



NEWS ROUNDUP

14 October 2022 [08:00 am]

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[Diokno: Developing countries need help funding climate efforts](#)

By Diego Gabriel C. Robles

DEVELOPING countries are heavily dependent on outside financing to execute their climate-change mitigation plans, Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Washington, DC.

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CLIMATE HOME NEWS

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By Chloé Farand

A group of 10 major economies are building momentum to scale-up climate finance for developing countries by reforming how development banks spend money, starting with the largest: the World Bank.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Global wildlife populations have declined by 69% since 1970, WWF report finds](#)

By Hafsa Khalil

The world's wildlife populations plummeted by an average of 69% between 1970 and 2018, a dangerous decline resulting from climate change and other human activity, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warned in a report Thursday.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[PH calls for stronger support from multilateral institutions](#)

By Angela Celis

Finance chief and World Bank governor for the Philippines Benjamin Diokno has called on multilateral institutions for stronger commitment and financing support to emerging and developing countries amid concerns on rising inflation, climate change and other global challenges, according to a statement sent by the Department of Finance (DOF) yesterday.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Aboitiz Power, Mainstream partner for CamSur project](#)

By: Myrna Velasco

Listed firm Aboitiz Power Corporation has cemented a partnership agreement with Dublin-headquartered Mainstream Renewable Power for the 90-megawatt onshore wind farm project in Libmanan, Camarines Sur.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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PHILIPPINES NEWS AGENCY

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By: Jose Cielito Raganit

Manila – Cagayan de Oro City 2nd District Representative Rufus Rodriguez on Thursday pushed for the passage of a bill establishing the Philippine Renewable Energy Corp. (PREC) that would focus on the development of renewable energy (RE) sources in the country.

RAPPLER

[How to restore PH's lost mangrove forest? An Iloilo town shows the way](#)

By: Arnel Murga

Iloilo, Philippines – Full-grown, healthy mangrove trees stood firmly on the coastline between the municipality of Leganes and the city of Iloilo, burying and stretching their intricately interwoven roots on the shore.

TVC NEWS

[Climate change: Advocates list demands ahead UN COP 27](#)

A campaign has been launched to advocate for the implementation of climate change actions in Nigeria and other African countries.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Pandemic disruptions, new climate risks spur revisiting of 6-year-old Green Jobs Act](#)

By: Samuel Medenilla

THE imminent threat of climate change and the mass labor displacement caused by business disruptions from the pandemic have reinvigorated the government efforts to push for the creation of more “green jobs.”

[Recalibrating climate change, post-pandemic response](#)

By Jonathan Mayuga

STILL reeling from the economic setbacks brought by the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the Philippines was again struck by one of the worst impacts of climate change—extreme weather events.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[Diokno: Developing countries need help funding climate efforts](#)

By Diego Gabriel C. Robles

DEVELOPING countries are heavily dependent on outside financing to execute their climate-change mitigation plans, Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Washington, DC.

“We strongly support the call for the World Bank, the IMF, and all other multilateral institutions to continue providing technical and financial assistance that will cater to emerging and developing countries on a much greater scale. This will provide us with better opportunities to access funding that is tailored to fit each country’s needs,” Mr. Diokno said on Tuesday.

Mr. Diokno was addressing the 108th Meeting of Ministers and Governors of the Intergovernmental Group of 24 on International Monetary Affairs and Development (G-24), according to a statement carrying his remarks issued by the Department of Finance (DoF).

The World Bank Group has said that it is ready to increase its support for the Philippines in the areas of agriculture, education, tourism, water and energy.

Approved commitments for this year amount to \$1.5781 billion. As of March, the World Bank was the Philippines’ third-largest source of official development assistance, with loans and grants accounting for 23.38% of the total.

“At present, the World Bank Group has a Global Crises Response Package to help countries navigate multiple crises, including food and energy security, learning losses due to school closures during the pandemic, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and other long-term development challenges,” the DoF said.

Last year, the World Bank, also known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, provided \$1.376 billion in budget support loans to the Philippines, accounting for 12% of that year’s external financing.

During an intervention before the constituency members of World Bank Executive Director Erivaldo Gomes, Mr. Diokno outlined several of the Philippine government’s policy interventions against rising inflation.

“To cushion the effects of inflation, the Philippine government continues to extend targeted support to the most vulnerable sectors, including public transport workers, farmers, fisherfolk, and indigent senior citizens,” Mr. Diokno said. “We are also investing in improvements to local food production, ensuring the timely importation of goods,

improving distribution efficiency, ensuring adequate power supply, and carefully monitoring policy considerations on wage and transport fare hike petitions.”

“We expect inflation to remain elevated as long as world prices of oil remain high,” he added. “Nevertheless, with our combination of fiscal and monetary policies, we are optimistic that the average inflation rate will be within our target of 4.5% to 5.5% for 2022.”

On the monetary side, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has so far raised borrowing costs by 225 basis points since May.

Concerning climate change, Mr. Diokno said that the integrated green, resilient, and inclusive development (GRID) strategies baked into its post-pandemic recovery plans.

Mr. Diokno affirmed Philippine commitments under the Paris Agreement, specifically the adoption of its first nationally determined contribution (NDC) of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, among others.

“As in other countries, these NDC actions are heavily reliant on external financing. We see the key role of the World Bank Group — the largest multilateral provider of climate finance — in mobilizing more international public and private finance to accelerate GRID programs,” Mr. Diokno said.

Last month, Mr. Diokno said that he was not concerned about the tight prevailing fiscal conditions as he sought to finance the government’s climate change initiatives. In the P5.268-trillion proposed budget for 2023, the climate change adaptation budget has increased to P453.1 billion from P289.7 billion this year.

