



NEWS ROUNDUP

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By: Arlene Burgos

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By: Daphne Ewing-Chow

The road to COP29, this year's United Nations Climate Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, feels like the buildup to a long-awaited climax after years of polarized debate on financing climate action for the world's most vulnerable countries. Against a global backdrop of geopolitical, economic, and social instability, the COP29 Presidency is hoping for a historic moment of renewed trust and collaboration on climate change at this year's climate talks.

JOURNAL ONLINE

[Groundbreaking project to strengthen climate resilience in Philippine agriculture](#)

The Department of Agriculture (DA), the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PAGASA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the "Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change" (APA) Project during a landmark inception workshop held from June 18 to 19 at Citadines Roces Quezon City. This pivotal initiative marks a significant stride in improving farmers' resilience in the face of mounting climate challenges.

MANILA STANDARD

[\[Opinion\] Mitigating climate change](#)

Climatologists and other experts are saying the effects of global warming are already bringing harm to human communities and the natural world.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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By: Marita Moaje

Over 90,000 seedlings were planted nationwide during a simultaneous tree-growing activity led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in celebration of Arbor Day.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MANILA BULLETIN

[\[Opinion\] Environment and ICT months: Building a technology-driven and future-proof Bagong Pilipinas](#)

By: Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman

June is almost over, but I cannot let this month pass without commemorating two important celebrations very close to my heart: Philippine Environment Month and National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Month.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

'Way past emergency:' Urgent but enlightened climate news reports cited at media forum

By: Arlene Burgos

Experts called the climate situation at "way past emergency"-levels and urged journalists to inform people about the state of the planet during an international gathering of media professionals Tuesday here.

Yet the discussions veered toward preference for an informed and calm reportage, in contrast to the "doom-and-gloom" headlines that have characterized alarmist climate-related storytelling.

Leading the charge was internationally renowned marine biologist Sylvia Earle who headlined Day 2 of the three-day International Media Conference (IMC) 2024 of the East-West Center, which gathered some 350 journalists and academics from over 30 countries at the PICC.

"You can't care if you do not know," Earle said during the conference's Tuesday morning plenary. She was referring to the need for people to be informed of the climate crisis.

Joeli Veitayaki, strategic adviser for the Blue Prosperity Fiji, who spoke about community-based solutions in Gau Island in Fiji, said "the time for being less desperate is way past... It's way past emergency and desperation."

Earle, an oceanographer who has logged more than 7,000 hours underwater across over 100 expeditions worldwide, said there is "great opportunity" to change the trajectory of worsening climate and "restore nature... take care of nature."

There are climate consequences to burning fossil fuel, for instance, Earle said, but urged, "using the knowledge that is now accessible... We can do this... But we can't just sit around and talk about it."

"Humans have become the greatest predators," she said, treating even wildlife as products, monetizing them, and in the process destroying the planet."

Joan Carling, executive director of Indigenous Peoples Rights International, meanwhile, urged journalists to "connect the dots."

"Through thorough and unbiased reporting... the media can bring these issues to light... to expose unjust climate action," Carling said.

"We say that climate change is the result of years of industrialization yet we continue to proceed that way... It's up to journalists to connect the dots," she said.

'Solutions journalism'

In a subsequent panel discussion among experts in climate reporting, Lagipoiva Cherelle Jackson, director of Climate Journalism at the Solutions Journalism Network cited the stark difference between climate reports that tended to "catastrophize" the news, and local reports especially from the Pacific Islands that spoke about what are being done, or would cite successes in these efforts.

These were branded in the conference as "solutions journalism."

"These kinds of stories were often told in local media... small newspapers. You'll never really see this in large newspapers," Jackson said, explaining that it had to do with the needed familiarity or exposure of the journalist to the local context.

"The utilization of indigenous knowledge, empowerment of local journalists... Utilizing platforms and amplification of news media... really amplifies the solution," she said. "The doom-and-gloom approach continues at the Global North... But journalists have been reporting on climate solution for many, many years."

Janet Steele, a Journalism professor from George Washington University noted that solutions journalism has been around a while, being called public journalism, or civic journalism.

Loosely, this kind of journalism has been described as the integration of journalism into the democratic process, seeking to not only inform the public, but engage them as well.

The East-West Center's IMC is held every two years in a major regional media hub, and discussed key issues in the region and common challenges and trends in media.

As the only regularly held media conference focused on Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the United States, IMC has grown into one of the region's premier gatherings of media professionals.

