



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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- Paris Plans to Plant Trees That Can Survive Climate Change
- A 'once-in-200 years' heat wave caught Southeast Asia off guard. Climate change will make them more common
- Arctic could be ice-free a decade earlier than thought
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- Attack on ESG highlights need to regulate banks on climate finance: report
- PH, Sweden seek to advance partnership on green transition
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### ABS CBN

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### BLOOMBERG

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By: Jenny Che

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## **CNN**

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By: Carlotta Dotto, Krystina Shveda and Lou Robinson,

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## **GMA NEWS**

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## **GREENPEACE**

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## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[PH, Sweden seek to advance partnership on green transition](#)**

By: Joyce Ann Rocamora

The Philippines and Sweden seek to strengthen their collaboration on environmental protection and explore ways to accelerate the latter's green transition.

## **RAPPLER**

### **[\[Opinion\] ASEAN needs framework for environmental rights](#)**

By: John Leo Algo

In light of World Environment Day on June 5, it is a timely opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the environment and human rights.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Napocor, German-PH Chamber collaborate for green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies](#)**

THE German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI) and the National Power Corp. (Napocor) announced their joint interest in supporting the implementation of a feasibility study to investigate green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies in off-grid areas of the Philippines.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **Chedeng unlikely to bring heavy rainfall into PH in next 3 days: PAGASA**

Severe tropical storm Chedeng is unlikely to bring heavy rainfall to the Philippines in the next 3 to 5 days, the state weather bureau said early Thursday morning.

In its 5 a.m. weather advisory, PAGASA said Chedeng was last sighted approximately 1,090 km east of Central Luzon packing maximum sustained winds of 95 kph near the center with 115 kph gusts.

Strong to gale-force winds were extending around 350 km from the center of the storm, PAGASA said.

The weather agency said that even if the severe tropical storm is projected to enhance the southwest monsoon (habagat), the timing and intensity of monsoon rains over the Philippines "may still change due to the dependence of monsoon enhancement on the forecast movement and intensity of Chedeng as well as its interaction with the other weather systems surrounding it."

PAGASA also said hoisting of tropical wind signals is not foreseeable at present.

On Friday, the habagat's enhancement may cause gusty conditions over the Visayas, Romblon, Occidental Mindoro, the northern portion of Palawan including Kalayaan, Calamian, and Cuyo Islands, Surigao del Norte, Dinagat Islands, and Camiguin.

On Saturday, the monsoon is expected also bring the same conditions to the Visayas, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol Region, Camiguin, and Dinagat Islands.

Chedeng is projected to maintain its distance from the Philippine landmass while moving west-northwestward generally.

It is likely to develop into a typhoon by Thursday night or Friday, PAGASA said. "Peak intensity may be reached by Saturday," it said.

## **BLOOMBERG**

### **Paris Plans to Plant Trees That Can Survive Climate Change**

By: Jenny Che

The guiding principle for planting trees in Paris has historically been an aesthetic one: Find trees that are beautiful and have large canopies, the better to line the city's picturesque streets and provide ample shade to pedestrians.

This tradition, passed down since the 19th century from Baron Haussmann, has dotted the capital with plane, chestnut, linden and Japanese pagoda trees, including on the Champs-Élysées, in front of the Invalides and along the Seine.

But as the city prepares for rising temperatures in the coming decades, it's announcing plans that consider a new factor: trees that are more resistant to heat.

"We're going to diversify our trees ahead of climate change and an increasing number of heat waves," said Christophe Najdovski, the deputy mayor for green spaces. "We need species that will be able to handle the stress of not having water."

Providing more green space is a core component of Paris's new urbanism plan, adopted by the city council late on Monday. The project advances Mayor Anne Hidalgo's vision for a "bio-climatic" city that sees plants emerging from roofs and public squares, as well as the creation of more public housing.

That includes planting 170,000 trees by 2026 — and keeping them alive. Pledges to plant more trees have been popular responses in cities around the world for good reason: Trees absorb carbon, combat air pollution and alleviate urban heat.

