



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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#### [Philippine competitiveness drops 4 spots in global study](#)

By: Jessica Fenol

The Philippines dropped 4 places in the 2023 World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) based on several metrics across economic performance, government and business efficiency and infrastructure.

### BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Jovee Marie de la Cruz

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livelihoods and promote climate resiliency among farmers and fishers affected by the onslaught of Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai).

## **CNN**

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By: Kathleen Magramo

The world's highest peaks are at risk of losing up to 80% of their volume by the end of the century with profound consequences for millions of people under worst case climate scenarios, international scientists in Nepal warned in a new report.

## **MANILA BULLETIN**

### **[How our native trees and fruits will save us someday](#)**

By: Gregg Yan

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### **[The future of electric vehicle](#)**

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## **TOL VIEWS**

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## **GREENPEACE**

### **[The Climate Crisis is a Threat to Our Lives and the Economy – Greenpeace USA Response to the Dollars and Degrees Senate Hearing](#)**

In response to today's Senate Committee on the Budget Dollars and Degrees hearing, Alice Madden, Policy and Political Director at Greenpeace USA, said: "In the 2022 election cycle, the oil and gas industry funneled more than \$50 million to support their

back-pocket candidates in the closest races. These same candidates continually present a false choice between a healthy economy and a healthy planet. Today we saw that with fossil fuels – we get neither.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[Romualdez assures American businesses of investor-friendly policies](#)**

By: Antonio Iñares

House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez assured American businesses on Wednesday of the commitment of Congress to support the initiatives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. aimed at making the Philippines a more investor-friendly environment.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[Iloilo to mainstream NCDs in health programs](#)**

By: Perla Lena

The provincial government here will adjust the direction of its health program to include non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. likened to climate change, a lingering condition that can cause natural disasters.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Building a sustainable future with ESG and technology](#)**

By: Kay Calpo-Lugtu

ENVIRONMENTAL, social and corporate governance (ESG) is slowly making its way in conversations in the enterprise market, broadening the many ways to address organizational value among stakeholders. It includes the environment as an additional stakeholder, among others, and is recommended to be incorporated in an organization's strategy. In addition, it covers the treatment of an organization's employees and stakeholders, and its adherence to ethical and transparent governance practices. Alongside the rise of ESG, technology has emerged as a powerful tool for driving positive change and enabling sustainable practices. This intersection of ESG and technology highlights how technology can be leveraged to advance environmental sustainability, social responsibility and effective governance, effectively aligning to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[Climate goals need clean energy surge in Global South: IEA](#)**

By: Marlowe Hood

Financing for clean energy in developing and emerging economies excluding China must increase seven-fold within a decade if global warming is to be capped at tolerable levels, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

### **[Improved agriculture crucial for post-pandemic recovery – Marcos](#)**

By: Alexis Romero

The Philippines cannot recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic if its farming sector does not improve, President Marcos said yesterday.

### **[\[Opinion\] Conserve water](#)**

According to a study, more than half of the world's largest lakes and reservoirs have shrunk since the early 1990s. The same study places the blame on climate change.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

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### **[PH, G77 Chair To Advance Developing Nations' Positions In UNFCCC](#)**

The Philippines and the Group of 77 (G77) through its chair Cuba have committed to work closely and further reinforce coordination to advance the positions of developing nations in all relevant meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **Philippine competitiveness drops 4 spots in global study**

By: Jessica Fenol

The Philippines dropped 4 places in the 2023 World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) based on several metrics across economic performance, government and business efficiency and infrastructure.

The Philippines fell to 52nd out of 64 economies from 48th in 2022, according to the WCY published by the International Institute of Management Development (IMD) since 1989. IMD's Philippine partner is the Asian Institute of Management Rizalino Navarro Policy Center for Competitiveness (AIM RSN PCC).

"The Philippines suffered declines in 3 out of 4 main factors or dimensions of competitiveness," the study showed.

In Asia, the Philippines is ranked 13th out of 14 economies for 6 consecutive years, it said.

The biggest decline was seen in the "government efficiency" factor, dropping to 52nd spot to 48th, the study showed. The segment analyzed efficiencies in public finance, tax policy, institutional framework, business legislation and societal framework, WYC said.

Business efficiency went down to 40th this year from 39th in 2022, while the infrastructure factor fell to 58th spot from 57th, it said.

The Philippines' economic performance, meanwhile, improved by 13 places to 40th this year from 53rd in 2022, the WCY said. This was driven by the improvements in domestic economy, employment, and prices, the study showed.

"Some of the challenges that the Philippines faces in 2023 include sustaining economic recovery and growth momentum amidst global downside risks, strengthening social protection and healthcare systems for inclusive development, addressing learning gaps to improve local education system, investing in sustainable infrastructure to reduce climate change vulnerability, and reinforcing efficient public management strategies to support fiscal responsibility," the report said.

Meanwhile, the top 3 most competitive economies in 2023 are Denmark, Ireland and Switzerland. In the Asia Pacific, the top 3 are Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong, according to the WCY.

According to the World Competitiveness Center, this year's results took into consideration the impact of global headwinds such as inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine were excluded due to limited data reliability.

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[Odette-hit farmers to get aid from Japan, FAO](#)**

By: Jovee Marie de la Cruz

The Department of Agriculture (DA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Japan have forged cooperation to restore agri-fishery-based livelihoods and promote climate resiliency among farmers and fishers affected by the onslaught of Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai).