At the end of the second quarter, the Philippines’ debt-to-gross domestic product ratio was 62.1%, above the prescribed 60% threshold multilateral lenders recommend for developing economies. Its rise from 39.6% at the end of 2019 reflects the debt taken on to finance pandemic containment measures.

Mr. Diokno has said that the government intends to keep foreign borrowing at 25% of the total, falling eventually to 20%, in order to minimize foreign exchange risk. — Diego Gabriel C. Robles

GOCC for renewable energy proposed to manage Agus-Pulangi hydro

By: Matthew Carl Montecillo

A bill has been filed at the House of Representatives calling for the creation of a new government-owned and -controlled corporation (GOCC) specializing in renewable energy which will be tasked to run Mindanao's largest hydroelectric power complex.

House Bill 4205 proposes to concentrate the government's efforts to promote renewable energy in the Philippine Renewable Energy Corp., the establishment of which will involve the takeover of functions currently exercised by a unit of the Philippine National Oil Corp. (PNOC), PNOC Renewables Corp.

"It is imperative for the government to take a more active role in assuring adequate supply of electricity with the use of RE sources, thereby reducing the country's dependence on imported fossil fuels and mitigate the impact of climate change," Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus B. Rodriguez said in the bill's explanatory note.

The proposed GOCC will operate the Agus-Pulangi Hydroelectric Power Plant complex, effectively keeping Agus-Pulangi in government hands, contrary to the broader trend of privatization of the power industry. Mindanao business leaders favor keeping the complex in government hands because it generates cheap power for the southern island.

The bill proposes a P7 billion initial appropriation to capitalize the new GOCC.

Toyota PHL to adopt forest, mangrove sites in Laguna and Batangas

By: Revin Mikhael Ochave

Car manufacturer Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. (TMP) will adopt two planting sites located in the provinces of Laguna and Batangas in a bid to improve its climate mitigation and biodiversity protection efforts.

TMP said in a statement on Wednesday that it is set to sign two separate agreements with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region IV-A this month to formalize the adoption of the areas under the National Greening Program.

The site in Laguna is an upland forest block in Siniloan, while the one in Batangas is a mangrove forest in Calatagan.

“These projects’ commitment is to plant 41,000 trees and mangroves in a span of five years, aiming at 80% survival rate,” the TMP said.

The company will plant native and fruit-bearing tree species in a 50-hectare area on the tail-end of Sierra Madre in Siniloan, while 16,000 mangrove propagules will be set in an eight-hectare area along the coast of Calatagan.

“Toyota shares the responsibility in protecting the planet Earth and in fighting climate change in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Global Toyota implements the Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050 to achieve zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and net positive environmental impact by year 2050,” TMP President Atsuhiko Okamoto said.

CLIMATE HOME NEWS

[US, Germany back 'fundamental reform' of World Bank to scale climate finance](#)

[A group of 10 countries led by the US and Germany have presented the bank's management with a plan to reform the institution this week]

By Chloé Farand

A group of 10 major economies are building momentum to scale-up climate finance for developing countries by reforming how development banks spend money, starting with the largest: the World Bank.

On Tuesday, Germany and the US handed a joint proposal for “a fundamental reform of the World Bank” to its management, during this week’s annual meetings in Washington DC.

The proposals aim to make the bank fit to address global challenges, including climate action and biodiversity conservation.

A spokesperson for the German government told Climate Home News the proposed reforms were backed by 10 countries, including all of the G7 group.

Development minister Svenja Schulze, who serves as Germany’s representative on the World Bank’s board of governors, said: “The World Bank’s current model.... is no longer appropriate in this time of global crises. Challenges and investment needs are so great that the model needs to be adjusted.”

Schulze said the reforms should include “climate lending on better terms” and “targeted budget support for governments which want to pursue policy reforms to make their economies climate neutral”.

Germany expects a response from the bank by the end of the year.

Developing countries have warned they need affordable financing options to transition to clean energy and invest in resilience without being pushed into unsustainable levels of debt. But finance isn’t flowing to those that need it most.

Last week, Janet Yellen, US secretary of the treasury, said multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, had to “evolve” to address global challenges such as climate change.

The US, the bank’s largest shareholder, and the group of reformers are calling for its management to develop “an evolution roadmap” by December, she said.

Yellen said development banks should increase concessional funding, including grants, to support middle-income countries transition away from coal.

Besides from governments, the banks could support regional and sub-national entities, such as green city initiatives, adopt stronger targets and develop new instruments to mobilise private finance.

Lagging behind

The World Bank provides loans and grants to developing countries and plays a critical role in leveraging private sector finance. Yet, it lags behind its peers in the share of funding dedicated to climate.

Analysis by The Big Shift, a coalition of NGOs, found that the World Bank provided more than \$14 billion in financing for fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement was adopted. While it has committed to end financing coal as well as oil and gas extraction, its subsidiaries are still backing fossil fuel projects.

President David Malpass' remarks doubting the scientific consensus on climate change increased scrutiny in the bank's management. Malpass later rowed back on his comment. But civil society groups say the bank can't be reformed without a change in leadership.

Collectively, multilateral development banks hold an estimated \$1.5 trillion in assets.

Earlier this year, a panel of experts, commissioned by the G20, presented five recommendations to maximise the banks' financing capacity without threatening their financial integrity.

Their report found that the reforms could unleash "several hundreds of billions of dollars over the medium term".

Franklin Steves, of think tank E3G, told Climate Home, the panel's report "has clear momentum behind it, and it's gathering political support among a variety of shareholders".

"It's incredibly encouraging that things are gradually moving the right way," he added. "We need to snowball that effort as much as possible to get key stakeholders in the G7 and G20 behind these proposals."