But while municipal tree campaigns are easy to back, authorities sometimes fail to follow up on their ambitious goals. A lack of planning and funding for maintenance means that some trees don't reach maturity. Climate change also plays a major role: In Madrid, only a fifth of saplings planted in one section of the Bosque Metropolitano, a woodland that will encircle the Spanish capital, survived seasons of drought. And in Copenhagen, unanticipated costs led officials to cut corners and plant trees in peripheral sites rather than in streets, where they are most needed.

Among the heat-resilient trees Paris may plant more of are the Turkish hazel, the Montpellier maple, the European nettle tree and the holm oak, all of which, like the plane tree, are already present in the capital. But beech, many of which are located in the Parc André Citroën in the 15th arrondissement, have adapted less well and will likely fare better in more humid climates.

Officials are wary of over-reliance on just a few species, which would make them more vulnerable to disease, and are studying others that could be planted for the first time in Paris. A preliminary guide, with suggestions on where each species could be placed as well as their water and sunlight needs, is already online. The city plans to expand the guide to include 180 species by the end of the year.

Asked what measures the city will take to ensure the survival of Paris's newly planted trees, Paris officials pointed to a longstanding protocol to water them every two weeks for the first three years. They are also supported by stakes and, occasionally, a metal girdle to protect them from dogs. Around 100 new trees are also outfitted with probes to measure water stress. The measures may ensure more trees make it through adolescence but — with a young tree requiring up to 50 liters (13 gallons) of water a week — might still put some new plantings at risk during the hottest, driest parts of the year.

“Planting a tree means you have to take care of it,” said Sylvain Montesinos, a member of the city's trees and forest office. “We make sure that they're growing well, and there are some that don't make it past the three years. But at that point we expect them to be self-sufficient.”

The city says it's already well on its way to reaching its tree-planting goal: More than 25,000 were planted between last November and this April, including 800 on the city's streets. Paris expects to reach a third of its target of 170,000 by the end of the planting season this year.

The new urbanism plan, which will be reviewed by the French government and is expected to come into effect late 2024 or early 2025, also calls for 300 hectares of additional green space, including a new park that would span the lower-income La Chapelle et La Villette neighborhoods at the northern edge of the city. In addition, the city hopes to open up some private gardens, including those of the Val-de-Grace military hospital in the 5th arrondissement and the former Reille convent in the 14th, to the public.

**CNN**

**[A 'once-in-200 years' heat wave caught Southeast Asia off guard. Climate change will make them more common](#)**

By: Carlotta Dotto, Krystina Shveda and Lou Robinson,

Every day, countless mopeds criss-cross the congested city of Hanoi, in Vietnam, with commuters traveling to work or motorbike taxis dropping off everything from parcels to cooked food and clients.

One of them is Phong, 42, who starts his shift at 5 a.m. to beat the rush hour, navigating the dense swarm of mopeds and drives for over 12 hours a day with little rest.

But an unprecedented heat wave that engulfed his country in the past two months has made Phong's job even more arduous. To get through the heat of the day, he equipped himself with a hat, wet handkerchiefs and several bottles of water – precautions that provided little relief as recorded daytime temperatures soared to more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

The average May temperature in Hanoi is 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit).

"If I get a heatstroke, I would be forced to suspend driving to recover," he told CNN. "But I cannot afford it."

Phong, who declined to give his surname, said he carries a tiny umbrella to protect his phone, the main tool he uses for work as a driver for the ride-hailing platform Grab, along with his bike. If the phone breaks, he misses out on much-needed income. "I was worried that the battery would overheat once exposed to the sun," he said.

Nearby in the same city, sanitation worker Dinh Van Hung, 53, toils all day cleaning garbage from the bustling streets of Hanoi's central Dong Da district.

"It is impossible to avoid the heat, especially at noon and early afternoon," Dinh told CNN. "Extreme temperatures also make the garbage smell more unpleasant, the hard work is now even more difficult, directly affecting my health and labor."

Dinh says "there is no other way" but to change when he starts and finishes his shift.

"I try to work early in the morning or afternoon and evening," he said. "During lunch break when the temperature is too high, I find a sidewalk in a small alley, spread out the cardboard sheets to rest for a while and then resume work in the afternoon."

