



NEWS ROUNDUP

02 AUGUST 2023 [08:00 am]

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By: Kendra Pierre-Louis

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By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

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SUNSTAR

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By: Third Anne Perlata Alonzo

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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Bernadette E. Tamayo

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Bulacan declares state of calamity due to widespread floods

Bulacan has declared a state of calamity due to the widespread floods that hit nearly the entire province, Governor Daniel Fernando said on Tuesday.

Since last week, the storm-enhanced southwest monsoon or habagat has dumped rain over the vast swaths of the Philippines, including Bulacan, which is home to some 3.7 million people. According to authorities, areas in Bulacan that have not experienced flooding in the past were impacted by the floods caused by the habagat.

The state of calamity declaration — which is expected to trigger the release of calamity funds — was upon the recommendation of the province's disaster council, Fernando said.

Some 228,648 families from 171 barangays have been affected by the massive floods, the governor said, citing the province's disaster office. He added that 21,367 individuals or 5,631 families were forced to flee their homes due to the flooding.

Based on initial assessment, the extensive flooding in the province brought damage to infrastructure worth P500 million. Meanwhile, the preliminary cost of agricultural damage was pegged at P93.023 million, while P7.677 million worth of livelihood was so far lost to the calamity.

As of Tuesday, some 2.4 million Filipinos nationwide were affected by storm Egay and the habagat, with thousands still in evacuation centers, according to the disaster monitoring council.

BUSINESS STANDARD

[Flooding in Beijing highlights climate change's impact on rainfall](#)

By: Kendra Pierre-Louis

Torrential rainfall from Typhoon Doksuri inundated Beijing on Monday, flooding neighborhoods, damaging roads and killing two people. Parts of the city saw up to three inches of rain, just over half of what Beijing usually gets in all of July. While it's too soon to determine whether Typhoon Doksuri was made stronger by climate change, higher temperatures are raising the odds of more intense precipitation around the world — and the dangers that come with it.

So far this year, rain-induced flooding has hit regions that include India, the Philippines and California and Vermont in the US. Last August, after flooding killed 1,700 and displaced 8 million in Pakistan, researchers at World Weather Attribution were able to calculate that climate change made the rainfall 75% more intense. When Hurricane Ian hit Cuba and Florida a month later, researchers estimated that climate change had made its rainfall 10% worse.

As temperatures increase, so too does evaporation — a relationship familiar to anyone who's tried drying clothes outside in winter versus summer. That's because warmer air is able to absorb more water; and as evaporation increases, precipitation does too. "That means that globally, there's going to be more precipitation," says Anthony J. Broccoli, a professor of atmospheric sciences at Rutgers University and co-director of the Rutgers Climate Institute.

For every 1 degree Celsius the atmosphere warms, it holds 7% more water vapor. So far, the Earth has warmed by roughly 1.3C, and current projections from Climate Action Tracker anticipate global average temperature increasing about 2.7C by 2100.

But understanding precisely how the added evaporated water in the atmosphere and subsequent precipitation will be distributed remains elusive, Broccoli says, because the "models don't do as well with projecting changes in precipitation" as they do changes in temperature.

Those models rely on both weather records going back to the 1800s and paleoclimate data that predates temperature records, from things like ice core samples and tree rings. That wealth of data shows relative consistency in global average temperatures, but significant variation in precipitation — which makes parsing the role of climate change in rainfall more difficult.

"Precipitation is probably changing every year in response to warming," says Upmanu Lall, the director of the Columbia Water Center at Columbia University and the chapter

lead on the 2018 National Climate Assessment's chapter on water. "But the historical variation in precipitation is so large that we don't really see clear signals on site data."

The signals scientists have been able to parse are concerning. The NCA's water chapter notes that "heavy precipitation in most parts of the United States has increased in both intensity and frequency since 1901 and are projected to increase over this century."

Rainfall from convective storms, for example, which includes many thunderstorms, is likely to increase in coming years. Convective storms are concentrated in the Northern Hemisphere near the tropics but also occur elsewhere. They happen when heat and moisture are transported vertically into the atmosphere.