'Most acute crisis'

For developing countries, an overhaul of development banks' lending practices cannot come too soon.

The compounding crisis of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the resulting food and energy crisis have caused developing nations' debt levels to soar, eroding their fiscal space to invest in climate resilience.

According to the IMF, more than 60% of low-income countries are in –or at high risk of— debt distress.

“This is the most acute crisis we’ve ever witnessed,” said Gayle Smith, CEO of the One campaign, which advocates to end extreme poverty and previously served as the administrator for the US Agency for International Development.

“Some countries have the tools to deal with these crisis and some don’t,” she added. Most vulnerable nations are in the latter camp.

“There needs to be an upscale in financing as a matter of urgency,” said Jean-Paul Adam, climate change director for the UN Economic Commission for Africa. “The World Bank is certainly one of the foremost institutions that should be leading the way.”

Barbados' prime minister Mia Mottley set out some solutions in her ‘Bridgetown agenda’, a detailed proposal backed by UN officials, academics and civil society groups. One of three key pillars is to expand lending from multilateral development banks by \$1trillion.

So far, no major economy has publicly endorsed the agenda.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Global wildlife populations have declined by 69% since 1970, WWF report finds](#)

By Hafsa Khalil

The world's wildlife populations plummeted by an average of 69% between 1970 and 2018, a dangerous decline resulting from climate change and other human activity, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warned in a report Thursday.

WWF tracked global changes in the abundance of wildlife across land, air and water of nearly 32,000 populations of 5,230 vertebrate species between 1970 and 2018. It used a dataset known as the Living Planet Index (LPI), which it has collated with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) since 1998 and updates every two years.

Written by 89 authors, the report highlights the planet's "double emergency" of climate and loss of biodiversity, the driving forces stemming directly from the degradation of land and sea systems, overexploitation of animals and plants, and climate change.

Latin America and the Caribbean show the greatest regional decline in average population at 94%, with the report warning that the Amazon rainforest is nearing the point of being nonfunctional.

Andrew Terry, director of conservation and policy at ZSL, said in a statement that the index "highlights how we have cut away the very foundation of life ... (and that) preventing further biodiversity loss and restoring vital ecosystems has to be at the top of global agendas to tackle the mounting climate, environmental and public health crises."

Currently, 1 million plants and animals face extinction, with 1%-2.5% of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and amphibians having already gone extinct, the WWF reported.

But the numbers don't mean that 69% of animals have been wiped off the planet since 1970. WWF International Director General Marco Lambertini told CNN that the LPI works out the decline of a particular species population as a percentage and then averages out all the percentages to come up with the headline figure.

"Normally, when people think of endangered wildlife, it's all the iconic animals such as elephants, tigers and pandas," Lambertini told CNN. "Funnily enough, some of these animals have started to bounce back. Tigers are almost double their number and pandas have gone up about 20%."

Lesser-known animals are often the ones in decline. The Amazon pink river dolphin in the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve in the Brazilian state of Amazonas, for example, saw a population decline of 65% between 1994 and 2016, the report found. The eastern lowland gorilla population in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Kahuzi-Biega National Park fell by 80% between 1994 and 2019, while the Australian sea lion lost 64% of its population between 1977 and 2019.

The index is based on pre-existing, published research on wild animals, which means there is a bias on which animals make the LPI and which don't. All the animals included are vertebrates -- animals with spines -- even though invertebrates, or spineless animals, outnumber them. Invertebrates are not included because it is more difficult to conduct research on them, Lambertini told CNN.

In 30 years of intervention to halt biodiversity loss, the LPI continues to observe declines, which, the WWF says, act as early warning indicators of ecosystem health. The report emphasized the importance of urgent action by governments, corporations and the public.

The planet has warmed by 1.2 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times, which is one of the reasons freshwater species showed the greatest overall decline, at 83%. In 2021, ocean temperatures were the hottest on record for the third year in a row. A loss of habitat and barriers to migration routes -- for example, dams -- are responsible for approximately half of threats faced by fish.

While the report finds the natural world near a tipping point, it also reiterates that immediate transformative action can slow and even reverse these devastating results.

The COP15 meeting of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is expected to take place in Montreal in December. Lambertini believes this will be an opportunity for leaders to set the direction for the world in providing solutions to stop or "bounce back" on the loss of biodiversity.

"It's a famous saying, 'you can't manage what you can't measure,'" so a manageable goal is needed. Climate, for example, needs to hit net zero carbon emissions, but net zero loss of biodiversity is not good enough," he said, because of the amount of loss incurred over a short period of time.

Instead, he reasons that the global goal should be "net positive" on biodiversity, because nature can come back, and is coming back for some species.

Under discussion is a global framework to double the protection and conservation of nature by 2030. Currently, 15% of land is conserved, and 8% of the oceans, he said.

On a smaller scale, he said the public can do their bit by following a simple rule: "Consume less, and more sustainably" in a bid to reduce the pressure on nature.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[PH calls for stronger support from multilateral institutions](#)

By Angela Celis

Finance chief and World Bank governor for the Philippines Benjamin Diokno has called on multilateral institutions for stronger commitment and financing support to emerging and developing countries amid concerns on rising inflation, climate change and other global challenges, according to a statement sent by the Department of Finance (DOF) yesterday.

“During this turbulent time, stronger commitment from our multilateral partners will help us overcome the adverse socioeconomic impacts of these crises and build resilience from future shocks,” Diokno said earlier this week in his intervention during the 108th Meeting of Ministers and Governors of the G-24.