Titled “Project for Restoring Livelihoods and Enhancing Resilience of Farmers and Fisherfolk Affected by Typhoon,” the DA, in a statement late Tuesday, said the project entails the use of the ¥251-million donation from the government of Japan for 4,000 small-scale coconut farmers, landless coconut farm workers, coconut farmers’ organizations, fishers, and fisherfolk organizations in 12 municipalities.

“Back-to-back crises—conflicts, typhoons, flooding, earthquakes—make it difficult for many farmers and fishers in the Philippines to rebound as they struggle to replace what was lost or damaged—be it seeds and tools, livestock, or fishing gear. Getting vulnerable families back to producing food and earning an income and helping them withstand the next disaster is at the heart of FAO’s work in the Philippines,” FAO Representative in the Philippines Lionel Dabaddie said.

Dubbed the second costliest typhoon in the Philippines, the calamity struck the country in December 2021. As of February 21, 2022, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (NDRRMC) reported 10,607,625 affected persons in 11 regions and P51.8 billion worth of damages—P17.7 billion of which belong to the agri-fishery sector.

According to Project Team Leader Gay Therese M. Bucol, the project takes a bottom-up planning approach and is made up of interventions that are unique per province.

“This guarantees its relevance and responsiveness to the needs of the beneficiaries, as well as its alignment and complementation to the plans, priorities, and ongoing projects of the local government,” said Bucol.

According to the DA, the municipalities of Carlos P. Garcia, Mabini, and Ubay in Bohol will receive assorted seeds and fertilizers for vegetable production, island-born Bohol native chicken strain and feeds for poultry and egg production, water pumps as irrigation support, milkfish fingerlings and fish feeds, and drift gill nets.

It added that the provincial government of Southern Leyte will implement a “one municipality, one product” scheme among the municipalities of Bontoc, Tomas Oppus,

Malitbog, and Limasawa with priority for sweet corn, peanuts, and vegetables. Farmers' associations will be given vermicomposting facilities and native chicken production support, while individual fishers and fisherfolk's associations will receive milkfish and tilapia fingerlings, feeds, and other fishing equipment.

Meanwhile, the agency said the municipalities of Surigao City, San Francisco, Gigaquit, Mainit, and Sta. Monica in Surigao del Norte will be encouraged to partake in climate-resilient agriculture practices such as the use of integrated vegetable production technology under protected culture for banana and cassava production.

Vermicomposting facilities and poultry and egg production will also be provided to qualified farmers organizations. Fisherfolk in the province will be entitled to seaweed propagules and other planting materials, tilapia fingerlings and feeds, and other fishing equipment.

To complement the agriculture and fishery inputs that will be distributed through the project, the DA said Farmer's Field Schools, Training of Trainers for farmer-leaders and agricultural extension workers, and season-long and short-term trainings on selected and specialized topics will also be conducted at the local level.

"Natural disaster itself is a tragedy, but people have the power to get better. I really hope that this project will contribute to the revitalization of affected farmers and fishermen," said Embassy of Japan in the Philippines First Secretary and Agriculture Attache Tachikawa Junpei.

For his part, Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban said the partnership with FAO, the Japanese government, and the local municipalities involved in the project is necessary to restore agricultural production in vulnerable areas, especially those that were affected by the calamity.

"I assure you the full support and commitment of the department—from the Regional Field Offices to its attached agencies, namely the Philippine Coconut Authority and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources—to effectively address the needs of the beneficiaries and enhance their resilience to climate change impacts."



## CNN

### [Himalayan glaciers could lose up to 80% of their ice by 2100 as temperatures rise, report warns](#)

By: Kathleen Magramo

The world's highest peaks are at risk of losing up to 80% of their volume by the end of the century with profound consequences for millions of people under worst case climate scenarios, international scientists in Nepal warned in a new report.

The report, published Tuesday by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), examined the impact of climate change on an area stretching 1.6 million square miles (4.1 million square kilometers) from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east.

The report found that glaciers in the Hindu Kush and Himalaya mountain range region melted 65% faster in the 2010s compared with the previous decade, which suggests higher temperatures are already having an impact.

Ice and snow in the region feeds 12 rivers that provide freshwater to two billion people in 16 countries, including China, India and Pakistan, and eventually too much water will eventually lead to too little, the report warns.

The same group published a report in 2019, which found that even in the most optimistic case, where average global warming was limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures, the region would lose at least one third of its glaciers.

The group's updated report shows those projections have since worsened.

With between 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius of warming, the world's highest mountain region stands to lose 30% to 50% of its volume by 2100, the latest report said.

If the world breaches 3 degrees Celsius of warming, glaciers in Nepal and Bhutan in the eastern Himalayas are at risk of losing 75% of their ice, and by just one degree more, that ticks up to 80%, according to the report.

The annual mean global near-surface temperature for each year between 2023 and 2027 is predicted to be between 1.1 degrees Celsius and 1.8 degree Celsius higher than the 1850-1900 average, according to the World Meteorological Organization

Scientists consider 1.5 degrees of warming as a key tipping point, beyond which the chances of extreme flooding, drought, wildfires and food shortages could increase dramatically.

“In all three pillars of climate action – in mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage – we are at a standstill or going the wrong way; while the consequences of inaction are accelerating by the day,” Prof. Saleemul Huq, director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh was quoted as saying in the report.

#### Rapid warming and glacial melt

About 240 million people live in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, many of their cultures dating back thousands of years, and another the 1.65 billion live downstream.