Lall points to the classic midwestern storm in the US as an example. As the day warms, water from irrigated fields, rivers and lakes evaporates. That air rises because hot air rises, forming clouds. When those clouds encounter the cooler upper atmosphere — temperatures drop roughly 2C with every 1,000 feet of elevation — they cool, too. And because cooler air can't hold as much water, it rains. As the climate warms, the air that rises gets warmer, meaning it holds more water and can yield more intense rainfall when it hits the upper atmosphere.

"We expect flash floods from that kind of situation," Lall says. "If you read the literature on this, people will talk about how the intensity of hourly rainfall has gone up a lot in the last 20 or 30 years. And that's strictly going to be related to the convection mechanism."

Other regions get their rainfall from more complex phenomena, including monsoons (wind-induced wet seasons) and atmospheric rivers (bands of water vapor that form over the ocean and flow through the sky). It can be difficult to suss out exactly how precipitation will evolve in these locales, in part because climate change is altering the circulation of atmospheric currents. But one thing researchers are already seeing is more variability in the water cycle.

"We may get heavier rains when it does rain, but also longer dry spells between rain events," Broccoli says. "As the temperature goes up, there's more rapid evaporation. Then during the dry periods, things will dry out more quickly." In Maine, for example, farmers who used to rely on rain to water their crops are finding they have to invest in irrigation as summers become drier. When rain does fall, it's more intense.

Communities facing more volatile precipitation will have to prepare. To mitigate flooding risk, municipalities can remove or reduce impermeable surfaces like roads and replace them with permeable surfaces like rain gardens or permeable concrete. Some of those solutions have the added benefit of being effective at combating heat.

“There's some potential ways to mitigate several types of risks at once,” says Elizabeth Sawin, founder and director of the nonprofit Multisolving Institute. Sawin says she once worked with a sewage district commissioner in Milwaukee who described such mitigation as “softening the city.”

“Those words always stuck with me,” she says.

But even the best adaptation options still have limits. “If you get a month's worth of rain in a day, more plants and more permeable parking lots can only do so much,” Sawin says. “So it's not a panacea. It has to go hand in hand with getting our societies off fossil fuels.”

BUSINESS WORLD

Philippines faces at least three typhoons this month

By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

THE PHILIPPINES would probably be battered by at least three tropical cyclones in August, the state weather bureau said on Tuesday, after the main island of Luzon was pummeled by two successive typhoons last week that killed at least 25 people.

These typhoons might pass through northern Philippines but were unlikely to make landfall, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

“Like other previous storms, there is a strong possibility that they will enhance the southwest monsoon that will bring rain especially in the western section of Luzon,” PAGASA weather specialist Grace Castañeda told a news briefing.

In an 11 a.m. bulletin, the weather bureau said typhoon Falcon was last spotted 875 kilometers east-northeast of extreme Northern Luzon.

It had maximum sustained winds of 175 kilometers per hour (kph) and gustiness of up to 215 kph. It was moving west-northwestward at 20 kph.

“The southwest monsoon enhanced by typhoon Falcon will bring occasional to monsoon rains over the western portion of Luzon in the next three days,” PAGASA said.

It added that storm Signal No.1 might be raised over Batanes province due to “the very expansive wind field of the typhoon.”

Ms. Castañeda said the typhoon might maintain its strength and could even develop into a super typhoon. “We can see that it may maintain its strength, but we do not rule out the possibility that this may intensify and become a super typhoon.”

Falcon is expected to weaken as it moves toward the waters southeast of Okinawa Islands. Based on PAGASA’s forecast track, the typhoon is expected to leave the Philippines by Tuesday afternoon or evening.

Meanwhile farm damage from typhoon Doksuri, locally named Egay, had reached P1.94 billion, the Department of Agriculture said in a separate bulletin citing reports from regional offices in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Soccsksargen and Caraga.

The volume of production loss was 86,975 metric tons covering 147,063 hectares of agricultural land, it said. About 123,274 farmers and fisherfolk were affected by the typhoon.

The agency said 111,873 bags of rice seeds, 14,426 bags of corn seeds and 2,582 kilos of assorted vegetable seeds were available for distribution to farmers.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources would give out P62,000 worth of tilapia, carp and catfish fingerlings to fishermen.

The Bureau of Plant Industry has buffer stocks for vegetable seeds for short gestating crops, Director Glenn F. Panganiban told reporters.