The G-24, or the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs and Development, coordinates the position of developing countries on monetary and development issues. Diokno represents the Philippines as the Second Vice-Chair of the G-24 Bureau.

Among the priority discussion areas were high inflation, debt distress, climate change and the growing need to expand liquidity support and development financing.

Diokno said the continued financing support to the Philippines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group has helped bridge the gaps in the country’s priority policies and initiatives and “enables us to pursue our socioeconomic agenda of achieving a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy.”

Diokno also met with World Bank Group president David Malpass on October 11 at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington to discuss the Philippines’ ongoing loan portfolio with the multilateral agency and seek support from the Bank for the Marcos administration’s comprehensive eight-point socioeconomic agenda.

The bilateral meeting was held on the sidelines of the 2022 Annual Meetings of the IMF and World Bank Group.

The finance chief called for the Bank’s support for key program areas in line with the Marcos administration’s goal of creating more jobs, improving food security and strengthening climate resilience.

Meanwhile, Diokno also bared policy measures that the Philippines is undertaking to address the impact of high inflation and climate-related risks.

“To cushion the effects of inflation, the Philippine government continues to extend targeted support to the most vulnerable sectors, including public transport workers,

farmers, fisherfolk and indigent senior citizens,” Diokno said in an intervention before the constituency members of World Bank executive director Eivaldo Gomes.

Other measures to address high inflation include investing in improvements to local food production, ensuring the timely importation of goods, improving distribution efficiency, ensuring adequate power supply and monitoring policy considerations on wage and transport fare hike petitions.

Diokno also emphasized the role of external financing in climate action.

“As climate change threatens the resilience of our communities, the government has integrated green, resilient and inclusive development or GRID strategies in our post-pandemic recovery plans,” Diokno said.

The Philippines adopted its first Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, which aims to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent by 2030; adapting to the impacts of climate change; and mainstreaming gender and social inclusion into climate action.

“As in other countries, these NDC actions are heavily reliant on external financing,” Diokno said.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Aboitiz Power, Mainstream partner for CamSur project](#)

By: Myrna Velasco

Listed firm Aboitiz Power Corporation has cemented a partnership agreement with Dublin-headquartered Mainstream Renewable Power for the 90-megawatt onshore wind farm project in Libmanan, Camarines Sur.

The wind farm development will be part of the investment ramping up being pushed by the Aboitiz group in the renewable energy (RE) space of the power sector – and this will serve as follow-through to the initial solar projects it had already undertaken.

According to Aboitiz Power, the joint venture deal will still be subject to regulatory approvals – and that will be concretized via acquisition by Aboitiz Renewables Inc. (ARI) of a 60-percent stake in the Libmanan onshore wind project, a venture that was started by Mainstream since 2017.

Aboitiz Power has the most diverse RE technologies on its supply portfolio – and that ranges from geothermal, hydro as well as solar; and the next to be delivered will be generated capacity from its first wind plant venture.

As noted by Aboitiz Power President and CEO Emmanuel V. Rubio, “this joint venture marks AboitizPower’s first foray into wind energy and underscores our aspiration to be a strong renewable energy partner.”

The energy investment arm of the Aboitiz conglomerate is currently the biggest power producer in the country – and in the regime of flourishing RE investments, the company is also eyeing to replicate the successful traction it already gained through investments in other technologies.

As cast by the company, it will be beefing up its RE portfolio to 4,600MW by the turn of the decade – coinciding with the timeframe set by the Department of Energy (DOE) when RE’s share in the country’s power mix would already reach a scale of 35-percent vis-à-vis installed capacity.

Rubio emphasized “the Libmanan onshore wind project with Mainstream, along with future endeavors in the pipeline will help bring us to our goal.”

He further highlighted the company’s optimism on “the realization of our renewable ambitions over the next decade, both domestically and internationally, while we continue to serve the critical baseload needs of the Philippine energy system.”

On the part of the foreign partner, Mary Quaney, chief executive officer of Mainstream, asserted that “the Philippines is one of our priority markets in the region and we are

committed to working in partnership with AboitizPower to support the country's ambitious and commendable target to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 75-percent by 2030."

James Arnold Villaroman, president and chief operating officer of Aboitiz Renewables, similarly stated that the Libmanan wind farm development is a "shared aspiration" with its global firm partner; primarily anchored on "growing the Philippine renewable energy generation portfolio in the years to come" and will also underpin the firm's decarbonization strategy moving forward.

"This is the beginning of an exciting new era for AboitizPower and ARI, as we take a key step towards our 10-year strategy of growing our renewable energy capacity and striking a 50:50 balance between our renewable and thermal portfolios," he stressed

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[\[OPINION\] Pondering on the critical threats and dangers facing the world today](#)

The 77th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) speech of President Marcos Jr. underscored the “threatening” global environment, with geopolitical crises, climate change, and recession all over the world.

Mr. Marcos’ repivot into America’s embrace, a departure from his predecessor’s anti-US and anti-UN rhetoric, mirrors the general attitude of Asean as a region, as well as a realization of the “clear and present danger” facing the world today.

But more than that, the President has apparently felt the nation’s pulse when it comes to attitude toward the US and China. Only a small percentage of Filipinos look kindly at China, since very little of what it had promised the Philippines at the start of the Duterte administration have come true, while many irritants remain in the West Philippine Sea affecting our poor fisherfolk.

Although Mr. Marcos repeated Duterte’s policy that the country will be “a friend to all and an enemy to none,” his pronouncements in New York saying that he cannot “imagine the Philippines without the US” as an ally betrayed his biases.

