shoots are emerging in Asia in some sectors.

After a bleak period for impact investing, parts of the sector are rebounding in Asia following the Iran war, with higher oil prices opening the door to renewable energy investments in the region. Though definitions vary, impact investing refers to investing with the aim of generating both social or environmental impact and financial return.

Serial investor Steve Melhuish, who backs companies tackling social inequality and climate change through Planet Rise and Wavemaker Impact, Asia's first climate-tech venture build fund, said the past 12 months have been "brutal" for impact investing in emerging markets, particularly for firms with exposure to the United States.

For companies and startups raising money from the US, the framing has had to shift from "clean energy" to terms like "energy resilience" or "domestic energy," to navigate the politicisation of climate action, Melhuish noted.

A "bright spark," however, has been renewed investment in renewables since the Iran war, he said. "[The Iran war] shone a light on the economic benefits of clean energy and the need for energy security and resilience."

He pointed to Pakistan as one example where a rapid rooftop solar boom is helping shield parts of the economy from oil supply risks triggered by the conflict.

The food sector has also shown early signs of recovery after the Middle East conflict, following a two-year period of "decimation" in investment into alternative and cell-based proteins, Melhuish said.

"The food space went toxic," he said, pointing to the collapse of startups such as Indonesia's E-Fishery as having damaged sentiment in the sector. "But two years on, things are starting to come back as the conversation shifts toward food security and resilience."

ABC Impact chief impact officer Sugandhi Matta noted that while there has been "some acceleration" in interest in areas like transport electrification in India, investors remain cautious about how prolonged the conflict may become.

"There is uncertainty on how this [Middle East] crisis will conclude or continue — it's not all roses," she said.

“We are seeing a more rational conversation about how these businesses need to be commercially viable to survive under different scenarios — this has happened over the last eight to 12 months,” Matta said. Her portfolio includes companies in financial inclusion, healthcare and climate.

Small base, big growth

Asia’s growth potential for impact investing is significant, albeit from a relatively small base. The region has historically lagged North America and Europe due to investor perceptions that prioritise philanthropy over commercially-driven impact funds.

As a result, Asia is historically only a fraction of the global impacting investing market, with just 7 per cent of worldwide assets under management. But the region’s contribution to the US\$1.57 trillion market has grown by 60 per cent over the last six years, according to data from IIX Global.

Matta said that Asia’s small base for impact investing is partly explained by “rationality and pragmatism.”

“When the environmental, social and governance (ESG) wave was high in North America, Asia was still focused on fundamental investing. We never really saw that boom in this part of the world — so we’re not really seeing that bust.”

Marco Serena, chief sustainable impact officer at Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), an infrastructure development and finance organisation funded by six governments, said impact investing has become more strategic amid geopolitical tension.

Key growth areas include electric mobility and renewable energy, while carbon markets continue to lag, he said. Serena added that if voluntary and compliance carbon markets were to merge, the sector could see a “big acceleration” in investment.

He also noted that now could be a favourable time for impact investment in Southeast Asia, as the region remains relatively stable in a volatile global environment.

True impact investing

While capital continues to flow into impact projects in Asia, debate persists over what qualifies as impact investing — and how it should be measured.

Steve Okun, who was previously head of public affairs for investment giant KKR and now runs consultancy APAC Advisors, says that real impact investing forsakes some returns for impact — or else is just conventional investing.

He suggests the sector may be smaller than reported due to “impact washing,” where firms label investments as impact-driven without delivering meaningful additional social outcomes beyond what would have happened anyway.

ABC Impact head of investor relations Jeffrey Fang doesn't see the industry that way. "If you're just doing good but you're not making any returns, then you're a charity," said Fang, who points out that Temasek invests in companies that can deliver market-rate returns.

Serena of PIDG said impact investing is not only about accepting lower returns, but also about "more patience with capital" and a longer-term investment horizon. "These two things together have a cost," he said, requiring a more deliberate approach.

Naina Batra, CEO of social investor network AVPN, said standardised metrics are essential for the sector's growth and to reduce impact-washing.

She also highlighted a shortage of fund managers and advisors with impact expertise as a barrier in Asia, adding that more success stories and unicorns are needed to attract broader investor interest.

She cited companies such as Khushi Baby, a decade-old digital health non-profit tracking maternal and child health in rural India, and Niramai, a breast cancer screening technology firm, as examples of successful impact ventures that have scaled in large markets.

MANILA BULLETIN

[BSP, IC weigh parametric insurance boost to unlock climate loans](#)

The central bank and insurance regulators are pushing for the bundling of parametric insurance with traditional credit lines, aiming to unlock vital financing for sectors most exposed to worsening climate risks.

By tying automated weather-indexed payouts directly to bank loans, regulators hope to create a financial buffer that protects both borrowers and lenders from the immediate aftermath of severe weather events.

Unlike traditional insurance, which requires lengthy claims assessments based on actual physical or financial damage, parametric insurance triggers guaranteed payouts the moment a specific, measurable threshold—such as wind speed or rainfall volume—is breached.

“When bundled with credit, it can serve as a credit-enhancing tool that supports continued financing in climate-vulnerable areas while strengthening financial institutions’ risk management practices,” the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said in a statement on Thursday, May 28.

During a recent webinar, BSP Assistant Governor Pia Bernadette Roman-Tayag said that parametric insurance serves as both a resilience and a bankability tool.

Roman-Tayag explained that as climate-exposed sectors become more resilient through these financial products, they naturally become more attractive to lenders.

“If climate-exposed sectors become more resilient, they become more bankable, which leads to stronger enterprises, more resilient supply chains, and an economy better able to withstand shocks,” Roman-Tayag said.

Insurance Commissioner Reynaldo A. Regalado likened this collaborative bundling approach to a traditional Filipino value.

“Parametric insurance and credit bundling are, at their best, bayanihan in financial form,” Regalado said. “A bank, an insurer, a cooperative, and a borrower all share a risk that none of them could carry alone.”

The event, which brought together over 400 participants, including bankers, insurers, and development partners, explored global best practices, product design, credit integration, and distribution channels.

This initiative forms part of the central bank’s broader sustainability agenda, which aims to strengthen financial resilience across the country while promoting innovative and inclusive financial solutions for sectors most at risk from climate change. (Derco Rosal)

MANILA STANDARD

[DA to showcase climate-resilient farming at Japan Expo 2027 to boost trade](#)

By Othel V. Campos

The Philippines has committed to joining the International Horticultural Expo 2027 in Yokohama, Japan to promote its climate-resilient agriculture and expand high-value crop exports to its second-largest agricultural market.

Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed the agreement with the Japan Association for the International Horticultural Expo 2027 on May 25, saying the country's involvement reflects strengthening economic ties between Manila and Tokyo.

"For us, this is more than participation. It is about friendship, sustainability, innovation, and opportunity," Tiu Laurel said, adding that agriculture centers on resilience and shared growth.