CNN

[Scientists identify new Antarctic ice sheet 'tipping point,' warning future sea level rise may be underestimated](#)

By: Laura Paddison

The Antarctic ice sheet is melting in a new, worrying way that scientific models used to project future sea level rise have not taken into account, suggesting current projections could be significantly underestimating the problem, according to a new study.

Scientists from the British Antarctic Survey found that warm ocean water is seeping beneath the ice sheet at its “grounding line” — the point at which the ice rises from the seabed and starts to float — causing accelerated melting which could lead to a tipping point, according to the report published Tuesday in the journal Nature Geoscience.

A tipping point refers to the threshold at which a series of small changes accumulate to push a system beyond a point of no return.

The melting works like this: relatively warm ocean water opens cavities in the ice, allowing more water to seep in, which causes more melting and larger cavities to form, and so on.

A small increase in ocean temperatures can have a very big impact on the amount of melting, the study found. As climate change heats up the oceans, the process speeds up.

“You get this kind of runaway feedback,” said Alex Bradley, an ice dynamics researcher at BAS and lead author of the paper. It behaves like a tipping point, he told CNN, “where you can have a very sudden shift in how much melting is happening in these places.”

This tipping point would play out through a faster flow of ice into the oceans, in a process not currently included in models of future sea level rise, Bradley said, suggesting “our projections of sea level rise might be significant underestimates,” he added.

The implications wouldn't be felt immediately, according to the study, but would see a higher rise in sea levels accumulating over tens and hundreds of years, threatening coastal communities around the world.

The study does not give time frames for when the tipping point might be reached, nor does it give figures for how much sea level rise can be expected. But the region is hugely significant: the Antarctic ice sheet already sheds an average of 150 billion metric tons of ice every year and, in its entirety, it holds enough water to raise global sea levels by around 190 feet (around 58 meters).

The study is not the first to point to Antarctica's vulnerabilities to the climate crisis. A slew of research points to the vulnerability of West Antarctica in particular, especially the Thwaites Glacier, known as the Doomsday Glacier for the catastrophic impact it could have on sea level rise.

But what surprised Bradley about this study, which used climate modeling to understand how this melting mechanism could affect the whole ice sheet, is that some of the most vulnerable glaciers were those in East Antarctica.

Eric Rignot, professor of Earth system science at the University of California at Irvine, who was not involved in the research, told CNN the study "encourages us to take a closer look at physical processes taking place in grounding zones."

"But this is a very complex, poorly observed region and a lot more research and field observations are needed," he cautioned, including establishing what processes control the intrusion of ocean water beneath the ice and exactly how this affects the ice melting.

Recent research from West Antarctica found melting at the base of glaciers was actually lower than expected, because it was being suppressed by a layer of colder, fresher water — although scientists still found a rapid retreat.

Ted Scambos, a glaciologist at the University of Colorado Boulder, said the new model developed by the BAS scientists "is potentially very important" but it should be looked at together with more recent findings, including mechanisms of ice melt as well as the impacts tides have on pumping seawater beneath the ice.

Bradley hopes the study will prompt more research into which regions might be most at risk and will give added impetus for policies to tackle the climate crisis. "With every small increase in ocean temperature, with every small increase in climate change, we get closer to these tipping points," he said.

DAILY TRIBUNE

Urban forests: The breathing life of Metro Manila

In Metro Manila, where concrete and steel dominate the skyline, urban forests offer services that reduce the impacts of urbanization and climate change.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, which stores carbon in their biomass and soil. Trees also produce oxygen, essential for all life forms.

Forests in metropolitans and cities help reduce the urban heat island effect, where city temperatures are higher than surrounding rural areas due to heat-absorbing materials and structures such as asphalt and buildings.

Trees provide shade and release water vapor through transpiration which cools the air. They also decrease the risk of flooding and erosion as their root systems enhance soil structure and permeability.

In densely populated cities like Metro Manila, air pollution poses a health risk. Urban forests filter and improve air quality. Trees remove pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and ozone from the air.

Beyond environmental benefits, urban forests are biodiversity hotspots as they offer nesting sites, shelter and food for birds, insects, and small mammals. They can also be planted with native tree species to promote the conservation of local flora and fauna and maintain ecological balance.

Access to green spaces is linked to health benefits as it promotes both physical and mental well-being. Studies have shown that exposure to green spaces reduces stress levels, lowers blood pressure and improves mood. Activities like walking, jogging or simply relaxing in urban forests contribute to better physical and mental health.