That US pivot is not without its dangers, however. While the Philippines has coaxed its Asean neighbors to have a peaceful and solid stance on international issues (especially on China’s expansive maritime claims), it is clear that the country is moving toward the alliance of America, Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

It is doubtful at this point that China, a major economic and military rival of the US, would warm up again toward the Philippines. That opens an imminent danger for the country as China and Taiwan (which is about 370 kilometers from Batanes) are seriously engaged in actual military provocations. The recent visit of a top US official to Taiwan riled China so much that it carried out its largest military exercises around the island. The problem here is that, unlike in the Ukraine-Russia war, America will NOT limit its help to logistics and firepower, but has said that it was destined to get involved militarily—as in sending its soldiers to defend Taiwan—if China invades it.

Where would that leave the Philippines when a firefight ensues between China and neighboring Taiwan? Mr. Marcos also mentioned the “nuclear threat” in his UNGA speech. We are not too far away from North Korea, which has indiscriminately fired missiles and texted its nuclear capabilities, even as its people starve. North Korea is clearly a rabid enemy of the US. Where does that place the Philippines?

Speaking of nuclear fallout, as a US ally, we are not that safe from the debris of Russia’s nuclear weapons. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has no love lost for America for its aid to Ukraine, has haughtily challenged the world last week, saying that Russia will win the war or there would be nuclear destruction.

Indeed, there's a price to pay by aligning our country strongly with the US. But then again, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

Next to such geopolitical dangers, there are the effects of climate change that threaten the Philippines even more. Though we are negative in our carbon emissions, the country remains No. 4 in terms of vulnerability to the ravages of climate change like typhoons, droughts, floods, and earthquakes. This week alone, the world saw the destruction wrought by a howling hurricane over Florida, the floods in Pakistan and India, and Typhoon "Karding" in the Philippines.

Our being in the typhoon and earthquake belt has increased the chances of our crops being destroyed and our land washed away, further threatening the country's food security that has been affected by the supply chain disruption caused by the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

We cannot afford to have a forever strengthening dollar while all other currencies flounder, as this creates a further trade imbalance among nations. Just look at how dangerously close the peso is to the P60 to \$1 exchange rate. Nations that have more imports than exports, buy its oil overseas, and have a huge foreign debt get doubly hit by the currency pinch and the rising interest rates of foreign obligations, as the Philippines has been.

Finally, there is the threat that comes even from benevolent sources like science. The digitalization of commerce has given rise to newfangled exotic crimes and the weaponization of AI (artificial intelligence). What shall poor nations do with the disappearance of jobs due to robots?

The world today is not what it was, even just five years ago. It is not better but immensely worse. Brace up!

PHILIPPINES NEWS AGENCY

[Solon pushes creation of GOCC focused on renewable energy dev't](#)

By: Jose Cielito Raganit

Manila – Cagayan de Oro City 2nd District Representative Rufus Rodriguez on Thursday pushed for the passage of a bill establishing the Philippine Renewable Energy Corp. (PREC) that would focus on the development of renewable energy (RE) sources in the country.

Under his House Bill No. 4205, the Mindanao lawmaker said Congress needs to enact measures that would help ensure stable, affordable and reliable supply of electricity to sustain economic growth and enhance the well-being of the nation.

“It is imperative for the government to take a more active role in assuring adequate supply of electricity with the use of renewable energy sources, thereby reducing the country’s dependence on imported fossil fuels and mitigate the impact of climate change,” Rodriguez said.

He said there is also an urgent need to undertake electrification projects through the development of RE sources in underserved, unserved and missionary areas.

Rodriguez said the necessity of developing RE projects could not be stressed enough following the warning of Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla Monday of a tight power supply situation in the first half of 2023.

“Accelerating existing (RE) projects and finding new sources will eventually boost supply,” he said.

He said other RE resources under HB 4205 include biomass, solar, wind, geothermal, ocean energy, and hydropower.

The bill abolishes the Philippine National Oil Corp.-Renewables Corp. (PNOC-RC) and transfers its power, functions, projects, investments, funds, property and other assets, and personnel to the proposed PREC.

The envisioned new entity would also inherit the Agus-Pulangui Hydroelectric Power Plant complex and its facilities, which are currently operated and maintained by the National Power Corp.

The bill provides that the complex, consisting of seven power plants located along the Agus and Pulangui rivers in Lanao and Bukidnon, shall be exempt from privatization. The plants generate about 1,000 megawatts of electricity.

“The plants shall be retained to generate buffer supply for Mindanao,” Rodriguez said.

The bill also mandates the inclusion of PHP7 billion in the national budget as an initial appropriation for PREC.

Aside from the appropriation, the corporation's authorized capital shall include all assets it would receive from PNOC-RC, and the Agus-Pulangui complex and its facilities.

PREC would be governed by a board of directors composed of seven members to be appointed by the President for a term of three years.

The use of renewable energy is on top of the agenda of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.

In his State of the Nation Address (SONA), Marcos emphasized the need to increase the level of energy production in the country as "our demand for energy far exceeds our reliable supply."

"We must look at every possible option that would be appropriate for the Philippine situation. Our search for new power sources should always be with an eye to improving the mix of the energy supply between traditional and renewable sources," Marcos said.

"The technology on renewable energy is progressing rapidly. And many of these technologies are appropriate for the Philippines," he added.

RAPPLER

[How to restore PH's lost mangrove forest? An Iloilo town shows the way](#)

By: Arnel Murga

Iloilo, Philippines – Full-grown, healthy mangrove trees stood firmly on the coastline between the municipality of Leganes and the city of Iloilo, burying and stretching their intricately interwoven roots on the shore.

“That’s the mangrove rehabilitation area,” said Leganes municipal environment and natural resources officer Wilson Batislaon, pointing to the thick mangrove forest as birds burst into flight.