Phong and Dinh are among millions of drivers, street vendors, cleaners, builders, farmers, and other outdoor or informal economy workers across Southeast Asia who were hit the hardest during what experts called the region's "harshest heat wave on record."

Workers like them make up the backbone of many societies but are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events, with dangerously high temperatures greatly impacting their health and the already precarious nature of their professions.

April and May are typically the hottest months of the year in Southeast Asia, as temperatures rise before monsoon rains bring some relief. But this year, they reached levels never experienced before in most countries of the region, including tourism hotspots Thailand and Vietnam.

Thailand saw its hottest day in history at 45.4 degrees Celsius (114 degrees Fahrenheit) on April 15, while neighboring Laos topped out at 43.5 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) for two consecutive days in May, and Vietnam's all-time record was broken in early May with 44.2 degrees Celsius (112 degrees Fahrenheit), according to analysis of weather stations data by a climatologist and weather historian Maximiliano Herrera.

Herrera described it as "the most brutal never-ending heat wave" that has continued into June. On June 1, Vietnam broke the record for its hottest June day in history with 43.8 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) – with 29 days of the month to go.

In a recent report from the World Weather Attribution (WWA), an international coalition of scientists said the April heat wave in Southeast Asia was a once-in-200-years event that would have been "virtually impossible" without human-caused climate change.

The scorching heat in Southeast Asia was made even more unbearable and dangerous due to high humidity – a deadly combination.

Humid heat causes extreme distress and climate change can make it worse  
Humidity, on top of extreme temperatures, makes it even harder for your body to try and cool itself down.

Heat-related illnesses, such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion, have severe symptoms and can be life-threatening, especially for those with heart disease and kidney problems, diabetes, and pregnant people.

"When the surrounding humidity is very high, the body will continue to sweat trying to release moisture to cool itself, but because the sweat is not evaporating it will eventually lead to severe dehydration, and in acute cases it can lead to heat strokes and deaths,"



said Mariam Zachariah, research associate in near-real time attribution of extreme events to climate change at World Weather Attribution initiative at Imperial College London.

“Which is why a humid heat wave is more dangerous than a dry heat wave,” she told CNN.

To understand the health risks of humid heat, scientists often calculate the “feels-like” temperature – a single measure of how hot it feels to the human body when air temperature and humidity are both taken into account, sometimes alongside other factors such as wind chill.

Perceived heat is usually several degrees higher than observed temperature and gives a more accurate reading of how heat affects people.

CNN analysis of Copernicus Climate Change Service data found that between early April and late May, all six countries in the continental portion of Southeast Asia had reached perceived temperatures close to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) or more every single day. This is above a threshold considered dangerous, especially for people with health problems or those not used to extreme heat.

In Thailand, 20 days in April and at least 10 days in May reached feels-like temperatures above 46 degrees Celsius (115 degrees Fahrenheit). At this level, thermal heat stress becomes “extreme” and is considered life threatening for anybody including healthy people used to extreme humid heat.

Throughout April and May, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia all had several days with potential to cause extreme heat stress. Myanmar had 12 such days – until Cyclone Mocha brought relative relief, but severe devastation, when it made landfall on May 14.

The April-May heat wave in Southeast Asia caused widespread hospitalizations, damaged roads, sparked fires and led to school closures, however the number of deaths remains unknown, according to the World Weather Attribution report.

The study found that, because of climate change, the heat was more than two degrees hotter in perceived temperature than it could have been without global warming caused by pollution.

“When the atmosphere becomes warmer, its ability to hold the moisture becomes higher and therefore the chances of humid heat waves also increase,” Zachariah, one of the authors, told CNN.

If global warming continues to increase to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), such humid heat waves could occur ten times more often, according to the study.

And if emissions continue to increase at the same pace, the next two decades could already see 30 more deaths per million from heat in Thailand, and 130 more deaths per million by the end of the century, according to the UN's Human Climate Horizons projections.

For Myanmar that number would be 30 and 520 more deaths per million respectively, for Cambodia – 40 and 270, data shows.

Extreme temperatures hit the poor and vulnerable the most  
Extreme weather events also expose systemic inequalities.

“Occupation, age, health conditions and disabilities, access to health care services, socioeconomic status, even gender – these are all factors that can make people more or less vulnerable to heat waves,” said Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, one of the WWA report's authors and lecturer at the department of geography at Chiang Mai University in Thailand.