The Philippines will occupy a 436-square-meter pavilion from March 19 to Sept. 26, 2027 under the theme "Bukás: Gardens of the Bayanihan Spirit," which aligns with the expo's overall concept "Scenery of the Future for Happiness."

The pavilion will serve as a living platform to connect Japanese investors, technology providers and logistics firms with Filipino farmers and exporters. The exhibit will highlight indigenous knowledge, biodiversity and sustainable farming practices alongside modern agricultural technologies designed for climate-vulnerable environments.

Japan ranks as one of the largest food importers globally with nearly \$90 billion in annual agri-fisheries purchases. It serves as the second-largest agricultural export market for the Philippines, receiving \$1.1 billion worth of goods in 2025.

Tiu Laurel said Filipino products such as bananas, pineapples, coconut-based goods, seafood, mangoes and ube have become staples in Japanese households. Through the expo, the Philippines aims to scale up its exports of banana, mango, pineapple, coconut, coffee, cacao, calamansi, durian, avocado, ube, papaya, okra and abaca while unlocking new market opportunities in floriculture and natural fibers.

[In Colorado, Trump climate science policy ‘threatens US interests’](#)

In a vast Colorado laboratory nestled at the foot of the Rockies, a US scientist waits and wonders if President Donald Trump’s administration will dismantle his acclaimed institute.

One of his projects, focused on adaptation to climate change, has already been axed, and he cannot hire any more PhD students, with a giant question mark over his funding.

“This is different than at any other time in my career,” the researcher at the National Center for Atmospheric Research told AFP, asking not to be named to protect his job.

AFP spoke to a dozen scientists who recounted how facilities in Colorado — one of the world’s most important hubs for climate and meteorological science — have been crippled since Trump returned to office last year.

From demoralized teams to the flight of young talent from the area, the picture they paint is indicative of the impact of the Republican president’s policies.

As so many staff left these labs and research centers after their projects were reined in or canceled, the upheaval is likely to linger, the scientists, many of them based in Boulder, warn.

Such a brain drain could sap US ability to remain a global authority in climate and weather science, even after Trump has left the White House.

NCAR, which is housed in an imposing Brutalist building that dominates the skyline in Boulder, a university town, is a world leader in the development of weather and climate models.

Its work, largely paid for with federal funds, has allowed for major improvements in the prediction of extreme weather events and a reduction in the number of air accidents caused by severe wind shear.

But on December 16, the administration said it would move to dismantle NCAR, calling it a source of “climate alarmism.”

When Dan — who requested anonymity, so AFP has used a pseudonym — learned the news, he was incredulous “because of how crucial NCAR is for American sciences.”

“It was a combination of outrage, confusion and, like, how could this even be happening?” he told AFP.

Faced with an uncertain future, Dan decided to leave NCAR to take a job in another lab.

The alliance of 129 colleges and universities that runs NCAR took legal action in March to block at least part of the center's dismantling.

The group has argued that NCAR is the victim of political retribution targeting the state of Colorado, which has a Democratic governor.

As the case winds its way through the courts, the government has not yet made good on its threat to break up NCAR's various labs, which currently employ about 800 people.

But its repeated policy blows have deeply undermined the research ecosystem in Boulder.

In the spring of 2025, John (also a pseudonym) was working on numerous projects in his lab at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), where he has worked for more than 20 years.

But amid severance checks and threats of firing, the Trump administration gradually pushed civil servants toward the door — and John took an early retirement deal on offer.

“My thought was, well, if I don't take that, they're going to lay off one of the younger scientists who needs this job much more than I do,” he said.

In his division of NOAA, which works on improving weather forecasts, about 10 people, including the boss, left with him, taking with them invaluable knowledge and contacts.

“It affects morale,” he said. “People don't function very efficiently if they're constantly worrying, ‘Is my job going to exist next week?’”

The scientific community in Boulder, a city with a vibrant outdoors culture and trendy restaurants, largely depends on federal subsidies.

But the Trump administration has either canceled or frozen many of those grants: the University of Colorado at Boulder, a research hub, has lost 59 federal research awards since early 2025.

Separately, one NCAR scientist, who asked not to be named, told AFP that three of his projects suffered: two grants came more than a year late, and another was effectively cut in half.

Such drastic reductions have been noted at universities and research facilities across the United States.

Tom Hamill, an alum of NOAA and NCAR who now works in the private sector, expressed his “genuine horror” over the situation.

“It's going to be a generation to recover from the damage the Trump administration has done,” Hamill told AFP.

In his Boulder lab chock full of instruments, Kyle McMillan — a PhD candidate in atmospheric chemistry — is working to better understand what happens in the clouds.

“I am hoping to graduate in December. And so, yeah, I’m definitely in a crunch right now. I do not have a good plan yet,” McMillan told AFP.

For Jim Hurrell, a former NCAR director who is now a professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University, north of Boulder, federal funding cuts have hit hard.

“It pours some cold water on the enthusiasm of students coming through the system,” he said.

Hurrell said he had seen a shift from student interest in pursuing climate science as a career.

Josh Hacker, another former NCAR scientist now working at a startup, said he feared Boulder’s status as a research hub was at risk.

“When talent is leaving, it’s also harder to keep remaining talent,” Hacker said. “It’s almost like a death spiral.”

[Beyond crop losses: Super El Niño and the ‘hidden hunger’ risk](#)

By: Dr. Teodoro Mendoza PhD

The immediate impacts of Super El Niño events on agriculture and water resources are well documented. But the “hidden hunger” scenario — driven by less-visible consequences on food quality, dietary imbalances, microbial risks, public health crises and environmental pollution — remains underexplored.

This paper examines these overlooked dimensions, including the cascading effects of Super El Niño on food production, intake and safety; the rise of nutrition-related illnesses; microbial growth and spoilage under high temperatures; health risks from heat waves; and pollution from forest fires that release polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

Building resilience against the hidden effects of Super El Niño underscores the need for integrated strategies that go beyond food production measures. Addressing these overlooked dimensions is critical to safeguarding health, sustainability and human development in an era of intensifying climate extremes.

Beyond crop losses

Super El Niño episodes represent one of the most disruptive climate phenomena in the modern era. Characterized by abnormal warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, these events alter rainfall patterns, intensify droughts, and trigger floods across regions. Governments and institutions often focus narrowly on crop-yield reductions, water scarcity, and import dependencies.

Yet broader systemic impacts—on food quality, dietary diversity, public health and environmental safety—are less visible but equally critical. The hidden consequences of Super El Niño exacerbate vulnerabilities in food systems and human health, demanding a holistic policy response that integrates nutrition, food safety and environmental monitoring (FAO, 2021).

This paper expands the discussion beyond the common narrative of agricultural losses. It argues that food insecurity manifests not only in reduced supply but also in diminished nutritional value, dietary imbalances, microbial contamination, and environmental hazards.

Food production: quantity and quality

Super El Niño reduces crop yields through prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall and heat stress. High temperatures disrupt pollination and fertilization in rice, coconuts and tropical fruit trees such as rambutan, mango, and lanzones, leading to flower abortion and reduced fruit yields.