“With the help of the government, private sector and local government units, I think we can recover rapidly from this,” he said.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council said 2.45 million people from 668,974 families were affected by the combined effects of the southwest monsoon.

Meanwhile, 108 cities and municipalities had been placed under a state of calamity. The government had given out P153.9 million in assistance to victims, it added.

The Philippines lies along the typhoon belt in the Pacific and experiences about 20 storms each year. It also lies in the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, a belt of volcanoes around the Pacific Ocean where most of the world’s earthquakes strike.

The country constantly experiences unavoidable losses and damage equivalent to 0.5% of its annual economic output mainly due to an increasingly unpredictable climate, according to the Finance department.

JOURNAL ONLINE

[Children appeal to President Marcos, Jr., after 2nd SONA's Climate Change agenda](#)

Over 100 children, including young climate advocates, wrote appeals to President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr., after his second State of the Nation Address, to echo their sentiments, views, and visions of a future generation who can live and thrive in a safe and healthy environment.

Save the Children Philippines co-organized with children the “Paper Boat of Hope” letter-writing marathon at the shores near the Municipality of Sulat, Eastern Samar, as a symbolic gesture of sending their messages to the President, our government officials, and concerned sectors, calling for urgent action on the climate and inequality crises.

In line with the President’s climate change agenda, Save the Children Philippines shares the appeal of Generation Hope advocates Aeron and Vivianne on how the climate crisis is affecting their future:

Dear Pres. Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr.,

A great day, Sir. I am Aeron, a member of Generation Hope and High School student. If ever this letter got to you, I am thankful to “Save the Children” organization for making it possible.

I wrote this letter as one of the children aware of the current environmental situation. We aim to minimize the suffering of people due to climate change and save the earth from the dangerous calamities. In order to achieve this, I believe that we need help from the government.

Personally, I noticed that our environmental temperature has been hotter than usual and it has become a problem to the daily lives of the people. I consider this a serious matter that needs to be addressed immediately so I am thankful to the organizations that conduct activities to resolve this just like the one I am attending as I write this letter.

Based on all the environmental-action related activities I have attended, I concluded that the world will need everyone to cooperate to overcome this challenge. Although as much as children like us want to help, it still won’t be enough due to lack of funds.

I humbly ask the government to support more organizations that conduct environment programs for them to reach out to more people. Through our combined efforts I am positive that we will be able to prepare a better future for the next generation.

Save the Children Philippines has been working with and for children through the Generation Hope campaign on climate change issues that affect them. Through the Generation Hope, children are given the platform to express and amplify their views and voices and call for urgent action on the climate and inequality crisis.

Sincerely,

Aeron

Vivianne expressed how collective action can address climate change and create a sustainable future:

Dear Pres. Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos,

Hi! My name is Vivianne from Samar. I am currently studying in high school and a member of Generation Hope. I hope that this letter will reach you but I’m not entirely sure.

I am writing to express my deep concern about the escalating climate crisis and to urge the government to take immediate action to mitigate climate change.

We must prioritize the transition to renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, while phasing out fossil fuels. Additionally, it is essential to promote energy efficiency across all sectors and invest in sustainable transportation options like public transit and cycling infrastructure. These measures, combined with efforts to conserve forests and protect natural ecosystems, will help us combat climate change and secure a sustainable future our planet.

I kindly request that the government prioritizes these actions, implements necessary policies, and encourage public awareness and participation in mitigating climate change. Time is of the essence and our collective efforts today will determine the well-being of future generations.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Vivianne

President Marcos Jr., in his speech, then stressed the impacts of climate change to the nation-building efforts of his administration, saying: “We can never lose sight of our

responsibility to the future. The economic agenda cannot and will not ever be compatible without the climate change agenda.”

Meanwhile, Save the Children Philippines is engaging children and youth to climate action through the Generation Hope Campaign. Children are already leading the way towards a safer, fairer, and happier future.

It is time to put children first and follow their lead. Join #GenerationHope now and together, let us create positive lasting change in the lives of children and the future we share: <https://www.savethechildren.org.ph/generation-hope/>

MANILA BULLETIN

[The state of play on key negotiation issues in the lead-up to COP28](#)

By: Climate Reality Project

Delegates from more than 100 countries met in Bonn, Germany last month to prepare for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) in Dubai later this year.