Marginalized members of society, those without adequate access to healthcare and cooling systems, and those in jobs that are exposed to extremely hot and humid conditions are most at risk of heat stress.

“It's important to talk about who can adapt, who can cope, and who has the resources to be able to do this,” Emmanuel Raju, also an author and director of the Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research, said in a press conference on May 17.

“For those working in the informal economy a lost day means a day lost in wages,” Raju said.

More than 60% of the employed population in Southeast Asia work in informal employment, and over 80% in Cambodia and Myanmar, according to a 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO) report.

In late April, Thai health authorities issued an extreme heat alert for the capital Bangkok and several other places across the country, warning people to stay indoors and of heat stroke dangers.

But for migrant workers like Supot Klongsap, nicknamed “Nui,” who temporarily left his home to work in construction in Bangkok during the pre-monsoon season, staying indoors was simply not an option.

He said that this year's hot season was exceptional, causing him to sweat all the time and feel exhausted. "I started to sweat from 8 a.m., and it was difficult to work. I felt very exhausted from losing so much water."

Nui, who slept at the construction site, said even the nights were unbearable. "Water coming from the pipe even during nighttime remained very hot just like it was boiled. It was difficult to find comfort."

He said the accommodation for construction workers is roofed and walled with corrugated sheets, and it barely protects from heat. Any access to air-conditioned rooms is a luxury Nui couldn't afford. "We had to rely on buying ice and adding it to our drinks, our simple way to cool down," he said.

A 2021 study found that outdoor workers in developing countries have higher core body temperature than those working indoors, and they are two to three times more at risk of dehydration, leading to a higher chance of reduced kidney function and other related conditions.

In Thailand, the government recommends reactive measures, such as staying indoors, hydrating adequately, wearing light-colored clothes, and avoiding certain foods, Chaya told CNN.

"But that doesn't mean that everybody has the same capacity to do so."

The burden of cost often falls on individuals, Chaya said, making it their responsibility to cope with the heat.

What is needed, he said, is a cohesive international plan that can protect the more vulnerable populations in the face of increasing climate change risks, and proactive measures to prevent potential health issues.

Governments need to develop large-scale solutions, such as early warning systems for heat, passive and active cooling for all, urban planning, and heat action plans, World Weather Attribution scientists recommended in their report.

Communities adapt to protect livelihoods

Intensifying heat waves not only affect individuals' health, but threaten the environment and people's livelihoods, worsen air quality, destroy crops, increase wildfire risk, and damage infrastructure – so the need for government action plans on heat waves are vital.

In Yotpieng and Phon villages in northeastern Laos, people's livelihoods are intimately connected with weather patterns.

Villagers' lives here revolve around tea. For centuries, every day at 7 a.m. the tea farmers start collecting leaves, until 11 a.m. when they would bring the harvest back home. The survival of these communities depends on collecting tea leaves to generate income for whole families.

But this year's extreme heat is disrupting their ability to work according to their ancient working habits – they had to change from working in the morning to the afternoon during heat waves, and they are worried the quality and quantity of tea leaves will be affected, members of the local community told CNN.

"[The] weather is extremely hot for everyone this year and farmers are struggling," according to Chintanaphone Keovichith, management officer at the Lao Farmer Network.

"This year the weather is hotter than last year, and the tea leaves are dry," said tea farmer, Boua Seng.

The manager of a 1,000-year-old tea processing factory, Vieng Samai Lobia Yaw, said she is worried this year's tea leaves have not grown enough, which decreases harvest by almost 50% daily.

"It's so wasteful – we spend more capital on laborers' fees but getting less product," she said.

For now, tea farmers in Laos have invented solutions to protect their trees. Some have planted large fruit trees, such as peach or plum, to provide shade for tea plantations, while others added more compost to nourish their plants.

"The tea [trees] in the shade will have a nice green leaf, but the ones without shade will have yellow leaf," explained tea farmer Thongsouk. "We also collect additional income by selling fruit products."

But they cannot do it alone.