Heat stress damages pollen viability, stigmatic receptivity, and fertilization success, making reproductive stages highly vulnerable. The reproductive stage is the most vulnerable phase for

crops. Heat stress reduces pollen viability, stigmatic receptivity, and fertilization success, leading to poor grain set, nut set, and fruit yields, undermining food security and farmer incomes.

In fruit trees, heat stress accelerates flower drop and reduces carbohydrate allocation to reproductive organs, compounding yield losses. Low yields mean high prices for rambutan and lanzones in August and September.

Heat stress and high temperatures during Super El Niño and their effects on rice, coconuts and tropical fruit trees such as rambutan, mango and lanzones are summarized in Table 1.

Rice

Vulnerability: Highly sensitive at anthesis (flowering)

Effects: Pollen sterility, anther indehiscence, reduced stigma receptivity → spikelet sterility

Estimated yield loss: 20% to 50% under more than 35-38 C

Key references: Jagadish et al., 2007; Shi et al., 2015

Coconuts

Vulnerability: Vulnerable during flowering and nut set

Effects: Reduced pollen germination, poor stigmatic receptivity, fewer female flowers

Estimated yield loss: 15% to 30% nut set reduction

Key reference: Foale, 2003

Mangoes

Vulnerability: Sensitive during anthesis and fruit set

Effects: Flower desiccation, pollen sterility, flower drop, poor fertilization

Estimated yield loss: 20% to 40% fruit set reduction

Key reference: Singh et al., 2011

Rambutan

Vulnerability: Susceptible during flowering clusters

Effects: Reduced pollen viability, stigmatic receptivity, flower abortion

Estimated yield loss: 25% to 35% fruit set decline

Key reference: Tindall, 1994

Lanzones (*Lansium domesticum*)

Vulnerability: Sensitive to drought and heat during flowering

Effects: Reduced flowering intensity, poor fertilization, accelerated flower drop

Estimated yield loss: 30% to 40% yield reduction

Key reference: Coronel, 1991

Rice

Rice is highly sensitive to heat stress during its reproductive stage. When temperatures exceed 35-38 C at anthesis (flowering), pollen viability declines, anthers fail to open properly, and stigmas lose receptivity.

This leads to spikelet sterility and poor grain set, directly reducing yields. Studies show heat stress during flowering can reduce fertilization success by as much as 50%, especially under combined drought and heat conditions (Jagadish et al., 2007; Shi et al., 2015).

Coconuts

Coconut palms, though resilient, are vulnerable to prolonged high temperatures during flowering. Heat stress reduces pollen germination and stigmatic receptivity, leading to poor nut set. Extended drought also weakens inflorescence development, resulting in fewer female flowers and reduced copra yield. High temperatures can shorten the lifespan of flowers, limiting the window for successful pollination (Foale, 2003).

Mangoes

Mango trees are particularly sensitive to heat stress during anthesis. Elevated temperatures cause flower desiccation, pollen sterility, and poor fertilization, reducing fruit set. Heat waves during flowering often trigger flower drop, resulting in smaller harvests. Research indicates mango pollen viability declines sharply when exposed to temperatures above 35 C, reducing fertilization success (Singh et al., 2011).

Rambutan

Rambutan flowers are highly susceptible to heat stress. High temperatures reduce pollen viability and stigmatic receptivity, causing flower abortion. Fruit set declines sharply when temperatures exceed optimal ranges, leading to fewer fruits per cluster. Rambutan trees also experience carbohydrate stress under prolonged heat, limiting energy available for reproductive development (Tindall, 1994).

Lanzones (*Lansium domesticum*)

Lanzones trees are sensitive to both drought and heat stress. High temperatures reduce flowering intensity and impair fertilization, resulting in poor fruit set. Heat stress accelerates flower drop and reduces carbohydrate allocation to reproductive organs, compounding yield losses. Farmers often report significantly lower yields during El Niño years due to reduced pollination success (Coronel, 1991).

Beyond quantity: the “Hidden Hunger” scenario

A severe Super El Niño could reduce yields by more than 40%, with catastrophic impacts on both quantity and quality. Heat stress during Super El Niño not only reduces crop yields but also compromises the nutritional quality of grains, fruits, and vegetables. This hidden dimension is critical because it erodes the dietary value of already scarce harvests, worsening food insecurity and the “hidden hunger” scenario.

For grains such as rice and wheat, exposure to high temperatures during the grain-filling stage reduces protein content and mineral concentrations. Heat stress accelerates grain filling but shortens its duration, limiting the accumulation of proteins and essential micronutrients such as iron and zinc. This results in grains with lower nutritional density, undermining their role as staple foods in many countries (Lobell & Gourджи, 2012).

For vegetables, water and heat stress impair photosynthesis and metabolic pathways responsible for synthesizing vitamins and antioxidants. As a result, vegetables grown under these conditions often have diminished levels of vitamin C, folate, carotenoids, and phenolic compounds (Hedhly, 2011).

Yield losses are visible and often reported, but the decline in nutritional quality is less apparent and rarely addressed in policy discussions. This creates a “hidden hunger” scenario where caloric needs may be met, but essential nutrients are lacking. Such deficiencies contribute to stunting, weakened immunity, and increased susceptibility to chronic diseases.

Strategies to address climate impacts on agriculture must go beyond yield stabilization. They must also safeguard nutritional integrity, ensuring crops retain protein and micronutrient density under stress.

This requires investment in climate-resilient crop varieties, improved irrigation systems, and post-harvest technologies that preserve nutritional quality. Without such measures, Super El Niño will continue to erode both the quantity and quality of food available to vulnerable populations.

Fisheries also decline due to warmer waters and disrupted ecosystems. Warmer sea surface temperatures reduce plankton productivity, which cascades through the food chain, lowering fish catch potential (Cheung et al., 2010). This decline narrows dietary diversity, particularly in coastal communities reliant on fish as a primary protein source.

This will be discussed in more detail in “The Hidden Impacts of Super El Niño on Global and Regional Fisheries” by Dr. Donna Ria Josue-Canacan, Ph.D., professor, Agronomy Department, College of Agriculture, Mindanao State University, General Santos City, and Dr. Teodoro C. Mendoza, PhD, a retired professor and University of the Philippines scientist at the Institute of Crop Science, University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Super El Niño events represent one of the most disruptive climate anomalies, exerting profound effects on marine ecosystems and fisheries worldwide. While the impacts of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycles are well documented, Super El Niño magnifies ecological disruptions, undermining food security, livelihoods and economic stability in coastal and island nations.

Food intake and dietary imbalances

As staple crops become scarce and expensive, households shift toward cheaper, calorie-dense but nutrient-poor foods. Rice-centric diets intensify, while consumption of vegetables, root crops, and protein sources declines (Pingali, 2007). This imbalance fosters malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and diet-related illnesses. The lack of dietary diversity undermines resilience, leaving populations vulnerable to both undernutrition and overnutrition-related diseases.