Many high mountain communities depend on glacial waters to irrigate crops and to maintain their livestock, but the accelerated melting would inundate farmlands downstream followed by periods of drought as water sources dry up, the report said.

The erosion of glacial slopes also heightens the likelihood of floods, landslides and avalanches, increasing the risk to millions living in mountain communities.

“For them, this is home, and their livelihoods are mostly dependent on agriculture, livestock, tourism, and medicinal and aromatic plants,” report co-author Amina Maharjan, a senior specialist in livelihoods and migration at ICIMOD.

“What we realized in doing this assessment is that all of these are very, very sensitive to slight changes in climatic conditions and cryospheric conditions in the region,” she said.

For example, snowfall patterns are increasingly out of sync with seasonality, blanketing pastures and shrinking the grazing land for livestock, Maharjan explained. Over the past half decade, yaks have died due to a lack of food in India, Nepal and Bhutan, leaving farmers with huge income losses, she added.

The remoteness and rough terrain of the region also means that mountain communities often lack access to immediate disaster response.

“The glaciers of the Hindu Kush Himalaya are a major component of the Earth system. With two billion people in Asia reliant on the water that glaciers and snow here hold, the consequences of losing this cryosphere are too vast to contemplate. We need leaders to act now to prevent catastrophe,” said Izabella Koziell, deputy director general of the ICIMOD.

Unique species are also threatened by adverse changes to the climate of the diverse ecosystems that include tropical and subtropical rainforests, temperate coniferous forest and cold deserts, the report said.

Fourteen species of butterflies have already become extinct from the Murree Hills of Pakistan, according to the report, while endemic frog species are among the most impacted by climate change as they experience breeding problems and developmental deformities.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [How our native trees and fruits will save us someday](#)

By: Gregg Yan

What are the most familiar Pinoy fruits? Mangoes, bananas, pineapples, and papayas probably come to mind—but did you know that Philippine forests harbor hundreds of lesser-known fruits, nuts, and herbs?

Alupag or the Philippine lychee tastes like the lychees originally imported from China. Saba or native bananas are loved by millions of Pinoys. Kamansi is our local version of langka. Sticky Tibig fruits are produced by our native fig trees. In our mountains sprout sour berries like Alingaro, Bignay, and Sapinit. And though most of the world's mango trees originally hailed from India, we have our own indigenous mangoes like Pahutan and the fragrant Kuini.

The Philippines has strong agrobiodiversity resources. The pandemic and post-pandemic periods, coupled with intensifying climate change effects, have highlighted the importance of agricultural diversity and biodiversity-friendly agriculture, plus the global rethinking of our agriculture and food systems. These new concepts now form the foundation for economically viable, resilient, and sustainable agriculture.

#### Native trees and plants in UP Diliman

Inside the sprawling UP Diliman Campus in Quezon City lies the UP Institute of Biology and Energy Development Corporation's (UPIB-EDC) Threatened Species Arboretum. An arboretum is a botanical garden that specializes in trees. Inaugurated in 2014, the one-hectare park features over 70 native tree species and serves two vital functions—as a gene bank for endangered trees in case wild populations drop below sustainable levels and to educate students and the greater public about the country's native flora.

“We have so many indigenous tree species that very few Pinoys know about,” explains EDC BINHI forester Roniño Gibe. “One of our goals is to popularize the conservation of our native plants, especially our threatened Philippine native trees.”

In general, native plants naturally occur throughout a country, whereas indigenous plants thrive only in particular locales. Endemic plants can only be found in one country, whereas naturalized plants are exotic imports, which have settled into new countries over several centuries.

The Philippines hosts at least 10,107 plant species, as of a 2013 study by Barcelona et al. Over 57 percent of the country's plants are endemic, as per a 1996 study by Oliver and Heaney. The great majority of plants currently cultivated in Pinoy orchards, farms, and gardens, however, are exotic or naturalized plants originally imported from other countries.

Pineapples, for instance, came from South America, papayas from Mexico, lanzones from Malaysia. The ubiquitous trees found in many abandoned lots, like sampaloc and aratilis, came from Africa and Central America, respectively. Despite being called the Philippine lemon, even the iconic calamansi probably originated from the Himalayas.

Some native Philippine plants, however, successfully broke through as mainstream products. "The pili nut is a great example of an indigenous tree, which became popular, with a following both in the Bicol Region and abroad," explains botanist David Ples. Abaca, which is made from the fibrous stalks of a native Philippine banana, is another indigenous cash crop. "The key is to recognize these plants' value and create useful, viable products," adds David. As pili trees and abaca plants have become economically valuable, their survival over the next generations is assured. The same cannot be said for other Philippine tree species.

#### Philippine Agrobiodiversity resources

As per the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), biodiversity provides primary medicine for four billion people while agrobiodiversity improves the lives of one billion undernourished people.

"Our indigenous fruits, herbs, nuts, and other products can provide vital nourishment for Pinoys, who might not have ready access to mainstream food. Indigenous plants also have important vitamins and minerals that are sometimes deficient in the typical Pinoy diet," explains Department of Science and Technology Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI) senior science researcher Charina Javier. "But many of our indigenous flora are neglected and underused, so their potential to provide us with nutrients is not fully utilized."

The Philippine government has been working on the promotion of agrobiodiversity since 2015 and continues to achieve its agrobiodiversity targets under the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP). Its targets include maintaining and conserving the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and wild relatives, increasing agricultural areas devoted to all types of biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices, the formulation and adoption of enhanced Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUP) using the revised Housing Land Use

Regulatory Board (HLURB) framework, which incorporates ecologically-sound agricultural land use plans and increasing the number of recognized nationally-important agricultural heritage systems (NIAHS).