Without a comprehensive international approach to rapidly reduce planet-warming pollution and to address the interconnected impacts of extreme weather events on individuals, communities, and the environment, the health and economic costs from heat waves will only worsen as the climate crisis unfolds.

As May turns into June, many are still waiting for some respite.

“May was the worst month – that’s when the rain usually comes in, but this year [it] still hasn’t arrived yet,” said Chintanaphone.

## GMA NEWS

### [Arctic could be ice-free a decade earlier than thought](#)

By: Marlowe Hood

The Arctic Ocean's ice cap will disappear in summer as soon as the 2030s and a decade earlier than thought, no matter how aggressively humanity draws down the carbon pollution that drives global warming, scientists said Tuesday.

Even capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius in line with the Paris climate treaty will not prevent the north pole's vast expanse of floating ice from melting away in September, they reported in Nature Communications.

"It is too late to still protect the Arctic summer sea ice as a landscape and as a habitat," co-author Dirk Notz, a professor at the University of Hamburg's Institute of Oceanography, told AFP.

"This will be the first major component of our climate system that we lose because of our emission of greenhouse gases."

Decreased ice cover has serious impacts over time on weather, people and ecosystems -- not just within the region, but globally.

"It can accelerate global warming by melting permafrost laden with greenhouse gases, and sea level rise by melting the Greenland ice sheet," lead author Seung-Ki Min, a researcher at Pohang University of Science and Technology in South Korea, told AFP.

Greenland's kilometers-thick blanket of ice contains enough frozen water to lift oceans six meters.

By contrast, melting sea ice has no discernible impact on sea levels because the ice is already in ocean water, like ice cubes in a glass.

But it does feed into a vicious circle of warming.

Three times faster

About 90 percent of the Sun's energy that hits white sea ice is reflected back into space.

But when sunlight hits dark, unfrozen ocean water instead, nearly the same amount of that energy is absorbed by the ocean and spread across the globe.

Both the North and South Pole regions have warmed by three degrees Celsius compared to late 19th-century levels, nearly three times the global average.

An ice-free September in the 2030s "is a decade faster than in recent projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)", the UN's science advisory body, said Min.

In its landmark 2021 report, the IPCC forecast with "high confidence" that the Arctic Ocean would become virtually ice-free at least once by mid-century, and even then only under more extreme greenhouse gas emissions scenarios.

The new study -- which draws from observational data covering the period 1979-2019 to adjust the IPCC models -- finds that threshold will most likely be crossed in the 2040s.

Min and his colleagues also calculated that human activity was responsible for up to 90 percent of the ice cap's shrinking, with only minor impacts from natural factors such as solar and volcanic activity.

The record minimum sea ice extent in the Arctic -- 3.4 million square kilometers (1.3 million square miles) -- occurred in 2012, with the second- and third-lowest ice-covered areas in 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Scientists describe the Arctic Ocean as "ice-free" if the area covered by ice is less than one million square kilometers, about seven percent of the ocean's total area.

Sea ice in Antarctica, meanwhile, dropped to 1.92 million square kilometers in February -- the lowest level on record and almost one million square kilometers below the 1991-2020 mean.

## [Spain saw hottest, second-driest spring on record this year](#)

This year's spring was the hottest and second-driest in Spain since records began in 1961, with higher-than-average temperatures likely to continue this summer, the country's environment ministry and weather agency said on Wednesday.

Spain is still grappling with a prolonged drought that has decimated agricultural output, including in the key olive oil sector that accounts for nearly half of the world's production. The heat and dry weather bring additional dangers, with studies showing climate change has heightened the risk of wildfires.

Across continental Spain—excluding the Balearic and Canary archipelagos—temperatures between March 1 and June 1 averaged 14.2 degrees Celsius (57.6 Fahrenheit), the ministry said in a statement.

This was 1.8 degrees higher than the average for the reference period between 1991 and 2020 and 0.3 degrees hotter than the previous record registered in 1997.

The mercury in the southern province of Cordoba hit a new record high for April at 38.8C, the ministry said.

"We're getting used to breaking records," said Ruben del Campo, a spokesperson for national weather agency AEMET, adding that three out of the past four seasons—summer and autumn 2022 and spring 2023—were the hottest on record.