“That’s Leganes Integrated Katunggan Ecopark.”

Between 2000 and 2016, the world lost 62% of mangrove forests due to aquaculture, agriculture, urban development, and the timber industry. In the Philippines, 50% of mangrove forests have been lost mainly due to the construction or development of fishponds.

The country has been rectifying this by implementing various programs on mangrove reforestation, such as the Leganes Integrated Katunggan Ecopark (LIKE).

The land where the ecopark is situated is part of Republic Act No. 366, a law granting the municipality of Leganes the usufruct of a certain parcel of land of the public domain in Iloilo for communal purposes.

Rented and used by businessmen and local residents, the ecopark used to be a 9.5-hectare fishpond. However, in 2008, Typhoon Frank (Fengshen) lambasted the fishpond, destroying the dikes and leaving behind nothing but a pile of soil and mud-colored waters.

The lessees could no longer afford to recover from the economic loss. The fishpond was abandoned and, eventually, surrendered back to the local government unit (LGU).

But the tide turned what was then an abandoned fishpond into a 200-meter-wide mangrove greenbelt – considered as “one of the most successful mangrove rehabilitation projects in the Philippines,” according to the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)-Philippines.

The rehabilitation process

“It was not easy, of course. But the mangrove rehabilitation framework made it possible,” said Batislaon, who was awarded the Walt Disney Conservation Hero for his efforts to save the mangroves.

The framework involved five phases: local site coordination, comprehensive site assessment, participatory mangrove rehabilitation planning, participatory project implementation, and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

The destruction caused by Typhoon Frank prompted the LGU of Leganes and the ZSL-Philippines – known as the country’s authority on mangrove conservation – to survey the abandoned ponds in barangays Nabitasan and Gua-an in 2009.

During the local site coordination, the barangay captains and community members were presented with the results of the assessment, the recommendation to convert the fishpond back into mangrove forests, and the benefits of a rehabilitated mangrove ecosystem.

The local government and ZSL-Philippines entered into a memorandum of agreement in the same year, starting the conversion of the 9.5-hectare fishpond.

ZSL-Philippines, composed of biologists and marine scientists, among other technical experts, led the comprehensive site assessment, where the soil and the site were analyzed to identify the right species of mangroves.

Jurgenne Primavera, then-project leader of ZSL-Philippines, emphasized the importance of a science-based site assessment.

“Otherwise, the resources – both time and money – invested would go to waste. What to, when to, where to, and how to plant are important questions,” said Primavera, who was among Time magazine’s Heroes of the Environment 2008.

A total of 39 species of mangroves can grow in the Philippines. Ten of them were identified to be feasible for planting in the Leganes ecopark, namely:

- Avicennia marina (bungalon)
- Avicennia rumphiana (bungalon/apiapi)
- Bruguiera cylindrica (pototan)
- Ceriops decandra (baras-baras)
- Excoecaria agallocha (lipata)
- Lumnitzera racemosa (tabao)
- Rhizophora apiculata (bakhaw lalaki)
- Rhizophora mucronata (bakhaw babae)
- Rhizophora stylosa (bakhaw bato)
- Sonneratia alba (pagatpat)

ZSL-Philippines and the local government conducted site visits and oriented volunteers about basic information on mangroves. After the orientation, the volunteers – students and teachers from the local Nabitasan National High School, as well as LGU staff – were able to plant 1,712 mangrove seedlings.

“It is a good way to start with the locals and the government agencies,” said Batislaon. “This is to mobilize people and get the support that we need.”

Community as champions

The local government itself put money where its mouth was. In 2010, it allocated P147,000 for the mangrove rehabilitation, including everything from establishing a nursery to hiring a caretaker for the mangrove site, among others.

The following year, it legislated the Leganes Mangrove Protected Ordinance (Municipal Ordinance No. 2011-227), which declared the mangrove areas in Leganes protected, established regulations for the conservation and protection of mangrove trees, and penalized violators.

The Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) allotted an additional P47,000 for the construction of a resting shed in the ecopark, and another P250,000 for the construction of a bamboo footbridge and tower.

Local community members, meanwhile, constructed a floating cottage, as well as the T-fence, which traps sediment that provides a strong base for newly-planted mangrove seedlings.

They also served as guides for volunteers and visitors, bagged and planted seedlings, and helped in maintaining the mangrove sites.

After the mangroves were successfully restored and the ecopark structures were built, LIKE was launched to the public in 2014.

The local community members later organized themselves into a people’s organization, the Coastal Barangay Mangrove Seedlings Growers Association of Leganes, “so that they will have ownership of the project.”

The members of the group became champions of mangroves, serving as the frontliners in the conservation of the ecopark.

“We want to make sure that the ecopark thrives,” said Joseph Espinosa, the president of the organization.

In 2015, the Leganes local government extended its restoration efforts to include the adjacent 5.5 hectares of abandoned fishponds, turning the Leganes ecopark into a 15-hectare mangrove forest. As of June 2022, over 150,000 mangrove seedlings have been planted in the area.

Four years later in 2019, the Protection through Biodiversity Conservation in Coastal Ecosystems Affected by Typhoons in the Philippines (ProCoast) established LIKE as a

center of learning for mangrove conservation practitioners to “promote innovative measures through learning visits, peer-to-peer exchanges, and training workshops.”

Challenges

While considered as one of the country’s most successful community-based mangrove rehabilitation projects, LIKE’s rehabilitation process was not without challenges.

Along the way, organizers had to deal with community members who were either uninterested or violators themselves. Unscientific methods of mangrove planting were another challenge.

For instance, during the initial phase of the mangrove planting, some seedlings did not survive because they were planted incorrectly.