The Bonn climate talks aimed to prepare the ground for the upcoming COP, including the adoption of an official agenda that will be the basis for key decision points.

This year's conference was held against the backdrop of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, underscoring once more the urgent need for enhanced and urgent climate action.

We summarized developments arising from the Bonn climate talks that will shape the state of play on key negotiation points in COP28.

Fossil fuel phaseout

Marking his strongest pronouncement yet on the future of coal, oil, and gas in a climate-secure world, COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber admitted during the Bonn climate talks that the phasedown of fossil fuels is inevitable.

The shift in rhetoric was welcome news. But whether the Dubai COP will deliver on a commitment towards an equitable and just phaseout of fossil fuels still hangs in the balance.

Climate finance

The Bonn climate talks brought to light the lack of trust between developed and developing countries on the delivery of finance needed to pay for climate action.

Developing countries said they will only accept the inclusion of the mitigation ambition and implementation work programme (MWP) in the official COP28 agenda if an item on "urgently scaling up financial support from developed country parties" is also added.

Developed countered, arguing that finance is already part of other agenda items and would be within MWP.

Parties did not reach an agreement on the MWP but produced an "informal note" reflecting various viewpoints on a work programme on just transition pathways.

New climate finance target

Also making headway during the Bonn conference are the technical dialogues on the post-2025 New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) mandated by the Paris Agreement.

The NCQG the post-2025 climate finance target set to be finalized by 2024, will replace the unfulfilled US\$100 billion per year target funding to assist developing countries in emissions reduction and resilience building.

Experts underscored that the NCQG will not be able to unlock the trillions of dollars needed to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement without a reform of the international financial system.

Loss and damage

Meetings tasked to set up the loss and damage fund also indicated a clear division between developed and developing countries.

Developing countries are seeking a standalone fund, independent of all existing climate finance mechanisms. Developed countries showed a tepid response to the idea, emphasizing the need to avoid duplication and prioritize effective disbursement.

More meetings are scheduled this year before the committee makes recommendations for consideration and adoption by COP28.

Moreover, parties could not agree on recommending a host for the Santiago Network on loss and damage secretariat.

The Santiago Network was officially established at COP25 to provide technical assistance for “averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage in developing countries.”

Global stocktake

The Global Stocktake (GST) assesses the collective progress in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement

Discussions at Bonn focused on drafting the indicative framework for the forthcoming decision on the results of the first GST and revealed contentions on whether the process should emphasize the historical responsibility of the developed world in causing climate change and its impacts.

The first GST will culminate at COP28, where opportunities and challenges for enhancing action in the light of equity and the best available science will be presented.

Finding a common ground

Issues of justice and equity, both current and historical, are increasingly taking up space in climate negotiations.

Developed countries' reluctance to confront their historical responsibility for the climate crisis continues to impact our shared futures.

But there is still time to find common ground. Amplifying the voices of communities at the forefront of the climate crisis is essential for to COP28 deliver an equitable path to a 1.5°C future.

In line with our call to #RewriteCOP, we are calling for submissions of creative contributions! Here are the mechanics:

- (1) Take a look at our summary of the Bonn Climate Change Conference outcomes.
- (2) Craft a creative response (poem, painting, or other visual artwork) to the prompt, On the hills of East of France, and reflect on how histories have shaped our world.
- (3) Submit your creation via email at philippines@climatereality.com.
- (4) You can also post your work on your social media accounts. Don't forget to tag [@agamagenda](https://twitter.com/agamagenda) and [@climaterealityph](https://twitter.com/climaterealityph).

This article is a collaborative piece of The Climate Reality Project Philippines and the Agam Agenda and is part of its RewriteCOP campaign.

RewriteCOP invites everyone to intervene in policy- and decision-making on climate solutions, through storytelling, art, and creative expression that are vital in tackling the crisis.

[Opinion] Ushering in a new era of PH-EU relations

The bilateral meeting between Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos and European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen has set the stage for a new chapter in the relationship between the Philippines and the European Union (EU).

Held in Malacañang, the meeting was considered productive, reinforcing the shared desire to rekindle and strengthen ties once more. The President expressed optimism about the relationship and relayed to President von der Leyen that he considers the Philippines and EU as “like-minded partners united by shared values of democracy, sustainable and inclusive prosperity, the rule of law, peace and stability, and human rights.”