Urban forests serve as classrooms that provide educational opportunities about ecology, conservation and sustainability. Schools and organizations use urban forests for hands-on learning experiences to teach students and the public about the importance of environmental stewardship and biodiversity.

Urban forests also offer a natural laboratory for scientists and researchers to study ecological processes, climate impacts and conservation strategies, which contribute to scientific knowledge and environmental policy.

FORBES

[COP29 President Anticipates Climate Finance Breakthrough In Azerbaijan](#)

By: Daphne Ewing-Chow

The road to COP29, this year's United Nations Climate Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, feels like the buildup to a long-awaited climax after years of polarized debate on financing climate action for the world's most vulnerable countries. Against a global backdrop of geopolitical, economic, and social instability, the COP29 Presidency is hoping for a historic moment of renewed trust and collaboration on climate change at this year's climate talks.

Minister Mukhtar Babayev, Azerbaijan's Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources and the President Designate of COP29 is confident in the potential for "the Finance COP" to transform ambition into tangible action for Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and other countries and regions most impacted by climate change.

He sees Azerbaijan's COP presidency as pivotal in rebuilding trust and alignment between the global north and south through a new climate financing target sustained by developed countries. His message ahead of COP29 is clear: universal cooperation and commitment are a must.

Minister Babayev and I make plans to discuss these issues in a shaded outdoor seating area at an international development conference. He arrives punctually with his Chief of Staff, exuding an approachable demeanor and a profound awareness of global issues that extend far beyond his geographic sphere of influence.

The sweltering heat is inescapable—a poignant reminder of the climate crisis we discuss.

For the first time, global warming has surpassed 1.5°C over the course of an entire year, with forecasters predicting another year of extreme heat, following the hottest year on record. As we sit on an outdoor bench, discussing climate finance at COP29, I silently grimace at the sweat pouring down my back—a stark contrast to Mr. Babayev's calm focus.

Mukhtar Babayev is acutely aware of the unequal global burden of climate change. In April, during the Petersberg Climate Dialogue in Berlin, he passionately reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to the Paris Agreement, stressing that failure to limit global

warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels would disproportionately harm vulnerable communities worldwide.

Despite his long tenure as an executive at SOCAR, Azerbaijan's state oil company, Mr. Babayev spent much of his career addressing and mitigating the company's environmental impacts. Over the past six years in his ministerial role and now as COP29's President Designate, he has expanded his environmental advocacy to emphasize global inclusivity and collaboration.

"We must demonstrate that the world is ready to work together to support each other," he asserts, expressing frustration with recent challenges achieving consensus among nations. "This is a very critical time, not only for Azerbaijan but for the entire world, to find solutions."

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 60th meeting in Bonn, Germany, highlighted the ambiguity surrounding climate finance for vulnerable countries. At COP29, nearly 200 nations will strive to agree on a new financing target—the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)—to replace the \$100 billion annual pledge from wealthy countries to support poorer countries between 2020 and 2025 in reducing emissions and safeguarding their societies amid increasingly severe climate impacts.

UN Climate Chief, Simon Stiell described the upcoming challenges as "a very steep mountain to climb." Babayev echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the critical task of working with other nations to increase contributions and update goals. "This is a very crucial time for the world and for our team to find solutions for NCQG," he says.

In 2022, developed countries contributed and mobilized \$115.9 billion for climate-vulnerable countries, meeting the \$100 billion annual climate finance goal for the very first time. In addition to the milestone being met two years late, progress has been slow and insufficient, with contributions consisting predominantly of high-interest loans, exacerbating debt burdens for climate-vulnerable nations. Nearly half of the global population currently resides in countries where debt interest payments exceed spending on education or healthcare.

This failure has created distrust among nations.

"Unfortunately, after 28 COPs in the past, if we look at the history of how we have performed and fulfilled our promises, we see that many were not performed or even

started,” he laments. “Many countries signed different initiatives, declarations, and coalitions, but unfortunately, most of them are not working.”

Mr. Babayev believes that Azerbaijan’s COP presidency can be the bridge that helps to re-establish trust between and reconnects the diverging aspirations of the global north and the global south.

“Azerbaijan is at the crossroads between the East and West, and South. That’s why we would like to be the bridge between the developing and developed world,” he says.