This spring was also the second-driest on record, with almost no rainfall until mid-May, Del Campo said.

Although the longer-term drought outlook has eased slightly thanks to heavy rains in the second half of May, the problem was far from being solved, he added.

According to AEMET meteorologist Estrella Gutierrez, there was a "high probability" that Spain would once again experience a warmer-than-normal summer this year, especially in the eastern half of the country and on the islands.

AEMET's predictive models forecast a 50% to 70% chance that this summer will be one of the five hottest in the past three decades, she said, though there was also a 40% to 50% likelihood it would see higher-than-average rainfall.

Spain's reservoirs are on average at 47.4% of their capacity but levels have fallen to approximately 25% in southern Andalusia and northeastern Catalonia.



Data for 2022 showed it was the hottest year since records began in 1961, with three summer heatwaves that added up to 41 days, the most ever.

## GREENPEACE

### [Attack on ESG highlights need to regulate banks on climate finance: report](#)

By: Laura Bergamo

A new report from Greenpeace Canada shows how the fossil fuel industry-backed assault on banks' climate commitments has only highlighted the urgent need for governments to step in and regulate the financial sector – in 2022, the five biggest Canadian banks provided 20.4 percent of funding that went to fossil fuels from the 60 largest banks in the world, up from 13.8 percent in 2016. The new Greenpeace report, *What to do about Canadian Banks 'Quiet Quitting' their Climate Commitments*, details how Canadian banks, who were already on track to be kicked out of the UN's Race to Zero initiative for greenwashing [1], are using the attacks on ESG as an excuse to 'quiet quit' their climate commitments.

"The oil, gas and coal companies behind the attacks on bankers' voluntary climate commitments have overplayed their hand," said Keith Stewart, Senior energy strategist at Greenpeace Canada and author of the report. "By making it legally risky for banks and other financial institutions to comply with voluntary net zero initiatives, the fossil fuel industry has left government regulation as the only viable path forward."

The report traces the rise of the anti-ESG movement back to fossil fuel interests, using investigative work by the New York Times and Influence Map showing how fossil fuel companies and industry associations have 'weaponized' key Republican politicians and state treasurers against financial institutions acting on climate change.

Whether it is out of fear of being sued for collusion under anti-trust legislation, or if this is being used as a convenient excuse, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero changed its membership criteria last year so that its members no longer have to meet the UN's Race to Zero criteria. The UN had set a June 15, 2023 deadline for financial institutions to meet their criteria or risk being kicked out of the initiative. As detailed in the report, none of Canada's Big Five banks were even close to meeting the Race to Zero criteria due to their ongoing, massive funding of fossil fuels.

The report points to a new political momentum for regulation. This includes polling showing 70% of Canadians support regulation, Senator Rosa Galvez' proposed Climate Aligned Finance Act and support from Liberal, NDP, Bloc and Green MPs for a new motion calling on the federal government to "use all legislative and regulatory tools at its disposal to align Canada's financial system with the Paris Agreement."

"The wildfires burning across Canada are fueled by bank funding of fossil fuels," said Stewart. "Since bankers can't, or won't, act on their own, it is time for our elected

officials to finally lay down the law and regulate banks so they are part of the climate solution rather than an ever-greater part of the problem.”

Greenpeace Canada has launched a new petition this week that calls on the federal government to regulate banks to align Canada’s financial system with the Paris climate agreement.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [PH, Sweden seek to advance partnership on green transition](#)

By: Joyce Ann Rocamora

The Philippines and Sweden seek to strengthen their collaboration on environmental protection and explore ways to accelerate the latter's green transition.

Swedish Ambassador to Manila Annika Thunborg said Tuesday night Stockholm's priorities are well aligned with that of the Marcos administration, where security, rule of law, and green transition top the list.

"It's a sign of our kindred spirits how well these priorities also equal those of President (Ferdinand) Marcos and the Philippines and they are well in line with how we in Team Sweden engage here in the Philippines," Thunborg said during the Sweden National Day reception in Taguig City.

"We need safe and secure borders to build socio-economically sustainable societies. We need the international rules-based system to preserve our planet for future generations. And we need the green transition to build peace and stability. Everything is connected and Sweden has a lot to offer in these areas."