In the Philippines, per capita vegetable consumption remains far below recommended levels, exacerbating risks of noncommunicable diseases (WHO, 2023). During climate shocks,

households often prioritize caloric sufficiency over nutritional adequacy, leading to diets dominated by refined carbohydrates.

This dietary shift contributes to rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, even as undernutrition persists among vulnerable groups. Super El Niño thus accelerates the “double burden of malnutrition,” where undernutrition and overnutrition coexist within the same population.

A severe Super El Niño could reduce vegetable consumption by more than 40%, with protein intake falling by 30%. These dietary shifts exacerbate both undernutrition and overnutrition, creating long-term health risks.

Health effects: malnutrition and illness

Poor diets during Super El Niño heighten risks of multiple health conditions. Micronutrient deficiencies such as iron, vitamin A, and zinc deficiency lead to anemia, weakened immunity, and increased susceptibility to infections (Black et al., 2013). These deficiencies are particularly dangerous during climate shocks, when health care systems are already strained by increased demand.

The decline in protein intake exacerbates childhood stunting and wasting, undermining long-term human capital development and perpetuating cycles of poverty and ill health (UNICEF, 2020).

At the same time, reliance on refined carbohydrates and processed foods contributes to the rise of metabolic illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes and hypertension (Hu, 2011). This paradox — where populations suffer from both undernutrition and overnutrition — illustrates the complexity of the “double burden of malnutrition.” Super El Niño accelerates this burden by simultaneously reducing access to nutrient-rich foods and increasing dependence on cheap, unhealthy alternatives.

Heat-related illnesses compound these dietary risks. High temperatures increase dehydration, cardiovascular stress, and respiratory complications (Patz et al., 2005). Vulnerable populations — children, older adults, and outdoor workers — face heightened risks, particularly when poor diets weaken their ability to cope with thermal stress.

During a severe Super El Niño, malnutrition rates will increase further, with catastrophic impacts on public health.

Hidden micronutrient deficiencies during Super El Niño: magnesium and potassium

Super El Niño events exacerbate nutritional crises in low-income households by sharply reducing access to vegetables, legumes, and protein-rich foods. While deficiencies in iron, zinc, and vitamin A are widely recognized, hidden micronutrient deficiencies such as magnesium and potassium are often overlooked or improperly diagnosed, despite their implications for both biological and mental health.

Magnesium is a cofactor in more than 300 enzymatic reactions, including those involved in energy metabolism, neurotransmitter regulation, and muscle function. Deficiency can manifest as fatigue, irritability, poor concentration, and heightened stress responses.

In children, inadequate magnesium intake has been linked to impaired learning, anxiety, and behavioral disorders (Barbagallo & Dominguez, 2010). Because symptoms are nonspecific — such as headaches, sleep disturbances, or muscle cramps — magnesium deficiency is frequently misattributed to other conditions, leaving it untreated (DiNicolantonio et al., 2018).

Potassium deficiency, or hypokalemia, is another silent but serious consequence of reduced vegetable and protein intake. Potassium regulates fluid balance, nerve signaling, and muscle contraction, and plays a central role in cardiovascular health.

When households shift to rice-heavy diets during Super El Niño, potassium intake drops significantly because fresh produce such as leafy greens, bananas, beans, and root crops are primary dietary sources (He & MacGregor, 2008).

Chronic low potassium intake can lead to muscle weakness, fatigue, constipation, and irregular heart rhythms. In children, it impairs growth, reduces energy levels, and undermines school performance. Low potassium also interacts with low magnesium to increase risks of hypertension, insulin resistance, and cardiovascular disease later in life (Palmer, 2015).

The mental health implications of these deficiencies are significant. Both magnesium and potassium are essential for proper nerve transmission and brain function. Deficiencies contribute to irritability, confusion, anxiety, and mood disturbances.

In children, this manifests as poor concentration, reduced cognitive performance, and heightened vulnerability to stress. Combined with the psychological strain of food insecurity, these hidden deficiencies magnify risks of depression and behavioral problems (Whelton & He, 2014).

Addressing these hidden deficiencies requires targeted interventions beyond cash transfers, such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). While 4Ps improves household purchasing power, families often prioritize rice and other staples, leaving micronutrient gaps unaddressed. A complementary program — such as a NutriBond initiative — could ensure access to fortified foods, nutrition vouchers for fresh produce and school-based feeding programs enriched with these critical minerals.

Community gardens and cooperatives could also increase the local supply of potassium- and magnesium-rich foods, while nutrition education campaigns would raise awareness about their importance. Integrating mental health support into these programs would further strengthen resilience.

In sum, magnesium and potassium deficiencies represent hidden but critical dimensions of the nutritional crisis during Super El Niño. Their biological and mental health impacts on poor families and children are profound, perpetuating cycles of poverty, illness, and reduced human capital.

By complementing existing social protection programs with nutrition-specific interventions, governments can safeguard both the physical and mental development of vulnerable populations in the face of intensifying climate extremes.

Microbial growth, food storage and safety

Beyond dietary imbalances and health effects, Super El Niño poses significant risks to food safety. High temperatures accelerate microbial growth in stored food, increasing risks of spoilage and foodborne illnesses.

In tropical countries with inadequate cold storage infrastructure, these risks are magnified. Pathogens such as Salmonella and E. coli proliferate rapidly under warm conditions, contaminating food supplies and increasing the incidence of gastrointestinal illness.

At the same time, aflatoxin contamination in maize and peanuts rises under humid conditions, posing long-term risks of liver cancer and immune suppression (Wu et al., 2014). Food safety lapses during Super El Niño therefore compound malnutrition with toxic exposures, creating a hidden but severe threat to public health.

A severe Super El Niño could increase foodborne illness rates by more than 40%, with catastrophic impacts on public health and economic stability.

Forest fires, pollution, and PAH emissions: pollution creates a toxic synergy

A severe Super El Niño could increase forest fire incidence by more than 50%, with catastrophic impacts on air quality and public health. Super El Niño triggers forest fires due to prolonged drought. These fires release fine particulate matter and PAHs, which are linked to cancer, respiratory illness, and developmental disorders (Kim et al., 2013). Air pollution from fires spreads across borders, creating regional health hazards and compounding the food-health-environment nexus.

Southeast Asia's haze episodes during past El Niño events illustrate how transboundary pollution magnifies health risks (Marlier et al., 2013). The combination of poor diets, heat stress and air pollution creates a toxic synergy, undermining public health and resilience. Addressing these risks requires regional cooperation on forest management, pollution monitoring, and public health preparedness.

Building resilience against hidden impacts

Super El Niño is not merely an agricultural or meteorological event. It is a systemic shock that reverberates across food systems, public health, and environmental safety. Its “hidden hunger” scenario — along with dietary imbalances, malnutrition, metabolic illness, microbial risks and

toxic exposures — is often overlooked in mainstream discourse. Yet these carry profound implications for human well-being and societal resilience.

Discussed in this paper is that Super El Niño accelerates the “double burden of malnutrition,” undermines food safety through microbial contamination, exacerbates heat-related illnesses and magnifies pollution risks through forest fires and PAH emissions.