The presidencies of COP28, COP29, and COP30, collectively known as ‘the Troika,’ have been urging developed countries to boost their climate finance contributions in the lead-up to COP29.

But countries are yet to agree on the scale of a global funding package.

The ‘Loss and Damage’ fund, which was established in 2022 and was activated and began receiving commitments in 2023, has raised only \$661 million, far short of the \$215 to \$387 billion that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) says is necessary for developing countries to effectively mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In 2022, the UN’s high-level expert group on climate finance reported that developing nations (excluding China) need to invest around \$2.4 trillion annually in clean energy and climate resilience by 2030, which is four times the current expenditure. Other reports, including a submission to the UNFCCC from India earlier this year, call for “at least” \$1 trillion per year, beginning in 2025.

Many wealthy countries have argued that excessively high targets are a recipe for failure and further breakdown in credibility. The cry for trillions of dollars to cope with climate change impacts underscores the urgent need for efficient and transparent management of climate finance flows and global consensus on how they should be managed.

Countries are divided over several critical issues: who should receive priority for finance, whether developed nations should qualify for funding, whether all types of finance—including non-concessional loans—should count towards climate finance targets, how to ensure funds are accessible, and who should contribute. There is also debate over the obligations of countries that have transitioned beyond their “emerging” status but were not included on the original list of roughly two dozen historically industrialized nations that are expected to contribute.

With climate adaptation in developing countries requiring up to 18 times current contributions— at least 50% more than was previously thought— Mr. Babayev is adamant that the private sector has a critical role to play.

“The private sector is one of the big sources of possible investments, and we would like to provide all necessary platforms to motivate them to be part of the solution,” he says. “How to do this is the subject of negotiations, but transparency is very important here, because markets, countries, and the private sector want to see transparency.”

Enhancing dialogue and collaboration with the private sector can help to identify challenges and accelerate the flow of capital towards climate- and nature-positive outcomes. The COP29 Green Zone will serve as a platform for non-state actors to share best practices and explore initiatives that support global sustainability goals. Advocates are urging nations to view Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as investment opportunities for private finance.

As COP29 approaches, Mukhtar Babayev emphasizes: without a foundation of trust and collaboration, the global effort to limit warming to 2°C could falter.

“For our country, I think we would like to provide inclusivity,” says the president designate of his hopes for the climate summit in November. “We want to show how the world is ready to come together for this climate agenda. It is very important to find solutions to financial issues and discuss critical topics like water issues, land degradation, green agriculture, green skills, food security, green urban projects and more. Azerbaijan aims to build this platform for all countries to see how the world can organize a very constructive dialogue. We invite all stakeholders to attend.”

JOURNAL ONLINE

[Groundbreaking project to strengthen climate resilience in Philippine agriculture](#)

The Department of Agriculture (DA), the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PAGASA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the “Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change” (APA) Project during a landmark inception workshop held from June 18 to 19 at Citadines Roces Quezon City. This pivotal initiative marks a significant stride in improving farmers’ resilience in the face of mounting climate challenges.

Anchored on the success of the DA’s Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) Project, the APA project focuses on advancing climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) technologies and empowering farmers to develop sustainable enterprises in nine provinces across the country identified as climate hotspots. With a target of reaching 1.25 million farmers, the project aims to raise awareness on climate risks, enhance capacity for resilient agricultural practices, and facilitate access to vital financial resources.

“The AMIA villages, which serve as community-based resiliency building models, will now be scaled up under this project. Through financially and economically viable CRA projects, we can help maximize farmers’ incomes and improve their adaptive capacities,” said DA Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Atty. Alvin John Balagbag.

DOST-PAGASA Administrator Nathaniel Servando highlighted the project’s significance, saying, “The DOST-PAGASA strongly supports this initiative, emphasizing new agriculture is Climate Resilient Agriculture under one DA framework that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable.”

With a total fund of USD 39.2 million, including a USD 26.3 million grant from the Green Climate Fund – the largest agricultural grant in the Philippines to date – and USD 12.9 million in cofinancing from the DA and DOST-PAGASA, the APA project is poised to transform the Philippine agricultural landscape. The project will integrate technical support services including training, provision of production inputs, market access, and financing to improve food security, increase household incomes, and enhance resilience.

“By supporting our farmers, we are strengthening our agrifood system to withstand the impacts of climate change. Let us work together to ensure the success of this project,” said FAO Representative to the Philippines Lionel Dabbadie.