One of the significant outcomes of the meeting was the signing of a bilateral agreement on the “Joint Declaration of the Green Economy Program.” The agreement solidifies Europe's role in supporting the country's transition to a circular economy and the generation of green energy. A grant worth 60 million Euros will be provided to aid the Philippines in areas such as circular economy practices, renewable energy projects, and climate change mitigation.

The EC's Team Europe Initiative on Green Economy will complement these efforts by providing expertise, training, and technology transfers to empower local communities. With a focus on sustainable plastic value chains and reducing plastic waste and marine litter, the initiative aims to develop a circular economy policy in close cooperation with local authorities.

The EU's support goes beyond green technologies as it is putting resources in our country's capacity to fight climate change. In fact, as part of the Global Gateway strategy, the 27-member EU will “contribute approximately half a billion Euros to support the Philippines' fight against climate change,” and this investment will “provide the access to expertise and technologies, boosting the country's efforts in addressing climate concerns.”

President von der Leyen expressed enthusiasm in partnering with the Philippines on its journey toward a cleaner and greener future. “We want to partner with you on this path. Notably with a team Europe initiative on the green economy that we just signed here,” she said.

Furthermore, one of the positive outcomes of the meet was the agreement to resume talks on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Philippines and the EU. The FTA, once established, is expected to enhance economic ties and take trade relations “to the next level.”

“The EU is already your fourth largest trading partner, and we are the first foreign investor. But we can do so much more. So, I’m very glad that we have decided to relaunch negotiations for a free trade agreement,” von der Leyen said.

The proposed chapters of the Philippines-EU FTA encompass a comprehensive array of topics, including trade in goods, rules of origin, customs and trade facilitation, trade in services, investments, intellectual property rights, etc. The FTA holds immense potential for both regions, fostering economic growth and creating employment opportunities. It is targeted that formal negotiations will start in 2024.

As the Philippines and the EU embark on this renewed journey of cooperation, it is crucial to recognize the significance of this partnership in tackling global challenges collectively. A new era of PH-EU relations will be mutually beneficial, more so for our country as we build toward a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous future. May this partnership set a good example for the world!

SUNSTAR

[PH, EU Commission affirm stronger cooperation on trade, climate change](#)

By: Third Anne Perlata Alonzo

THE Philippines and the European Commission affirmed on Monday, July 31, 2023, their commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations through the expansion of trade and enhanced cooperation on climate change, maritime security and green economy.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the first EU Commission president to visit the Philippines, was accorded with arrival honors led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in the Malacañang and it was followed by a “productive” meeting.

“But during our meeting, we discussed the economic relations with particular focus on revitalizing trade between our two regions. I welcomed the conduct this year of the scoping exercises between the European Commission and the Philippines towards negotiations for a Philippines-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA),” Marcos said.

In her statement, Von der Leyen said the Philippines and the EU commission will bring their trade relations “to the next level,” noting the relaunching of negotiations for the FTA, which has a “huge potential” for both parties in terms of growth and jobs.

She raised the importance of economic dependencies and diversification of supply lines in order to make it resilient.

Von der Leyen said an FTA can be a springboard for a new technology corporation to modernize the broader economy.

Marcos and Von der Leyen also witnessed the signing of a bilateral agreement on the Joint Declaration on the Green Economy Program between the Philippines represented by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and the European Union (EU) represented by its Ambassador to the Philippine Luc Veron.

The EU will provide a grant worth 60 million euros for the Green Economy Program initiatives in the country to support areas such as circular economy, renewable energy, and climate change mitigation.

“I welcome your ambition to put the Philippines on the path to a cleaner and greener future. We have the same ambition; therefore, we created the EU global gateway which is the EU’s investment plan for the world, for sustainable infrastructure. We want to partner with you on this path,” said Von der Leyen.

“We will provide financing expertise and access to technologies to support you to a circle economy and the generation of green energy,” she added.

The official also vowed to support the country in its effort for digitalization, noting the commitment of several European businesses to invest in the Philippines.

She also cited the country’s “great potential” in the critical raw materials industry, noting their support to develop its mining industry.