In some protected areas, the encroachment of agricultural lands has become so evident that the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) signed Joint Administrative Order (JAO) 2021-01 or Mainstreaming Biodiversity-friendly Agricultural Practices (BDFAP) in and around protected areas and promoting the same in wider agricultural landscapes.

The United Nations Development Program's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (DENR-UNDP BIOFIN) is currently assisting the two national agencies to enable the implementation of the JAO through by developing an agrobiodiversity framework for the country.

"We should do all we can to strengthen local agrobiodiversity, such as promoting our native fruits," says DENR-UNDP BIOFIN national project manager Anabelle Plantilla. "Native and even naturalized plants can be used for a host of purposes. Alupidan and pandan leaves can be used to garnish dishes, batuan fruits for flavoring, and rattan vines to make furniture."

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According to the Forest Foundation Philippines, the promotion of native trees is beneficial for threatened native flora and fauna species as they help recover and expand forest habitats, protect watershed and freshwater resources, secure the livelihood of local people, and link protected areas with natural forests.

Food forests, where various combinations of cash-crops are planted in a natural setting, instead of the endless monocrop rows, which dominate large-scale agriculture, are slowly taking root.

At the Subic Bay Jungle Environment Survival Training (JEST) Camp, where participants learn to survive in a tropical rainforest, campers are taught how to make “jungle coffee” from Kupang seeds, how to use Gugo vines as “jungle soap,” how to fashion survival implements from bamboo, and which leaves one can chew on to help stave off hunger.

In the uplands of Sibalom in Panay, locals seasonally harvest the leaves and stems of bakan, balud, banban, and nito to make tourist souvenirs while locally grown tobacco leaves are ground and inserted into dried duhat leaves to make native cigarettes called Lomboy or Likit. Local knowledge is already boosting forest productivity.

“The United Nations Development Programme promotes ethical, natural ways not just to produce food and other vital resources, but to find alternative livelihood opportunities for communities living in or near forestlands, and that are supportive of the UN Sustainable Development Goals,” adds UNDP resident representative to the Philippines Dr. Selva Ramachandran.

Established in 2012 and with a network comprising 41 countries in Africa, Europe, South and Central America, plus the Asia Pacific Region, DENR-UNDP-BIOFIN helps raise funds for smart agriculture to boost the productivity of ecosystems, while repurposing potentially harmful agricultural subsidies into effective conservation measures.

“Our forests serve many key functions. They provide habitats for wildlife, generate the oxygen we breathe, even offering us places to spiritually recharge,” concludes Anabelle. “We can make them worth more than logs or farmland by seeing them as our First-Nations people have for generations—as a pharmacy, a grocery, and an extension of our home.”

Visitors interested in learning more about native Philippine trees, fruits, nuts, and herbs can schedule a visit to the UPIB-EDC Arboretum in UP Diliman, where donations for upkeep and maintenance are appreciated.



## The future of electric vehicle

By: Senator Francis Tolentino

### TOL VIEWS

The globally shared issue on climate change and humanity's attempts to mitigate its impact have radically altered the ways by which people, goods and information travel. From the ancient tools for travelling to the more modernized vehicles of the contemporary world, transportation indeed plays a pivotal role in driving development and growth.

While climate change is, sadly, irreversible, the birth of electric vehicles (EV) gave birth as well to a deeper understanding and appreciation of how cleaner power sources to fuel transportation, land travel in particular, can help in reducing the threat of global warming. The use of electricity instead of fuel to power up vehicles is generally viewed to be a cleaner technology. Carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels remains at the top of factors that contribute to climate change. The increased demand for more transportation tools driven by a rapidly increasing population and hence, the need to meet the diverse needs of this growing populace resulted to more and more vehicles on the road, silently choking us and our earth to death.

The production of electric vehicles is a stable industry in more affluent countries as Europe, the United States, China and Japan. In Southeast Asia, electric powered vehicles are widely accepted in Singapore and Thailand. In the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, however, fossil fuelled vehicles remain preferred over rechargeable EVs. While this technology is surely the better option, a lack of deeper understanding of its benefits blocks greater appreciation of EVs' critical role in our common pursuit for climate change mitigation and ecological preservation.

The Department of Energy estimates a growth both in numbers and in support for the use of EVs. Some 2.45 million electric vehicles are expected to be on the road by the end of President Bongbong Marcos' term in 2028, alongside the establishment of 65,000 charging stations across the nation. Recognizing the gains that may be derived from using EVs, the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA) or RA 11697 passed on May 2022 carved a clearer path for the electric vehicle industry in the Philippines. The suspension of tariffs for imported electric vehicles and the reduced tariffs on hybrid vehicles resulted in increased public interest and positive perception on EVs.

The stability and sustainability of the EV industry in the Philippines, we have yet to determine, but we remain with high hopes. Of course, creating awareness and

generating support for this novel technology is equally important. If our goal is to end our age-old dependence on petroleum products to fuels and steer the Philippine economic engine, then there is much hope in the EV option.

## **GREENPEACE**

### **[The Climate Crisis is a Threat to Our Lives and the Economy – Greenpeace USA Response to the Dollars and Degrees Senate Hearing](#)**

In response to today's Senate Committee on the Budget Dollars and Degrees hearing, Alice Madden, Policy and Political Director at Greenpeace USA, said: "In the 2022 election cycle, the oil and gas industry funneled more than \$50 million to support their back-pocket candidates in the closest races. These same candidates continually present a false choice between a healthy economy and a healthy planet. Today we saw that with fossil fuels – we get neither.