The cascading nature of these impacts underscores the need for integrated resilience frameworks. Policymakers must move beyond narrow production-side measures and embrace nutrition-sensitive interventions that safeguard dietary diversity.

Investments in cold chain infrastructure, food safety monitoring, and public awareness campaigns are essential to mitigate microbial risks.

Public health systems must be strengthened to address both malnutrition and chronic disease, while regional cooperation is needed to manage transboundary pollution from forest fires.

The severity of Super El Niño determines the scale of its impacts, highlighting the importance of proactive planning and adaptive governance.

By integrating climate forecasts, nutrition strategies, food safety measures, and environmental monitoring, societies can build resilience against the hidden effects of Super El Niño.

Ultimately, recognizing and addressing these overlooked dimensions is critical to safeguarding health, sustainability and human development in an era of intensifying climate extremes.

[PH again seeks seat in UN Security Council](#)

By: Gabryelle Dumalag

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is again seeking a nonpermanent seat in the UN Security Council, banking on its record of service and commitment to the United Nations and international law.

The country will be competing with Kyrgyzstan for the sole seat allocated for Asia-Pacific countries in the Security Council for the 2027–2028 term, which begins at the end of the year.

Scheduled to be held during the UN General Assembly session on June 3, the election will fill five nonpermanent seats on the 15-member body tasked with maintaining international peace and security.

PH again seeks seat in UN Security Council

PROVEN COMMITMENT Former Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo, now permanent Philippine representative to the United Nations, highlights the Philippines service to the UN and international law at the body's General Assembly. —DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PHOTO

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Aside from the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan, other nations seeking election are Austria, Germany and Portugal for the Western European and Others Group, Trinidad and Tobago for the Latin American and Caribbean Group and Zimbabwe for the African Group.

Winning candidates must secure a two-thirds majority of member states in a secret ballot, typically requiring support from roughly 120–130 states.

According to Article 23 of the UN Charter, the Security Council is composed of 15 members of the United Nations. It includes five permanent members with veto power—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States—and 10 nonpermanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

Enrique Manalo, the country's permanent UN representative, has anchored the Philippine candidacy on decades of UN engagement, highlighting its four previous terms in the Security

Council and its status as a founding member of the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Philippines previously served as a nonpermanent Security Council member four times in 1957, 1963, 1980–1981, and 2004–2005.

Reliability

From 1950 to 1953, the Philippines sent an expeditionary force totaling 7,500 peacekeepers to assist UN operations in the Korean peninsula.

The unit took part in the Battle of Miudong, Battle of Yultong and Battle of Hill Eerie, resulting in 299 wounded and 57 missing in action. Later, 41 troops were repatriated as prisoners of war.

In a World Federation of United Nations Associations election debate earlier this month, Manalo said the Philippines was ready to serve as a “reliable partner, an innovative pathfinder and a committed peacemaker,” emphasizing that its approach to multilateralism is “inclusive, principled and grounded in cooperative action.”

Manalo said that aside from upholding the UN Charter and international law, the Philippines would seek to strengthen peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, advance the global agenda on women, peace and security and address the intersection of climate change and humanitarian response.

He also pushed for reforms aimed at making the Security Council more transparent and responsive, underscoring what he described as the country’s “experience and proven track record” in global diplomacy.

Kyrgyzstan, meanwhile, said it is seeking to rebalance representation in the UN because it is among 59 UN member states that have never been elected to the Security Council. Kyrgyzstan became an independent nation in 1991.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov earlier said in a preelection statement that intensifying geopolitical rivalry and rising global conflicts highlight the need for a more “inclusive and equitable” Security Council.

Kyrgyzstan, which used to be part of the defunct Soviet Union, has been trying to promote a global image of neutrality and balance, but it remains a member of Russian-led blocs, like the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Bishkek, however, has not endorsed Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and has abstained on UN resolutions condemning the invasion, rather than voting with Moscow.

Against bullying

The Philippines, on the other hand, has consistently supported Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, in line with the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

The Philippines has voted in favor of all six UN General Assembly Emergency Special Session resolutions on Ukraine since the 2022 invasion, including those demanding Russia's immediate withdrawal and condemning illegal annexations.

The Philippines has been a consistent contributor to UN peacekeeping operations since 1950 and has deployed nearly 14,000 Filipino peacekeepers across 21 UN missions.

About 22 Filipino peacekeepers have died in UN operations, such as in Kosovo, the Golan Heights and Haiti.

In the Congo, the Philippines first deployed in 1963 when the Philippine Air Force's now-defunct 9th Tactical Fighter Squadron was asked to secure Congolese airspace and help end the civil war.

When trees get in the way of 'progress'

By: Michael Lim Ubac

The public uproar over the cutting of mature trees along Quirino Avenue in Manila is not going away soon, despite repeated assurances from government authorities that the environmental assault was legally permitted and complied with strict environmental regulations.

Metro Manila now feels as though it is being baked in intense urban heat, with a heat index forecast to soar to 44 degrees Celsius yesterday—classified as a “danger level.” This oppressive heat is certain to intensify public frustration over how development is being managed in the urban jungle that we call home.

It is ironic that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is defending what a Catholic bishop described as “ecological violence” (see <https://tinyurl.com/2swwn92u>), which primarily victimizes the urban poor and also harms daily commuters.

San Carlos City Bishop Gerardo Alminaza, the president of Caritas Philippines, has joined the growing clamor to immediately save nearly 400 trees, which are among the 617 mature trees targeted for destruction to make way for the construction of the Southern Luzon Access Link Expressway (SALEx) project.

Some 225 trees, including a 50-year-old narra tree, were no match for the chainsaws that felled them, leaving a horrible sight of tree stumps that has angered motorists and passersby.

“[It] is an act of ecological violence against the people of Manila, a direct assault on the poor who have been enduring the daily penance of extreme heat, poisoned air, and sudden floods,” the good bishop said, lamenting the loss of the decades-old trees that once lined Quirino Avenue, a major highway that connects the progressive cities of Manila and Makati. He called these felled trees “silent protectors” that offered shade and relief to pedestrians in a densely urbanized city like Manila.

A public-private partnership project spearheaded by San Miguel Corp., the 40.62-km SALEx is an under-construction elevated expressway network, which will consist of the proposed Shoreline Expressway at R-10 in Manila and three Skyway Stage extensions—C3-R10, Quirino Avenue, and Buendia Avenue. The Quirino Extension will connect the Quirino Interchange to the existing Metro Manila Skyway Stage 3.

Alminaza took exception to the perceived insensitivity of private contractors and government regulators to the plight of vulnerable communities. “Why must ‘development’ always demand the sacrifice of the vulnerable? Why are our cities designed for vehicles and concrete instead of for children, workers, pedestrians, and the elderly?” he asked, adding: “We refuse to hide this injustice behind bureaucratic language. What is legal on paper is not automatically moral in the eyes of God.”