Environment Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said Manila regards Sweden as an important partner given its position as one of the countries leading the charge on green and energy transition.

Yulo-Loyzaga said the government banks on this partnership to reach as soon as possible the goals in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, specifically to improve the country's resilience against natural hazards and climate change.

"The Philippines and Sweden have had a long history of collaborative partnerships in the management of our forests, coastal areas, and coral reefs," she said.

"At this turning point of our planet's future, we look forward to deepening our partnership as we work towards a just transition in our respective journeys towards building both green and blue economies."

Under the PDP, Manila aims to adopt low-carbon technologies that preserve and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems from ridge to reef; achieve smart consumption and production; develop renewable energy; and promote sustainable ecotourism, among others.

Yulo-Loyzaga also emphasized that collaboration is the only way to reach the global goal of net zero or the cutting of greenhouse gas emissions close to zero by 2050.

“The bold leadership and unwavering commitment of Sweden in the areas of environmental protection, sustainable production and consumption, ecological innovation, minerals development, and climate action are what we value the most in this friendship,” she said.

‘Long-term partnership’

Aside from addressing climate change and environmental protection, Sweden and the Philippines are engaged in various areas of cooperation.

Since the reopening of the Swedish Embassy in Manila in 2016, exchanges between the two nations grew and opened up opportunities to increase interactions in the areas of trade, maritime, energy, defense, and science and technology.

In 2023, the two countries convened their fifth round of political consultation in Stockholm and also saw a bilateral meeting between Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo and his Swedish counterpart Tobias Billström.

Last month, Sweden's Foreign Trade Minister Johan Forssell also conducted a two-day high-level mission to explore potential investments in the country.

“These engagements have provided us with opportunities to take stock of the areas of engagement that we affirm our commitment to further advance our relationship,” Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said.

“We look forward to a long-term partnership between the Philippines and Sweden as we continue to deepen our engagement in energy, trade, infrastructure, green transition, development cooperation, and defense.”

## RAPPLER

### [\[Opinion\] ASEAN needs framework for environmental rights](#)

By: John Leo Algo

In light of World Environment Day on June 5, it is a timely opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the environment and human rights.

When we hear the word “environment,” our mind immediately goes to nature itself, and rightfully so. Yet at its most basic definition, the “environment” refers to anything that surrounds us. Through this angle, we can say that caring for our environment inherently involves caring for other human beings, including their substantive and procedural rights.

The environmental rights agenda has seen significant progress globally in recent years. The UN recognized the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right, while the Commission on Human Rights issued a landmark report that states fossil fuel companies can be held liable for human rights violations caused by their pollutive activities.

Despite this progress, environmental rights continue to be threatened in the Philippines. For example, the country remains one of the most dangerous in the world to environmental defenders. With crises like climate change and plastic pollution projected to worsen, millions of Filipinos could be hindered in exercising their rights.

These trends are also seen in many of the Philippines’s neighbors within the ASEAN, collectively among the most vulnerable regions to several ecological issues. As a result, a new regional framework is needed for protecting and upholding environmental rights of millions of its residents.

It is with this context that the ASEAN Environmental Rights Framework (ERF) is being developed.

What should be included

The ERF must contain strong measures for protecting the rights and well-being of environmental defenders and frontline communities. These should include the rights to life, freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly, and participation in environmental decision-making processes. ASEAN has to create a framework that guarantees a safe and secure environment for these stakeholders to exercise their rights, given that they are also likely among the most vulnerable to natural and man-made threats.

Among the stakeholders that needs to be specifically focused on are the indigenous peoples (IPs) within the region. Despite their role in protecting ecosystems and biodiversity and the well-documented threats they have faced in previous decades, no specific clause on IP rights was included in the current ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

Within the resulting framework must be clear statements that the IP's substantive rights, especially those that pertain to basic necessities, livelihoods, and protecting ecosystems, are protected and upheld through mechanisms at the national and regional levels. They must also be directly included and enabled to actively participate in decision-making processes that directly impact the well-being of their communities and the environments on which they depend.