"Between 2010 and 2019, the United States experienced 119 climate disasters that each caused damages of \$1 billion or more. That's more than double the previous decade. The consequences of the climate crisis are wreaking havoc on our health and our economy. We have many options to tackle it by transitioning to a clean energy economy that will create up to 25 million good-paying jobs across every zip code in America, jump-starting the economic recovery and positioning America to compete in a world that runs on clean technologies, not fossil fuels."

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [Romualdez assures American businesses of investor-friendly policies](#)

By: Antonio Iñares

House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez assured American businesses on Wednesday of the commitment of Congress to support the initiatives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. aimed at making the Philippines a more investor-friendly environment.

Speaking to members of the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines (AmCham) at their June General Membership Luncheon Meeting at the Fairmont Hotel, Romualdez emphasized the partnership between the Executive and Legislative branches in the nation's economic growth and investment attraction.

"The 19th Congress, in partnership with President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., is committed to creating an environment that fosters economic growth and attracts investments," Romualdez said.

"As Speaker of the House of Representatives, it is my duty to promote policies that enhance the growth and prosperity of our nation, and I believe that our partnership with the American business community is vital to achieving these goals," he added.

Romualdez said that Congress is committed to addressing infrastructure development, a key driver of economic growth. He noted that their efforts aim to rectify issues that have been stalling progress. The government's "Build Better More" program, he said, stays at the forefront of development initiatives.

"We aim to strengthen our infrastructure through the passage of landmark bills. Congress would push for legislation that streamlines the permitting process, promotes public-private partnerships, and ensures the sustainable financing of infrastructure projects," Romualdez said.

Romualdez also emphasized the commitment of Congress to enhancing the country's education and skills development systems to remain competitive in the global economy. He said that they would prioritize measures to improve the business environment, including tax reforms promoting simplicity, fairness, and competitiveness.

“We will also work towards easing regulatory burdens and enhancing transparency to create a more business-friendly climate that attracts both local and foreign investors,” he said.

Romualdez also said the 19th Congress would focus on sustainable development, transitioning to renewable energy sources, and addressing climate change. They also plan to enhance the justice system’s efficiency, tackle corruption, and safeguard citizens’ rights and freedoms.

He said that before adjourning its First Regular Session this month, the 19th Congress had approved 33 out of the 42 priority measures of the Marcos administration, three of which have been signed into law.

He cited the Maharlika Investment Fund bill, which seeks to create the country’s first-ever sovereign investment fund, as an example of approved measures. This fund, Romualdez noted, “is designed to promote economic development by making strategic and profitable investments in key sectors including public road networks, tollways, green energy, water, agro-industrial ventures, and telecommunications.”

As the bill awaits Marcos’ signature, it is expected to become a major funding source for the administration’s large-scale infrastructure projects.

Romualdez noted that the ongoing global conflicts and the pandemic have caused financial disruptions and reversed the country’s economic gains, necessitating an aggressive approach to expanding the country’s revenue sources.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### Iloilo to mainstream NCDs in health programs

By: Perla Lena

The provincial government here will adjust the direction of its health program to include non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor Jr. likened to climate change, a lingering condition that can cause natural disasters.

“This is actually one of the most serious problems in the area of health. It does not get our attention every day. We want to have an adjustment in our direction. With the World Health Organization and the DOH (Department of Health), we want to give more attention every day,” Defensor said in a press conference to launch Phase 3 of the Healthy Hearts Program at the Casa Real in Iloilo City on Wednesday.

WHO Philippines Country Representative Dr. Rui Paulo de Jesus, in the same press conference, cited DOH statistics showing that 70 percent of deaths in the country were due to non-communicable diseases.

“The important thing for all of you to know is that almost all non-communicable diseases are preventable. That’s the bottom line why we launch(ed) this program,” de Jesus said.

Defensor said the 70 percent mortality is very serious and can be considered at the level of a national emergency.

“The way we see it we should deal with it like climate change. Everybody is talking about climate change when we talk about the environment. We want to give the same treatment when we talk about NCD,” he added.

Meanwhile, 16 additional towns from the province are recipients of technical assistance that would enhance their management of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) under Phase 3 of the program, which was piloted in the first district of Iloilo in 2021.

DOH Western Visayas Center for Health Development Director Adriano Suba-an said the expansion is eyed to further improve the service delivery of NCD-related diseases in health facilities, such as detection and control, creation of local government programs, and continuous assessment of risk factors to the community.

Barangay health workers are trained to do simple blood pressure tests.

Those who are hypertensive are provided with maintenance medicines and given a follow-up check-up by health workers.

The expansion will be implemented in the municipalities of Mina, New Lucena, Zarraga, Dueñas, San Enrique, Anilao, Banate, Ajuy, Concepcion, Lemery, Batad, Carles, Badiangan, Janiuay, Lambunao, and Alimodian.

Almost 25,000 of the population of the first district were tested for hypertension.