“Our existing partnerships in critical raw materials do not only invest in extraction but across the whole valued chain we share technology and knowledge, train the local workforce, empower the local communities and we abide by the highest environmental standard,” she said.

Von der Leyen also reiterated their commitment to support efforts and boost information sharing in order for the Philippines to strengthen its maritime security.

She emphasized the EU’s position on the arbitral ruling on the South China Sea in favor of the Philippines.

She said the ruling “is legally binding and that it provides the basis for peaceful resolving disputes between the parties.”

“We are ready to strengthen the cooperation between the Philippines on maritime security in the region by sharing information, conducting threat assessment and building the capacity of your national coast guard center and your coast guard,” Von der Leyen added.

Marcos also acknowledged the EU’s staunch support for the Bangsamoro peace process, as well as the development of the country in areas such as rule of law and justice, agriculture, space cooperation, and disaster management.

He also expressed gratitude to the EU for its decision to extend the recognition of Standard Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers certificates issued by the Philippines, saying this has a positive impact on the employment of more than 50,000 Filipino seafarers working onboard EU-flagged vessels.

THE MANILA TIMES

[PH to Asean: make SCS stability a priority](#)

By: Bernadette E. Tamayo

THE Philippines has urged Asean neighbors to include national "priorities" in their community's post-2025 vision such as stability in the Indo-Pacific region, in particular the South China Sea.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the Philippines pushed for the inclusion of national priorities at the 9th Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on the Asean Community's Post-2025 Vision held from July 26 to 27 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The vision will articulate Asean's aspirations for the next 20 years upon its adoption in 2025, the department said in a statement.

Asean is composed of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

"Chief among the priorities that were added to the draft vision by the Philippines include addressing threats to peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, in particular the South China Sea," the DFA said.

The Philippines has suggested that Asean "continue to respond to issues that affect the country and the region such as migration, climate change, and biodiversity loss," the DFA said on Monday. It also called for Asean to drive regional economic growth and prosperity by maximizing the opportunities of the "creative economy." The Philippine delegation, headed by Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso, advocated that Asean should empower women to participate fully and effectively in community-building and decision-making processes.

"These are important issues that Asean should continue to prioritize and be reflected in our vision," Buensuceso said.

The Asean Community Vision 2045 will be endorsed to the Asean Coordinating Council in September 2023, the DFA said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo will embark on a six-day trip to Vietnam and Laos to review Manila's relations with Hanoi and Vientiane and explore ways to strengthen bilateral ties with them.

Manalo will attend the 10th Philippines-Vietnam Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) where the two countries are set to discuss areas of cooperation such as defense, maritime, economic, and people-to-people ties. He will speak at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam with the theme, "Philippines-Vietnam Strategic Partnership in the Age of Change."

Manalo will then travel to Vientiane for the 2nd Philippines-Lao JCBC from August 3 to 5, where he will "take stock of the current Philippines-Laos relations and explore ways to expand cooperation," the DFA said.

He will also engage with the diplomatic community through his talk at the Institute of Foreign Affairs titled "Closer Together: People at the Center of Philippines-Laos Relations."

The JCBC is the primary mechanism that the Philippines has with both Vietnam and Laos that provides an opportunity to comprehensively discuss bilateral relations, as well as various regional and global issues, the DFA said.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

ECO BUSINESS

[As jobs law stalls, Philippines struggles to green economy](#)

Eight years ago, the Philippine government built an ultra-modern Green Technology Centre in the city of Taguig to spearhead a national drive for jobs to help combat climate change and protect the environment.

These days, however, the two-storey building of 1,000-square metres (10,800 sq ft) stands almost empty - and with only nine staff - after an innovative green jobs law stalled.

Around the world, countries are increasingly passing legislation to fight climate change, safeguard nature and cut pollution, but the UN Environment Programme says new laws often suffer from a lack of enforcement.

The Philippines centre in Taguig, near Manila, was built to teach greener, less-polluting techniques to workers in jobs ranging from construction to car mechanics, under the National Institute for Technical Education and Skills development.

It is intended to play a key role in implementing the Philippine Green Jobs Act of 2016 — the first and only legislation of its kind in Asia — which would promote micro, small and medium enterprises that create green jobs through tax deductions and tax-free imports of capital equipment.

Seven years after the law was passed, however, the vital standards and technologies to train and certify workers for jobs that produce green goods and services have yet to be defined, delaying implementation.