“Sang una nagapagusto lang kami tanum (We just planted however we wanted),” said Meriam Fely, a local resident who expressed willingness to volunteer in the mangrove rehabilitation project. “But it was wrong.”

“Planting mangroves needs to be science-based,” Primavera said.

In the country’s history of mangrove reforestation, there have been many failed planting activities mainly because of unscientific methods.

Dominic Wodehouse, the executive director of Mangrove Action Project, had said in a 2021 interview that one example of this was the country’s Guinness World Record for the “Most mangrove trees planted by a team in one hour.” After a few years, he visited the municipality of San Rafael in Ragay, Camarines Sur, where the world record-breaking planting was conducted, but there were no traces of the activity and only a few mangroves survived.

Back in Leganes, Batislaon recalled that at the beginning of the project, “the community members were hesitant and not interested to get involved.”

“Some even built shanty houses in the mangrove sites. And some mangrove seedlings were grazed by livestock, such as cattle and goats,” he said.

Espinosa added, “Before, the residents just cut down the mangroves either for firewood or timber.”

And though the fishpond was destroyed, shrimps, crabs, and other mollusk species continued to thrive in the waters, temporarily providing income for the local community members.

“That is why it was hard to work [with] them before. They thought we were taking their source of livelihood, which was not sustainable. It started from there,” Batislaon said. “It all boils down to education.”

Means of income

But once they were informed about the economic opportunity, community participation grew. Local community members started earning a living from nursing mangrove seedlings from “mother plant mangroves” – mangrove trees in nearby barangays.

The residents bagged the seedlings, which would then be bought by volunteers, students, employees of businesses, and members of professional organizations to plant in the project sites.

They also harvested the bounty the mangrove ecosystem provided. Mangroves, essential to the fisherfolk’s livelihood, are home to a large variety of marine fauna, including crustacean and mollusk species, such as imbao, a mangrove clam. They also serve as breeding grounds for coral reef fish and other fish.

“It has served as a sustainable means of income for me,” said Christian Quinayo, a local resident who has been actively involved in the mangrove rehabilitation.

“If I go to the mangrove areas, I know I will go home with a catch enough to feed my family and sell to the surrounding business establishments,” he added.

But some challenges remain, such as the negative attitude and harmful practices of non-members of the people’s organization, garbage coming from nearby barangays, and the need to further maximize the livelihood capacity of the mangrove system.

“These concerns are being addressed by the [people’s organization]. We expand our membership or invite them, conduct clean-up [drives], and provide capacity-building for other potential livelihoods we can generate from the mangrove,” Espinosa said.

The Leganes Mangrove Protected Ordinance paved the way for the smooth implementation of the rehabilitation. Illegal squatters were handled by police officers; cutting of mangrove trees was prohibited and penalized; and owners of domesticated animals that grazed in the mangrove areas were penalized.

“We have the full support of the LGU. It helped us in creating an enabling environment for mangrove rehabilitation,” Batislaon said.

Rooting for sustainability

In 2021, Leganes passed Municipal Ordinance 2021-502 series of 2021, which established the Leganes ecopark and provided other support services.

“The importance of good governance to sustain the project is really important,” Primavera said, citing the case of LIKE, which “continued to thrive” under three different local chief executives.

Learning from the ecopark's experience, Batislaon stressed the importance of mangrove reforestation as mandated by Republic Act No. 8850 or the Philippine Fisheries Code. The law provides for the reversal of all abandoned, underdeveloped, and underutilized (AUU) fishponds.

Under the law, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – in coordination with the Department of Agriculture, LGUs, and other concerned agencies and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils – determines which AUU fishponds can be reverted to their original mangrove state.

As of February 2015, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources recorded 345 canceled fishpond lease agreements involving 9,346.5985 hectares of AUU fishponds.

“With the number of the AUUs fishponds, the country can massively plant and expand the mangrove forests,” Batislaon said.

At present, LIKE's long-term vision is to become an ecotourism site. The United Architect of the Philippines (UAP)-Iloilo Bahandi designed a sustainable and eco-friendly infrastructure for the Laganes ecopark that would allow its visitors to enjoy, experience, and learn.

“Tourism infrastructure should not cause damage or stress to the surrounding environment and wildlife. But it needs to be well-planned. Otherwise, it can do more harm than good,” Batislaon said.

“The key here is no alteration of the habitat to promote eco-tourism,” said Nonard Suvisor, president of the UAP-Iloilo Bahandi. Aside from planting mangroves themselves, members of his group also collaboratively worked with the MENRO on the sustainability and eco-friendliness concept of the infrastructure.

“It was not only for us to experience the park but also to be involved in the conservation and reforestation process,” said Suvisor.

“Converting it into an ecopark is not only for tourism and to drive income. In ecotourism comes education, which is essential in the protection and conservation of the ecosystem. People can learn about mangroves and the rehabilitation without harming the environment,” Primavera added.

National coastal greenbelt?

Clearly, mangroves play a significant role in the protection of coastal communities against typhoons, rising tides and other related disasters, and mitigation of climate change. But despite its clear importance, human activities continue to destroy mangrove ecosystems in the country.

In Iloilo City, an age-old mangrove ecosystem was killed for the development of The Esplanade; in Bulacan, mangroves were uprooted for the Bulacan Aerotropolis; and in Manila Bay, biologists from the University of the Philippines Diliman's Institute of Biology said the coastline should have been planted with mangroves instead of being dumped with dolomite sand.

To strengthen mangrove reforestation and conservation in the Philippines, Liza Eisma-Osorio of international advocacy group Oceana Philippines said there is a need for the country to establish a national coastal greenbelt.