“As of now, 80 percent of the patients with hypertension exhibited controlled blood pressure,” Suba-an said.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### Building a sustainable future with ESG and technology

By: Kay Calpo-Lugtu

ENVIRONMENTAL, social and corporate governance (ESG) is slowly making its way in conversations in the enterprise market, broadening the many ways to address organizational value among stakeholders. It includes the environment as an additional stakeholder, among others, and is recommended to be incorporated in an organization's strategy. In addition, it covers the treatment of an organization's employees and stakeholders, and its adherence to ethical and transparent governance practices. Alongside the rise of ESG, technology has emerged as a powerful tool for driving positive change and enabling sustainable practices. This intersection of ESG and technology highlights how technology can be leveraged to advance environmental sustainability, social responsibility and effective governance, effectively aligning to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

In understanding the ESG framework, it is important to consider the dimensions that are part of it:

Environmental sustainability. Technology has become a crucial ally in addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time. From renewable energy solutions to resource management systems, technological innovations have the potential to reshape industries and reduce our ecological footprint. For instance, advancements in solar and wind energy have made renewable sources more efficient and cost-effective, paving the way for increased adoption and reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Smart grids, enabled by advanced data analytics and Internet of Things devices, offer optimized energy distribution and consumption, minimizing waste and promoting sustainability.

Furthermore, technology has facilitated the development of eco-friendly transportation alternatives. Electric vehicles (EVs) have gained prominence, aided by advancements in battery technology and charging infrastructure. With their zero-emission capabilities, EVs contribute to reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, thereby combating climate change. Additionally, emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles and ridesharing platforms have the potential to improve traffic efficiency and reduce the number of cars on the road, further promoting sustainable mobility.

Plant alternatives and going meatless are also slowly gaining prominence in the market, with plant-based and vegan options almost included on the menu of dining establishments. These dietary preferences are also considered as planet-based diets



and are friendly to the environment given the minimal footprint required compared to farming animals.

**Social responsibility.** The social aspect of ESG becomes essential especially in a country like the Philippines, where most of the population is marginally poor and majority of the businesses are classified as MSMEs. This allows organizations to consider these aspects in terms of inclusion overall — not just in the financial aspect but the many other things that are necessary in the age of technology and digital.

ESG places a strong emphasis on a company's social impact and responsibility toward employees, communities and society. Technology plays a vital role in fostering social responsibility by enabling inclusive and equitable practices. Accessible and affordable technologies, such as mobile devices and internet connectivity, have empowered marginalized communities and bridged the digital divide. These technologies have facilitated access to education, health care, financial services and information, contributing to socioeconomic development and empowerment.

Moreover, technology has facilitated the rise of social entrepreneurship and impact investing. Social media platforms have become powerful tools for raising awareness, mobilizing resources and fostering social change. Crowdfunding platforms allow individuals to support causes and initiatives they believe in, promoting community involvement and enabling grassroots movements. By leveraging technology, companies can embrace diversity and inclusion, promote fair labor practices and enhance their social license to operate.

**Effective governance.** The governance component of ESG focuses on ethical and transparent business practices, responsible leadership and accountability. Technology has significantly enhanced transparency and accountability through advanced data analytics, blockchain technology and artificial intelligence. These tools enable companies to track and report their environmental impact, monitor supply chains for ethical practices and ensure compliance with regulations and standards.

Blockchain, in particular, holds great promise in enhancing governance practices. Its decentralized and immutable nature ensure transparency and traceability, making it valuable in supply chain management, fair trade certification and combating fraud. Additionally, artificial intelligence can assist in identifying patterns of misconduct, detecting potential risks and enhancing corporate governance frameworks.

Similarly, we have seen banks put effort in the marginalized sector to access financial inclusivity, creating products and services that would be more relatable for them such as

"pasaload," a mini bayad center, even doing financial transactions even without a bank account. Banks enable access to digital services as well, eliminating the need to have physical cash and hence can cater to more customers.

This empowerment of the mass market to be their own entrepreneurial versions of themselves, even if challenges such as business capital may be present, is an example of incorporating ESG. Doing so will help foster a more sustainable business in the long term, with benefits enjoyed by all stakeholders.

The convergence of ESG and technology presents immense opportunities for building a sustainable future. By harnessing the power of technology, companies can reduce their environmental footprint, promote social responsibility and strengthen governance practices. However, it is essential to ensure that technological advancements are guided by ethical considerations and aligned with the principles of ESG. Collaboration among stakeholders, including businesses, governments and civil society, is crucial for maximizing the positive impact of technology on ESG goals. Together, we can leverage technology as a force for good and create a more sustainable and equitable world for future generations.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [Climate goals need clean energy surge in Global South: IEA](#)

By: Marlowe Hood

Financing for clean energy in developing and emerging economies excluding China must increase seven-fold within a decade if global warming is to be capped at tolerable levels, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

To keep Paris climate temperature goals in play, annual investment for non-fossil fuel energy in these countries will need to jump from \$260 billion to nearly \$2 trillion, the intergovernmental agency said in a report.

"Financing clean energy in the emerging and developing world is the fault line of reaching international climate goals," IEA executive director Fatih Birol told journalists in a briefing Tuesday.

The report comes on the eve of the two-day Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris, which seeks to galvanize support for revamping the mid-20th century architecture governing financial flows from rich to developing nations.

Speeding the transition from dirty to clean energy, and helping the Global South cope with and prepare for devastating climate impacts are high on the summit agenda.

Virtually all of the nearly 800 million people lacking electricity and the 2.4 billion without access to clean cooking fuels are in poor and emerging countries.

Under current policy trends, one third of the rise in energy use in these nations over the next decade will be met by burning fossil fuels, the main driver of global warming, the IEA warned.

"Clean energy investments is increasing gradually -- this is a good news," said Birol.

"The bad news is that more than 90 percent of that increase in clean energy since the Paris Agreement in 2015 comes from advanced economies and China."