The standards are now close to completion and the government has committed to put the law fully into practice by the end of 2023.

So far, the Taguig centre has been mainly limited to developing courses and educating dozens of green job experts who will train the wider workforce once the law gets off the ground.

Whole of government

The Green Technology Centre and the Green Jobs Act are part of the Philippines' "whole-of-government" approach to a "just transition", which aims to accelerate a shift to a sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy that also raises living standards for workers and their communities.

"The Philippines is not yet fully ready for just transition because it still doesn't have the technology to improve green practices," said Danielle Marie Torralba of the Climate Change Commission, one of the main implementing agencies of the Green Jobs Act.

"In addition, climate change awareness is not popular or mainstreamed in our society," she said, adding that details of the law were "near the finish line" to allow implementation by the end of 2023.

As one of the countries most at risk from climate change, the Philippines suffered more than 500 billion pesos (\$9.2 billion) in damages from weather extremes over the past decade, according to the Department of Finance.

And the World Bank says climate change risks – such as extreme weather events and slow onset trends of temperature increase and sea level rise – are threatening the Philippines' target to become a high-income economy by 2045.

Current annual losses from typhoons alone are estimated to reach 1.2 per cent of the Philippines' gross domestic product, according to the bank's 2022 Country Climate and Development Report.

Green skills

The Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the government agency that manages the Green Technology Centre, has so far 'greened' 30 per cent of around 300 job training courses, including construction, solar photovoltaics, welding, automotive and transport.

For the automotive sector, for instance, the new curriculum covers how to recycle or dispose of old engine oil responsibly. Welders are taught to reduce use of gases like carbon dioxide and argon.

TESDA has also introduced green training for jobs including housekeeping, tour-guiding and computer-programming.

Edgardo Caldit, a technical education and skills development specialist at the centre, said the initiative reflects the Philippines' ambition to create green jobs.

But he grapples with limited resources and said green skills training still does not appeal to Filipino workers. TESDA failed to attract a single applicant, for instance, when it introduced training for solid waste management.

"Filipino workers have yet to feel the benefits of green jobs and green skills. Many of them don't necessarily want to be green workers - and don't see green skills as something that can boost their employability," he said.

Caldit said a huge factor is that the Department of Labour and Employment has yet to finalise an official list of green careers, professions and skills available to workers.

"The definition of a green job remains vague for most workers. But if they received the proper training and certification for such jobs, they would gain a different sense of interest and pride in their new job titles," he said.

A dearth of qualified trainers is another challenge, Caldit said. "We simply don't have that many experts in this country and low government pay for these experts had also been a deterrent," he added.

Defining green jobs

The Philippine law defines green jobs as "employment that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment".

Such jobs must also be "productive, respect the rights of workers, deliver a fair income, provide security in the workplace and social protection, and promote social dialogue".

The labour department, Climate Change Commission and 20 other government agencies are tasked with implementing the law.

Only enterprises that meet the standards for the assessment and certification of green goods, services, technologies and practices can apply for incentives under the law.

The Climate Change Commission plans to adopt those key standards by the end of 2023. Both Torralba and Caldit said the pandemic had slowed momentum for the law, forcing agencies to go back to the drawing board last year.

“Defining ‘green’ is something that we really had to work on. How do we say that certain products and services are green, how do we assess that, and how can enterprises apply for incentives? That’s what we and other agencies had really focused on for the past years,” said Torralba.

Despite the legal foundation, the Philippines still falls behind its Asian neighbours in the share of green skills among its workforce, especially in agriculture, according to LinkedIn’s Global Green Skills Report 2022.

While high-income and upper-middle income countries maintained a steady green hiring rate in 2020, the rate of greening the workforce in lower-income countries decelerated, according to the report.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has recognised the crucial role that all businesses can play in greening the workforce and driving forward a just transition.

However, in 2022, the ILO noted that many small businesses face barriers, including limited access to finance and skills, lack of information and knowledge on innovation, and inconsistent enforcement of regulation.

“We want to incentivise enterprises because decarbonising and greening our economy should start with the private sector,” said Torralba.

The new law aims to inspire enterprises still pursuing ‘business as usual’ to adopt green practices, she added.

“That’s how we really imagined it,” she said.

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