Furthermore, the ERF must remove barriers that prevent individuals and communities from access to environmental justice, such as expensive legal procedures and bureaucratic inefficiencies that delay decisions. ASEAN member-states should enforce strategies and improve existing policies to ensure their access to legal and administrative measures applicable for matters on environmental rights. Mechanisms should include providing free legal and technical assistance to complainants and use of native languages in addressing cases and disputes.

Enhancing inclusive public participation in environmental decision-making should be required for ASEAN and its member-states. We are all stakeholders to numerous environmental challenges facing us, which means all citizens have the right to be represented or actively engage in decision-making. Mechanisms must be established to ensure the entire process at any level of governance would be culturally-appropriate, locally-relevant, and gender-sensitive.

The ERF must emphasize the protection of human rights of those that would be affected by the inevitable just transition towards more sustainable models. A transformation of economies and societies throughout the ASEAN must guarantee that workers and communities either dependent on systems to be phased down or phased out (i.e. fossil fuels) or affected by more ecologically-sound infrastructures to be built as part of the transition (i.e. renewable energy) would not be left behind.

The resulting framework should also improve on existing strategies for communicating information related to environmental rights. It should guarantee that data will be generated, collected, and disseminated in a comprehensible and timely manner to different sectors. Key information such as ways to access legal and judicial instruments, file cases, respond to complaints, and participate in decision-making processes must be communicated, especially to the most vulnerable peoples (i.e., women, youth, IPs, persons with disabilities).

Another key provision within the ERF must be denouncing, prohibiting, and punishing environmental denialism and disinformation. Failure to respond to this growing alarming trend within the ASEAN effectively limits the ability of many communities to exercise their environmental rights, as they would be accessing false information. ASEAN member-states should enact new laws and policies to avoid such scenarios and help reduce the risks that millions of citizens would face.

It should be emphasized that developing the ERF is an entirely different matter from effectively implementing it. Yet there is no question that establishing this framework is not an option, but a necessity for the ASEAN to address the environmental crises that face it and are still to come.



## THE MANILA TIMES

### [Napocor, German-PH Chamber collaborate for green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies](#)

THE German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GPCCI) and the National Power Corp. (Napocor) announced their joint interest in supporting the implementation of a feasibility study to investigate green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies in off-grid areas of the Philippines.

This collaboration aims to promote knowledge transfer, modernization opportunities, and the economic achievement of clean and affordable energy.

"Napocor is excited to partner with GPCCI in exploring the potential of green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies in off-grid areas," says Napocor President Fernando Martin Roxas. "With our mandate to provide electricity to rural areas and our commitment to optimizing power generation assets, this collaboration presents an opportunity to modernize power systems and reduce emissions. We believe this feasibility study will pave the way for a sustainable and climate-friendly energy transition in the Philippines."

The purpose of the joint project is to produce a comprehensive feasibility study titled "Feasibility Study for Green Hydrogen Technology in Off-Grid Areas in the Philippines."

This study aims to support the modernization of power generating assets in off-grid areas by exploring the potential replacement of diesel-powered systems with green hydrogen and fuel cell technologies. By doing so, the project aims to make a positive contribution to climate change by reducing emissions in an economically viable manner.

The project will be implemented in three phases. In Phase 1 (Set-Up and Coordination), two suitable sites will be selected based on criteria such as renewable resource availability, economic factors, accessibility and community support. The Napocor will provide technical and economic data, while GPCCI will assist in data gathering.

Phase 2 (Execution of Modelling and Presentation of Results) will involve the modeling of the selected sites by the Reiner Lemoine Institut (RLI) in collaboration with stakeholders. The results will be presented internally to the NPC and externally to interested parties through a technical event organized by GPCCI.

In Phase 3 (Evaluation of Project Results and Public Relations Work), GPCCI will launch an information campaign to disseminate the project's results through various channels, including interviews, podcasts, press releases and social media.

"The Philippines is experiencing rapid growth in energy demand, and the existing fossil fuel power generation capacity is unable to keep up with this growth in an environmentally friendly manner," says GPCCI President Stefan Schmitz.

"In light of the challenges related to energy supply and rising fuel and transportation costs that contribute to high electricity prices, the GPCCI and Napocor recognize the potential of hydrogen technology and fuel cells as an alternative energy solution for off-grid areas."

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