"Only 10 percent comes from the emerging and developing countries," he added. "We need to change this trend."

Solar is cheapest

With China included in the calculation, private and public money pouring into renewables and other forms of carbon neutral energy will need to more than triple from \$770 billion in 2022 to about \$2.5 trillion per year by the early 2030s.

Investment must remain at those levels until mid-century to help keep Earth's average surface temperature "well below" two degrees Celsius, and 1.5C if possible, the Paris climate treaty's binding and aspirational targets, respectively.

The potential for rapidly ramping up renewable energy is there, according to the report.

At least 40 percent of the global solar radiation reaching the planet lands on sub-Saharan Africa, and solar energy is now the cheapest source of electricity generation across almost the entire world.

And yet, nearly ten times more solar PV capacity was installed last year in China -- some 100 GW -- than across the entire African continent.

Sunny sub-Saharan Africa generates less solar electricity than the Netherlands, Birol noted.

According to the report, two-thirds of the finance for clean energy projects in emerging and developing economies excluding China will need to come from the private sector.

Today's \$135 billion in annual private financing for clean energy in these economies must rise to about a trillion a year within the next decade.

To meet both climate and sustainability goals, clean energy investment in emerging and developing economies should be concentrated in four areas, according to the IEA.

Just over a third should go into low-emissions generation, mainly solar and wind. Another third is needed to improve efficiency in end-use sectors, such as cooling and electric transport.

A quarter is required for electricity grids and storage capacity, while just under 10 percent goes to low-emission fuels and so-called carbon, capture and storage (CCS), which removes CO<sub>2</sub> from the exhaust of gas or coal power plants and heavy industry.

## Improved agriculture crucial for post-pandemic recovery – Marcos

By: Alexis Romero

The Philippines cannot recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic if its farming sector does not improve, President Marcos said yesterday.

In a speech during the 125th anniversary celebration of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Quezon City, Marcos said the problems that the administration is facing go beyond providing sufficient food that people can afford.

“One of the great priorities of this administration is to pull out of the pandemic economy. And every analysis, even it is not conducted by farmers, even if it is done by banks, by the World Bank, by the ADB, they always say that ‘your economy won’t recover if your agriculture does not improve’ because everything that we do in the economy is anchored on a resilient and robust agriculture sector,” Marcos, who is also the agriculture secretary, said, referring to the Asian Development Bank.

“That is how important your work is. It is not just about feeding people but the recovery of the Philippines after the pandemic. Let us always keep that in the back of our mind so we will always remember that this work is not just something that you do because you cannot find another job, you cannot find another work,” he added.

Marcos said agriculture is and “will always be an important contributor” to the economy.

He said that in the first quarter of the year, the sector grew by 2.2 percent while contributing 9.1 percent to the country’s total gross domestic product.

“Let us always bear in mind that the agriculture sector plays a major and significant role. Enhancing the agriculture sector is tantamount to improving the Philippines,” Marcos said in Filipino.

He expressed optimism that the targets set by the DA would be achieved.

“There are a lot of good people in the Department of Agriculture... They did not think of anything but find ways to improve the lives of our farmers, to strengthen our food supply. And that is why I am sure that...the goals that we have set for ourselves in the next few years...are goals that we can achieve because we have all the different elements that are required,” he said. “We have the expertise. We have the experience. We have the knowledge. We have the motivation to make things work. And so that is why – that is what we are trying to do to put all your efforts into a single plan that everyone can follow.”

Marcos did not provide specifics on the targets that he said were attainable.

He also did not mention anything about his promise to lower the price of rice to P20 per kilo.

‘Work together’

The President said the goals of the agency would be achieved if there is coordination among its personnel.

He cited the need to study forces that could affect the performance of the farm sector such as climate change, decreasing productivity, diminishing natural resources and changes in the market.

“But I cannot say that we can do it without any of you. We have to be together. We have to work together. I know that it is something that all of you want... Because with your help, we have harnessed the transformative potential of the agricultural sector in ensuring food sustainability, generating employment opportunities (and) mitigating poverty,” Marcos said.

He said the DA would continue to devise interventions to advance agri-fishery practices, improve the competitiveness of agri-fishery products and boost the income of our farmers and fisherfolk.

He urged the DA to continue the dialogues with experts, researchers and rural workers in order to solve the roots of lingering problems and adopt climate resilient and cutting-edge agricultural technologies.

“There is still a great deal of work to do. But it is on this note that I enjoin each of you to continue to exert all efforts to address the concerns of our sector, so we can achieve the goals we have set for ourselves, our sector and for our country,” Marcos said.

“As one department, let us continue to champion the well-being of our farmers, fisherfolk and rural communities. Let us promote agricultural productivity and resilience while also maintaining environmental stability, and let us nurture inclusivity and pride in the noble work of feeding our people.”

Smuggling

In an interview with journalists, Marcos said the agriculture sector’s value chain would be strengthened if smuggling and hoarding are addressed.

“We are making sure that the simple problems we are facing – rice smuggling, sugar smuggling, onion smuggling – will be stopped. We will do everything to stop them,” Marcos said.

He said the DA must also find ways to boost productivity to ensure that agricultural crops and livestock are affordable.

“Those two go hand-in-hand. The best way to improve, first of all, availability and to keep the prices down, is to have a good level of production so we won’t be a victim of imported inflation, which is happening now... we are forced to import,” he said.