In a video message, Jong-Jin Kim, FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, remarked, “With such huge targets and potential impact, I fervently hope that everyone maintains a good level of commitment and passion in implementing this project.” Approved in March 2023, this seven-year project aims to indirectly benefit over five million Filipinos living in climate-vulnerable areas by enhancing institutional capacities and information systems, facilitating widespread adoption of climate resilient agriculture.

MANILA STANDARD

[Opinion] Mitigating climate change

Climatologists and other experts are saying the effects of global warming are already bringing harm to human communities and the natural world.

They add further temperature rises will have a devastating impact and more action on greenhouse gas emissions is urgently required.

Given that multiple factors contribute to climate change, multiple actions are therefore required to address climate change, which refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns.

These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, experts say human activities have been the main driver of this significant variation of average weather conditions primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil and gas), which produces heat-trapping gases.

And the number of people on our planet is one of those factors. Every additional person increases carbon emissions – the rich far more than the poor – and increases the number of climate change victims – the poor far more than the rich, according to experts.

They add that worldwide Gross Domestic Product per capita and population growth remained the strongest drivers of CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion in the last decade.

Population growth affects the Earth's ability to withstand climate change and absorb emissions, like through deforestation as land is converted for agricultural use to feed a growing human population.

Demographers say we are currently adding more than 80 million people a year to our 8.019 billion — an increase of 75,162,541 or 0.95 percent) from New Year's Day 2023 – global population.

From January 2024, 4.3 births and 2.0 deaths were expected worldwide every second.

The UN projects without further action to address population growth, there will be two billion more people by 2050, and three-and-a-half billion more by 2100.

Warming of our atmosphere – whose effects will depend on how high and how fast the temperature rises – is now impossible to avoid, authorities say.

Global warming changes temperature patterns, causing severe weather events, heatwaves, droughts and floods.

Weather chasers say climate change is already shrinking glaciers and ice caps, altering the availability of fresh water.

This contributes to ocean acidification, destroying coral reefs and other aquatic ecosystems.

It makes places uninhabitable for some plants and animals, leading to extinctions and redistribution of species, threatening food production with alien pests and diseases.

We have seen bushfires, vegetation fires and floods in different countries while impacts on agriculture like through soil degradation and unseasonal weather are leading to unpredictable and unstable crop yields which experts argue are dangerous for the poorest populations.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

90K seedlings planted on Arbor Day

By: Marita Moaje

Over 90,000 seedlings were planted nationwide during a simultaneous tree-growing activity led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in celebration of Arbor Day.

In a press release on Tuesday, the agency said over 200 hectares of land in 205 sites nationwide were tapped during the activity aimed at intensifying the country's contribution to global efforts to fight climate change.

"The activity is part of the Philippines' contribution to global efforts to reverse global warming caused by the increase in greenhouse gases due to deforestation, transportation, agriculture, burning of fossil fuels, and the manufacturing industry. It is also a major step toward re-greening the environment and promoting a healthy ecosystem," the DENR said.

DENR Undersecretaries Jonas Leones and Marilou Erni, together with DENR Calabarzon Regional Executive Director Nilo Tamoria, led the tree-planting ceremonies in Tanay, Antipolo, Baras, San Mateo, and Rodriguez in Rizal, and were joined by over 1,500 volunteers.

Some 6,600 native tree seedlings of different varieties, including narra, apitong, and molave and fruit-bearing trees like guyabano (soursop or graviola) were planted during the activity.

In the province of Rizal alone, a total of 13 hectares of protected areas were planted in the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve, Upper Marikina River Basin, and Marikina River Watershed.

Watersheds and forest reserves in Rizal act as natural protection against soil erosion and flood, while ensuring a steady stream of water supply for the greater Metro Manila area and nearby provinces.

The country observes Philippine Arbor Day on June 25 every year under Presidential Proclamation No. 396 of 2003, directing the DENR to provide technical assistance to participants in the celebration, and Republic Act No. 10176 of 2012, requiring all able-

bodied citizens of the Philippines who are are at least 12 years old to plant one tree every year.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MANILA BULLETIN

[\[Opinion\] Environment and ICT months: Building a technology-driven and future-proof Bagong Pilipinas](#)

By: Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman

June is almost over, but I cannot let this month pass without commemorating two important celebrations very close to my heart: Philippine Environment Month and National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Month.