Environmental and urban poor activists, netizens, and the public at large are up in arms against this environmental assault on mature trees along Quirino Avenue, which not only provide shade for pedestrians but also serve as a natural flood-control defense (minus corruption) and help cool the planet through their high carbon sequestration capacity. The question that haunts all of us living in an urban environment is twofold: When will developers and government agencies, especially those tasked with safeguarding people's lives and a healthy environment, stop treating trees as obstructions to progress, and when will development be people- and environment-centered?

In other words, can people and nature really coexist well?

We have been taught since grade school about the benefits of trees around us. To refresh the memories of those behind these tree-cutting operations, let's turn to the Nature Conservancy, a United States-founded global environmental nonprofit, that is "working to create a world where people and nature can thrive."

The Nature Conservancy highlights that trees offer vital benefits for the environment, economy, and public health. They help combat climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, cool cities by providing shade, decrease the risk of flooding by soaking up stormwater, and filter harmful air pollutants. Additionally, trees can increase property values, reduce energy expenses, and enhance mental health. (See <https://tinyurl.com/yzabhrdy>)

Our country does not enforce a blanket ban on tree cutting. According to a statement from the DENR-National Capital Region, as reported by the Philippine News Agency, tree-cutting is not automatically allowed; every application goes through a thorough evaluation process. Some eligible trees will not be cut but will instead be relocated through earth-balling or transplantation based on evaluations by DENR foresters and environmental specialists. Additionally, the permit mandates planting 50,700 replacement seedlings within Manila City.

But one wonders whether the congested City of Manila has any open space for such massive tree planting activity, except to plant nonhardwood varieties like bamboo and ornamental plants, which is what the developer is poised to do.

THE JAPAN TIMES

[Fund for climate-exposed Pacific nation invests in fossil fuels](#)

By Steven Trask

SYDNEY – A trust fund set up to help a South Pacific nation gravely threatened by climate change has invested in coal mining, gas exploration and the world’s largest crude oil refinery, an investigation has revealed.

Low-lying Pacific island nation Tuvalu said it was reviewing the “fossil fuel exposure” of the \$200 million fund after it was presented with the findings.

Few countries are more exposed to climate change than Tuvalu, a chain of coral atolls reckoning with acidifying oceans, tropical disease and rising seas.

Land is already so scarce across the archipelago halfway between Australia and Hawaii that the international airport runway doubles as a makeshift sports field.

With a fragile economy and few natural resources, Tuvalu relies on a government trust fund to help foot the spiraling costs of the climate crisis.

Tuvalu has entrusted management of its single-largest financial asset to advisory firm Mercer, which has invested in funds holding stakes in major fossil fuel companies, according to financial records and government reports.

Tuvalu climate activist Richard Gokrun said it was “really shocking” to see the nation tied up with fossil fuel companies.

“We stand strong for the phase-out of fossil fuels, because we see the impacts to our country,” the former weather forecaster said from the capital of Funafuti.

“The major changes that we are seeing are sea-level rise. We are starting to see new places are getting flooded or inundated.”

The Tuvalu Trust Fund was established in 1987 with help from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, providing crucial revenue to a nation reliant on foreign aid.

Mercer took over management in 2022.

‘Adverse impacts’

Tuvalu’s expectations are laid out in the fund’s “investment objectives.”

“Tuvalu is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and it is appropriate to reflect this in the investment strategy,” the document states.

The fund must minimize its exposure to “fossil fuel reserves and carbon emissions” where possible, the document adds.

Mercer invested Tuvalu’s money in funds specializing in sectors like “Australian shares,” “international shares” and “emerging markets,” according to a quarterly report dated September 2025.

Mercer is not required to list each of the dozens of companies in these funds, but does publish the 10 biggest holdings.

Reporters analyzed this data for 14 Mercer funds held by Tuvalu.

Mercer’s “emerging markets” fund invested in Indian multinational Reliance Industries, according to holdings data from December 2025.

Reliance Industries owns the Jamnagar petrochemical complex in western India, a sprawling industrial facility described as the largest single-site crude oil refinery in the world.

It pumped out nearly 20 million metric tons of planet-heating carbon dioxide in 2022, making it the world’s highest-emitting oil refinery, according to nonprofit Climate Trace.

Funds for fossil fuels

Tuvalu is also invested in a Mercer fund that that holds American utilities The Southern Company and Duke Energy, the second and third-largest greenhouse gas emitters in the United States, according to the Political Economy Research Institute.

The Southern Company paid \$60 million to “groups and firms involved in climate disinformation campaigns between 1993 and 2004,” the U.S.-based Energy and Policy Institute found in a 2024 report.

And Mercer put Tuvalu’s money into funds invested in mining behemoth Rio Tinto and Australian oil-and-gas giant Woodside Energy, which government data says are among Australia’s 10 largest greenhouse gas emitters.

Investments in Woodside are particularly awkward for Tuvalu, which was scathing when Australia approved a 40-year extension for Woodside’s North West Shelf gas project in 2025.

Climate Minister Maina Talia warned then that the project’s emissions threatened Tuvalu’s very “survival,” urging Australia to reject the extension.

About 12% of the Tuvalu Trust Fund — or \$25 million — is invested in Mercer’s “Australian shares fund,” which has its largest holding in mining and metals firm BHP, one of Australia’s most valuable companies and the world’s biggest miner.

BHP has significantly divested from thermal coal in recent years, but still has a stake in Australian mines digging up the fossil fuel for steelmaking.

'Death sentence'

Tuvalu will receive a rare burst of international attention later this year when it hosts leaders for a special summit ahead of the U.N.'s COP31 climate conference, billed as a chance to show how climate change is battering the region.

Tuvalu is targeting the COP process to find "new contributors" to its trust fund, according to a September government report.

Its Prime Minister Feleti Teo has made clear that he believes "opening, subsidizing and exporting fossil fuels is immoral and unacceptable."

"To put it plainly — it is a death sentence for us if larger nations continue to open new fossil fuel projects," he said in 2024.

But Mercer's investments appear to show "virtually no formal consideration for climate change," said University of Otago climate finance expert Sebastian Gehricke.

The reporting "clearly warrants further investigation," added Ivan Diaz-Rainey, a finance professor at Australia's Griffith University.

He urged "full disclosure of holdings and a clear account of what actions have been taken to give effect to the fund's commitments to climate action."

A spokeswoman said Tuvalu Trust Fund (TTF) was reviewing its exposure to fossil fuels in light of the reporting.

"Since Tuvalu is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change, the TTF continues to seek to minimize the fund's exposure to fossil fuel reserves and carbon emissions," she added.

Mercer said: "We do not provide commentary or analysis on our clients or their investment portfolios."

THE MANILA TIMES

[Congress urged to pass National Coastal Greenbelt Act for climate protection](#)

NEARLY a year after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered an investigation into corruption-ridden flood control projects, the intensity of floods, storms and storm surges is already projected to worsen due to climate change. The fast-approaching rainy season also threatens to bring about massive, persistent flooding across the country again.