“We are doing everything that we can to increase production in all aspects. I’m not talking only about rice and corn but also livestock and fisheries,” he added.

Marcos ended his speech by announcing that DA employees would receive a bonus.

“We have to meet. I have to see first how much our savings is but you will have a bonus,” he said.

Also present during DA’s anniversary were Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, Sen. Cynthia Villar, Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos and Lionel Dabbadie, country representative of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization.

## [Opinion] Conserve water

According to a study, more than half of the world's largest lakes and reservoirs have shrunk since the early 1990s. The same study places the blame on climate change.

Here in the Philippines we are experiencing our own share of water problems even as we officially enter the rainy season.

Angat Dam, which supplies water to 90% of Metro Manila, the other day recorded the highest daily drop in the water level from 186.55 meters to 186.15 meters or a decrease of at least 40 centimeters.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said the water level is 3.63 meters away from reaching its rule curve elevation of 182.52 meters, the level needed for the dam to function. The weather bureau added that even the rains last week failed to improve the water level.

What does this tell us? We can't afford to waste whatever water we have.

For those of us who have a water connection it is easy to take water for granted; all we have to do to get water is turn the faucet on. It is also easy for us to think that the rains - -which are happening more frequently these days-- will readily replenish our supply.

However it's not that simple. In the case of rains it's often "water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink" to quote a line in a classic poem. Water falling from the sky or gathering in the natural waterways doesn't always translate to drinkable water.

We must not forget that aside from the El Niño phenomenon, which is predicted to sustain a severe dry spell until early 2024, we are also facing more extreme weather because of climate change, which includes drier droughts.

It's good that the government has called on its offices as well as households to conserve water as well as energy. Now we have to do our part. Let's also not forget that we never miss the water until the well runs dry.



## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### PAGE ONE

#### [PH, G77 Chair To Advance Developing Nations' Positions In UNFCCC](#)

The Philippines and the Group of 77 (G77) through its chair Cuba have committed to work closely and further reinforce coordination to advance the positions of developing nations in all relevant meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Meeting on the sidelines of the recent 58th Session of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB58) of UNFCCC here, Climate Change Commission (CCC) Secretary Robert E.A. Borje and Group of 77 Chair Ambassador Pedro L. Pedroso Cuesta emphasized the need to align climate action agenda towards result-oriented SB and Conference of the Parties (COP).

Borje and Cuesta renewed the commitment of both delegations to work closely together and further reinforce coordination in the lead-up to the 28th COP28 to the UNFCCC in the United Arab Emirates in November 2023.

They said COP28 is a valuable opportunity to build on the gains of G77 and COP27 in Sharm-El-Sheikh in Egypt on Nov. 6-18, 2022.

Both officials discussed the need to further strengthen the positions of developing nations in loss and damage as well as in scaling and speeding up the delivery of commitments of industrialized nations to developing nations in terms of capacity building, technology development and transfer, as well as climate finance.

“Developing nations need to work even more closely under the ambit of the G77 to better articulate principled positions on climate change and make even more resonant our message on living up to commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement,” Borje, head of the Philippine delegation, said.

“The Philippines appreciates the work of Cuba as Chair of G77 and we will ensure we are a constructive partner to the Chair and to the G77 in advancing our shared objectives,” he added.

Cuesta is also head of the Cuba delegation to SB58 held from June 5 to 15 in Bonn, Germany.

## Ecosystem stewards

Borje and Monsignor John Kallarackal, head of delegation of the Holy See, also met on the sidelines of the SB58, underscoring the importance of cooperation in ramping education programs on both climate change and of human stewardship to better protect and manage ecosystems and natural resources.

They also agreed to explore ways by which stewardship could be pushed in appropriate fora within and outside the United Nations system.

“Education plays a crucial role in addressing climate change. We need to empower our youth and adults through education on intergenerational responsibility in order to change what is now a story of devastation into a story of transformation. We need to start them young,” Borje said.

Kallarackal, for his part, said promoting education was one of the efforts of the Holy See at the 27th COP27.

“The Holy See recognizes the importance of education in the fight against climate change, thus, promoted education, lifestyle and behavioral change, as well as lobbied for net-zero, in COP27,” he said.

They agreed that loss and damage funding (LDF) is vital to helping vulnerable countries to climate change, such as the Philippines, to recover quickly.

Borje emphasized that “expeditious, stable and predictable disbursement of LDF is key to helping developing countries to recover from the loss and damage resulting from the impacts of climate change.”

Both Borje and Kallarackal also recalled with great reflection Typhoon Yolanda and its impacts on the Philippines, underscoring the need to learn from lessons and continuing education to further increase awareness and capacities to address and respond to such severe extreme climate events.

Borje and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell also emphasized the need to continue working together “in a constructive manner” to ensure that the SB58 meetings and the COP28 would deliver outcomes and results, particularly for vulnerable developing nations.

Borje acknowledged the work of the UNFCCC Secretariat in providing a platform defined by “an enabling environment for discussion and cooperation,” with an emphasis on universal participation and inclusivity.

“The Philippines appreciates the work of the UNFCCC Secretariat and will continue to support all efforts that ensure that all relevant UNFCCC meetings are supported accordingly, both in terms of substance and operations,” Borje said.

Stiell, on the other hand, reassured that the UNFCCC Secretariat remained fully committed to the UNFCCC processes and was at the full disposal of Parties.

Both officials looked forward to continue coordinating in the leadup to COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates towards success, and support all efforts for meaningful and transformative outcomes of UNFCCC meetings.

**END=**