We only have one home, the Earth. Thus, we must protect and cherish it. It is in this spirit that Proclamation No. 237, s. 1988, declared the month of June as Environment Month to focus on protecting and developing the environment. I truly believe that this year's theme, "Our Environment, Our Future," is apt as it is a timely reminder of the critical link between our planet's health and future generations' welfare.

The country's recent experiences with the rising heat index as a result of El Niño and the occurrence of La Niña make it imperative for us to address the issue of climate change.

In this regard, under the 2024 Budget Priorities Framework, aligned with the government's 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda and the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028, our government is prioritizing adaptation measures in agriculture and climate-proofing of infrastructure; accelerating rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and strengthening the management and sustainable use of natural resources; and using integrated and ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions for sustainable use of natural resources.

Together with the Climate Change Commission, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) conducts Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) to track, monitor, and report government agencies' programs to help address and alleviate concerns posed by climate change.

The climate change budget has progressively increased in recent years, growing by an average of 22.5 percent from 2015 to 2024. This year, Climate Change Expenditures are at ₱457.414 billion, higher than 2022's ₱444.862 billion. The Department of Public Works and Highways received the highest CC expenditure among the departments/agencies, mainly for flood control works and structures, amounting to ₱375.011 billion, followed by the Department of Agriculture for food security programs

with ₱29.271 billion, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for ecosystem and environmental stability programs at ₱10.628 billion.

The DBM has also allocated ₱20.5 billion to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund under the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA) for disaster risk reduction, mitigation, prevention, and preparedness activities, as well as for relief, recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and other works or services in connection with natural or human-induced calamities. This allocation is on top of the ₱7.925 billion built-in Quick Response Fund (QRF), representing standby fund for relief and recovery programs to quickly normalize conditions in areas stricken by disasters, calamities, and other emergencies.

In addition, the government's Green Green Green Program aims to transform local government units by enhancing public open spaces and green infrastructure. Some ₱1.055 billion is allocated under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 National Budget to support provinces, cities, and municipalities in promoting green open spaces and active mobility. The DBM has also released ₱999.985 million for the Support and Assistance Fund to Participatory Budgeting Program, which enables 75 municipalities nationwide, identified by civil society organizations, to access resilient and safely managed water supply and sanitation services.

While the sustainability of the environment is our vision, I believe that our digitalization initiatives are enablers. Thus, equally important is the celebration of National ICT Month. Themed "Bayang Digital ang Bagong Pilipinas," the occasion highlights the digital transformation initiatives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. (PBBM) to make the government truly responsive to the needs of the people, accountable to its constituents, and able to fulfill its promise of prosperity to everyone.

And we begin by reforming and digitalizing our procurement system so that our kababayans will get the service they deserve. Under the New Government Procurement Act, the government will adopt green procurement practices to ensure that government purchases are economically sound, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible. Also notable among the proposed amendments is the eMarketplace, which digitalizes the procurement of common-use supplies and equipment by serving as the government e-commerce platform. I am happy to note that the House of Representatives and the Senate have ratified its bicameral committee report. Thus, I am positive that PBBM will soon sign the proposed measure into law.

Meanwhile, for FY 2024, our total digitalization budget more than doubled to ₱64.6 billion, higher by 159.1 percent compared with the ₱24.93 billion budget last year. Hence, we have funded more digitalization projects, including the ₱2.5 billion Free

Public Internet Access Program of the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

Further, the implementation of DBM's 2022–2026 Digital Transformation Roadmap is in full swing and is expected to foster long-term growth by promoting efficiency, transparency, and accountability throughout the bureaucracy. With PBBM signing Executive Order No. 29 in June 2023, the full adoption of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) is underway to improve bureaucratic efficiency and deliver services efficiently.

Among DBM's major projects are the Project Technical Innovations in the NEP Application (TINA), which focuses on implementing automation and interoperability projects for the budget management process; Project Marissa, which uses blockchain technology to enhance public financial management; and the Project Digital Information for Monitoring and Evaluation (DIME), which uses modern technologies such as satellites, drones, and geotagging to monitor and evaluate the status of government projects.

Beyond budget, the PBBM administration is paving the way to a technology-driven and sustainable nation. On the part of the DBM, rest assured that we are ensuring harmony between our environment, systems, and processes. And with your support, I am confident that all these programs and projects will achieve promising results beneficial to the present and future generations. Hence, collectively and individually, let us build a green and future-proof Bagong Pilipinas, where caring for the environment and the nation is a shared responsibility.

=END=