To reduce this impact as well as those of super typhoons and other extreme weather events, the international marine conservation group Oceana has urged Congress to fast-track the passage of the National Coastal Greenbelt Act. During the hearing of the House Committee on Climate Change, it also called for a stand-alone version of the same bill, rather than folding the measure into the proposed Integrated Coastal Management Act.

The National Coastal Greenbelt Act would ensure the protection and restoration of mangrove forests nationwide, which “are a science-proven shield for our coastal communities against the damaging impact of the climate crisis,” said Oceana Vice President Von Hernandez. He added that “mangroves can reduce wave heights by up to 75 percent.”

As a stand-alone bill, the National Coastal Greenbelt Act would establish clear targets, designate a single lead agency, set firm timelines and secure dedicated funding for mangrove protection. In contrast, an Integrated Coastal Management Act — by design — could be bogged down by the need to satisfy multiple and competing priorities at once, like fisheries, tourism, shipping, reclamation and urban development.

“The climate emergency should compel Congress to pass a dedicated, stand-alone greenbelt bill now, one that protects our coastal communities from calamitous storm surges and impacts, and that will not be held hostage by other competing economic and commercial interests,” said Hernandez. “Failure to do this would be criminal, leaving millions of our countrymen vulnerable and defenseless against the catastrophic impacts of climate change.”

The Philippines’ mangrove cover is estimated to be around 285,000 to 311,400 hectares in 2020, down from a high of 500,000 hectares in the early part of the 20th century. The country hosts at least 50 percent of the approximately 65 mangrove species found worldwide.

“Is the government doing all it can to protect our people and communities from the anticipated impacts of climate change?” asked Hernandez. “The sad answer is no — because instead of ensuring the protection of nature’s most effective defenses against coastal erosion and storm surges, it is allowing the continuing decimation of our mangrove forest.”

Hernandez described faulty and irregular flood control projects, breached seawalls and dikes as a massive wastage of public funds that could have otherwise supported children’s education, health subsidies for the poor and environmental resilience.

“The fixation on flood control projects has resulted in billions of public money being squandered. On top of that, we’ve seen losses in people’s lives and livelihoods, and damage to property — leaving more communities vulnerable to climate impacts,” Hernandez said.

JICA commits support for PH development projects

By: Catherine Valente

The Philippines and Japan will further strengthen cooperation on infrastructure, healthcare, climate action, and peace and development initiatives in Mindanao, President Ferdinand Marcos said on Thursday after meeting with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) president Dr. Tanaka Akihiko at the Okura Hotel in Tokyo.

Marcos went on a state visit to Japan on May 26-29.

“JICA continues to help [with] projects that create jobs, improve connectivity, and make everyday life better for Filipinos,” Marcos said in a Facebook post. “We also welcomed JICA’s continued support as we work to protect our economy and our people from the impact of rising global oil prices and global uncertainties.”

Marcos and Tanaka discussed ongoing and pipeline projects aimed at boosting connectivity, disaster resilience, human resource development, and economic growth — including railway systems, road networks, bridges, and disaster risk management initiatives as the Philippines continues its infrastructure expansion efforts.

The Japanese government, through JICA, is expected to sign nine pipeline loans worth ¥292.10 billion (\$1.84 billion) this year.

These are for funding the Build Universal Health Care Program Subprogram 3 and the Climate Change Action Program Subprogram 3.

Aside from loans, JICA has approved 47 grants to the Philippines amounting to ¥45.17 billion (\$288.93 million) as of December 2025, of which 23 grants totaling ¥9.55 billion were signed with the Marcos administration.

The meeting also reaffirmed JICA’s continued support for the Philippine Coast Guard, including assistance for patrol vessel acquisition, development of the PCG base in Subic, and capacity-building activities.

Malacañang said the meeting highlighted the Marcos administration’s efforts to deepen cooperation with Japan in pursuit of “shared prosperity, sustainable development, and regional stability.”

It also acknowledged the longstanding partnership between Manila and Tokyo through JICA, which remains the Philippines’ largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Japan accounts for \$13.959 billion or 33.54 percent of the Philippines’ total ODA portfolio as of December 2025.

JICA had been funding 26 ongoing ODA loan projects worth ¥1.94 trillion (\$12.16 billion) as of May 18 — of which 13 loans worth ¥932.01 billion were signed with the Marcos administration.

The Philippines has so far completed 295 ODA loan projects amounting to ¥2.66 trillion.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DIALOGUE EARTH

[The Philippines is failing to include Indigenous people in climate decision making](#)

By: Judy Anne Egay

As the Philippines moves to make a long overdue update on its climate commitments, Indigenous people – whose territories are crucial to climate efforts – must be central to the conversation. Yet a lack of representation in climate conversations and policy frameworks suggest that they remain on the margins.

In a letter to Dialogue Earth, the Philippines Climate Change Commission, the country's lead policymaking body on the subject, said its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is in the final stages of review before formal submission.

NDCs are climate action plans submitted by countries every five years, outlining how they will contribute to lower emissions and meeting the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5C. Updated plans were supposed to be submitted before September 2025, though several countries, including the Philippines, are behind schedule.

The absence of an updated NDC and a clear net-zero pathway has affected the Philippines' overall score in the Climate Change Performance Index, which compares 63 countries and the European Union. This year it ranked 19th, down from 7th last year, making it a medium rather than high performer. Notably, the index highlighted human rights violations linked to the country's expansion of renewable energy, and the threat posed by some hydropower projects to Indigenous communities' water supply.

Shortly after last year's UN climate negotiations (COP30) concluded in Belém last December, the Climate Change Commission held a consultation in Manila with civil society, government, development partners and academic stakeholders. This was to present an indicative NDC, including proposed sectoral commitments and national targets, and feed insights from the event towards the final updated NDC, aiming to affirm a whole-of-society ownership of the plan.

Some climate action groups have claimed that, prior to COP30, the Philippines delegation had failed to consult non-state actors and that draft NDCs were not shared. In response, the commission told Dialogue Earth that it is committed to "inclusive and meaningful participation consistent with national laws and international obligations". It highlighted that the NDC drafting process "has involved inter-agency coordination mechanisms, targeted sectoral consultations, and engagement platforms with non-state actors, particularly those working on or for Indigenous peoples and climate-vulnerable communities".

The commission also underscored its recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to participation and self-determination consistent with the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act and related policy frameworks.

But despite these affirmations of inclusion, Indigenous people have been absent from important climate conversations at the official level.

Missing representation at COP30

COP30 was framed by the Brazilian presidency as having a focus on Indigenous issues and representation, including more representatives from Indigenous communities than ever before. But the Philippines' official delegation list, seen by Dialogue Earth, did not include any representatives from the government agency responsible for protecting Indigenous rights, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

The Climate Change Commission clarified months after the conference, in the letter to Dialogue Earth, that the NCIP had expressed welcome interest in nominating representatives to COP30, but later informally communicated that it "would no longer proceed with the nominations due to logistical challenges in Belém". The NCIP confirmed this in an email to Dialogue Earth, citing accommodation shortages and participation capacity constraints owing to the large number of attendees expected.

Indigenous territories cover 13-14 million of the country's roughly 30 million hectares of land, and more than half of the Philippines' remaining intact forestlands are within ancestral domains. These lands have been protected by the stewardship of Indigenous peoples, as rooted in their cultures and beliefs. Yet such lands, which are central to conservation and mitigation efforts, are under increasing pressure from mining, renewable energy and infrastructure projects.

Under the administration of Ferdinand Marcos Jr, mining reforms have accelerated, and the government has pushed to expand critical mineral extraction, according to a 2024 report from Global Witness and Philippine environmental campaign network Kalikasan. This is despite a significant share of the country's mineral resources overlapping with Indigenous peoples' territories, as recognised under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, the report notes.

The Philippine Mining Act states that all mineral resources in public and private lands are owned by the state, which contradicts Indigenous territorial sovereignty. Indigenous communities have voiced concerns to the media of facing mining impacts such as landslides and contamination of fishing waters and farmland.

While formal government representation was limited at COP30, Indigenous leaders from the Philippines still participated through civil society organisations and as observers. Among them was Minnie Degawan, a Kankanaey-Igorot Indigenous leader from the Cordillera region in northern Philippines who is managing director of the Forest Stewardship Council's Indigenous Foundation.

“I am happy that Indigenous Peoples’ participation is increasing,” she told Dialogue Earth. “Of course, resources are always a question, which is why not everyone can be included, but I hope there will be efforts to bring in more Indigenous peoples,” she added.

Between principle and practice

The limited official representation of Filipino Indigenous peoples at the climate negotiations stands in contrast to the country’s own climate policy frameworks, where they have featured prominently.

The Philippines’ last Nationally Determined Contribution, submitted in 2021, recognises the role of traditional knowledge in strengthening climate action and affirms obligations related to human rights and Indigenous rights.

Similarly, in 2025, the government stated that the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights will place strong emphasis on protecting Indigenous peoples and their ancestral domains. The National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050, meanwhile, acknowledges the unique circumstances of Indigenous peoples and their deep ties to ancestral lands.

Taken together, these frameworks recognise Indigenous peoples’ participation and knowledge as essential to climate resilience and ecosystem integrity. Yet their limited representation in international negotiations reveals a widening gap between principle and practice.

This tension is not unique to the Philippines. An analysis of 195 parties’ NDCs, conducted by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, found that 90 countries recognise Indigenous peoples in their climate pledges. However, only five refer to their right to be consulted on measures that affect them, and only six mention free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). According to the analysis, recognition of Indigenous peoples’ rights still lacks concrete enforcement.

The path forward

Near the end of COP30, Aksyon Klima Pilipinas, the Philippines’ leading civil society network for climate action, urged the government to provide direct and accessible climate financing to Indigenous peoples and local communities, with simplified procedures, strong safeguards and FPIC at every stage.

The Climate Change Commission, in response to queries about how it will ensure the NDC reflects the lived realities of Filipinos, especially Indigenous people and other climate-vulnerable communities, told Dialogue Earth it is working with relevant agencies and stakeholders “to ensure that the NDC reflects Philippine priorities and capacities, and supports a just, culturally sensitive, and context-responsive transition in line with existing policies and frameworks”.

It added: “Climate action, to be effective, should reflect the country’s development context, differentiated vulnerabilities, and the social and economic conditions that shape how risks are experienced across regions.”

The commission explained that the NDC is informed by sectoral analyses, risk assessments, and local planning processes that “also acknowledge the value of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices, which have long guided communities in stewarding ecosystems and navigating environmental change”.

Looking toward COP31

As preparations begin for this year’s COP31 in November, the incoming leadership has emphasised inclusion. Türkiye’s COP31 president-designate, Murat Kurum, has outlined guiding principles for the process: “Dialogue, not a single voice; Consensus, not division; Action, not stagnation.”

He stressed that Türkiye and Australia, which is leading the negotiations, aim to work together to ensure all voices are heard and no participants are left behind, highlighting the importance of consultation and cooperation for a successful conference.

For the Philippines, aligning its local actions with global commitments is key to inclusion. The updated NDC needs to acknowledge the role of Indigenous communities, and the country’s delegation at COP31 must do more to include Indigenous peoples.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[CCC, UN Women, New Zealand Embassy strengthen collaboration on gender-responsive climate action](#)

MANILA, Philippines – The Climate Change Commission (CCC), led by Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje, met with New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines, Catherine McIntosh, and representatives from UN Women Philippines to explore areas of cooperation supporting inclusive and gender-responsive climate action.

The courtesy call highlighted the importance of partnerships in advancing climate resilience efforts that recognize the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable and marginalized sectors, particularly women and communities at risk.

“Climate action must be inclusive, responsive, and people-centered. Strengthening gender-responsive approaches in climate policies and programs is essential to ensuring that no one is left behind in building resilient communities,” Borje said.

Affirming this, CCC Commissioner Rachel Herrera emphasized the importance of aligning the projects with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) localization and gender action plan.

“If the tools are developed in an inclusive manner, it will really reflect a response to the issues on the ground,” Herrera said.

The discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening women’s participation and leadership in climate governance, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation planning, while also ensuring that climate policies and programs respond to the needs of vulnerable communities.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) welcomed New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines, Catherine McIntosh, and representatives from UN Women to discuss opportunities for strengthened collaboration on gender-responsive climate action and sustainable development initiatives.

Among the initiatives discussed were ongoing efforts related to gender mainstreaming in climate adaptation programs, support for the localization of the NAP, which was developed under the leadership of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and collaboration on knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities for local government units and partner institutions.

UN Women, through their representatives Athena Dennise Galao, Regional Programme Coordinator on Climate Change, and Jonas Gregory Perez, National Programme Officer for Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, shared its continuing support for initiatives that promote women’s leadership and participation in climate and disaster risk reduction efforts.

Meanwhile, the Embassy of New Zealand, through Ambassador McIntosh, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting programs that strengthen resilience and inclusive development in the Philippines.

The CCC emphasized that collaborative efforts and sustained engagement with development partners remain vital in enhancing institutional capacities, strengthening policy support, and promoting climate action that is equitable and responsive to the needs of communities.

This engagement reflects the CCC's continuing commitment to fostering partnerships that advance climate resilience, inclusive governance, and sustainable development in the country.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC, UN Women, New Zealand embassy boost alliance on climate action](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), led by Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje, met with New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines Catherine McIntosh and representatives from UN Women Philippines to explore areas of cooperation to support inclusive and gender-responsive climate action.

The recent courtesy call highlighted the importance of partnerships in advancing climate resilience efforts that recognize the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable and marginalized communities, particularly women and other at-risk groups.

“Climate action must be inclusive, responsive, and people-centered. Strengthening gender-responsive approaches in climate policies and programs is essential to ensuring that no one is left behind in building resilient communities,” Borje said.

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