A greenbelt refers to natural or planted coastal vegetation, stretching at least 100 meters in width from the sea towards land, consisting primarily of mangrove and beach forest species. It is designed as a shield against the damaging effects of natural disasters and other issues that may occur, such as coastal erosion and storm surges.

Currently, at least seven bills have been filed both in the Senate and the House of Representatives to establish a national coastal greenbelt – a measure that was first proposed in the lower house in 2015.

“We needed this [greenbelt] decades ago,” Primavera said.

For now, she is pushing for best practices in mangrove rehabilitation – such as LIKE – to be replicated across the Philippines in the face of intensifying natural disasters.

TVC NEWS

Climate change: Advocates list demands ahead UN COP 27

A campaign has been launched to advocate for the implementation of climate change actions in Nigeria and other African countries.

This is intended to address the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations.

The launch of the African women and girls demands, ahead of the twenty seventh united nations climate change conference, is expected to ensure that urgent actions are taken to reverse the trend.

Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change amplifying existing gender inequalities and posing unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety.

Over the years, efforts to fight climate change and assist vulnerable countries to cope with its impact, have intensified.

But these impacts are still being felt by everyone particularly the vulnerable groups such as women, girls, the physically challenged and the aged.

As the impact of climate change continues to take a toll on vulnerable continents across the world, urgent actions are needed to reverse the trend to pave way for a more sustainable development.

A gathering organised by the Women's Environmental Program and Christian Aid hopes to accomplish this by presenting a list of six expectations and requests ahead of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

All regions of the world are affected by the negative impacts of climate change but developing nations are mostly affected due to their low adaptive capacity.

The push here is to ensure that this situation changes by raising voices at the climate change summit taking place, November in Egypt.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Pandemic disruptions, new climate risks spur revisiting of 6-year-old Green Jobs Act](#)

By: Samuel Medenilla

THE imminent threat of climate change and the mass labor displacement caused by business disruptions from the pandemic have reinvigorated the government efforts to push for the creation of more “green jobs.”

Unfortunately, Republic Act 107741 or the Green Jobs Act, which was supposed to help in that initiative, has yet to be fully implemented six years after it was signed by former President Benigno S. Aquino III.

In his speech at the 55th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. reiterated that his administration will aim for creating a “green sustainable and climate-resilient” economy.

He said this will boost international efforts to address rising sea levels and the increasing incidents of destructive extreme weather, which scientific experts attributed to climate change.

Marcos also hoped that “greening” specific parts of the economy like the energy industry will reduce the number of unemployed workers, which remained at 2.6 million as of July 2022.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated the so-called green economy is expected to generate between 15 million and 60 million jobs worldwide by 2030.

Green Jobs Act

RA 107741 aims to establish the National Green Jobs Human Resource Development Plan (NGJ-HRD) and provide incentives to employers who will engage in green practices and industries.

These incentives include fiscal and nonfiscal, such as a special deduction from taxable income, equivalent to 50 percent, for skills training and research and development expenses, as well as tax- and duty-free importation of capital equipment.

Under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 107741, as issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in 2017, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) was tasked to develop the standards that government will use to assess the qualified applicants for the incentives.

But in an e-mail to the BusinessMirror in August, CCC Development Management Officer Arnold G. Belver said they are still finalizing their “green thresholds” mandated by the said legislation.

“We are currently in the process of completing the data sets in the so-called ‘green thresholds’ of industry activities, and fine-tuning development and regulatory aspects of the draft guidelines and standards for the assessment and certification of green goods and services, and green technologies and practices for the purpose of regulating the availment of incentives, and ensuring green jobs content pursuant to the National Green Jobs Human Resource Development Plan spearheaded by the DOLE,” Belver said.

Among the challenges CCC faces in crafting the said standards were the overlapping provisions of RA 107741 with RA 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE), particularly those involved in the processes and innovations related to environmental protection systems and sustainability strategies.

The quarantine restrictions, which took effect during the onset of the pandemic, also caused delays in the consultations held by CCC for RA 107741.

The thresholds should have been completed by the CCC 120 days after the effectiveness of the IRR.

As of October 3, 2022, the CCC said the thresholds are still pending.

Just transition

THE former dean of the University of the Philippines-School of Labor and Industrial Relations (UP-SOLAIR), Rene E. Ofreneo, lamented the long delay in the full implementation of RA 107741, saying it would have encouraged more employers to create green jobs.

The legislation defined green jobs as “decent and productive employment that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment.”

“The vision and program of CCC [regarding RA 107741] will be critical for the green transformation of the economy,” Ofreneo said.

Aside from providing incentives to the private sector to adopt more sustainable measures, he said the law should also facilitate the “just transition” of workers from traditional less efficient and carbon-emitting activities, which are being phased out, to jobs with more sustainable operations.

The NGJ-HRD, which was finalized by DOLE in 2020, stipulates the importance of facilitating such transition through the consultation and capacity building of all tripartite

stakeholders, including the affected workers, before the implementation of any economic restructuring to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Through such transition, the government will establish a framework to ensure the displaced workers will still enjoy basic labor rights through employment-centered macroeconomic policies and environmental regulations.

In his 2019 paper titled “Is the Philippines Getting Green and Just? A Baseline Study on the Application of Just Transition Framework in the Philippines,” labor leader Wilson Fortaleza noted that such a framework is currently lacking in the local power and transportation sector.

“The lack of a just transition process in the power sector was due to the fact that there was no phaseout plan for fossil fuels to begin with, while the continuing dispute between the government and the transport sector on PUV [public utility vehicle] modernization also points to a shoddy process as well as fear of economic dislocation among PUV drivers,” Fortaleza said.

Both sectors, he said, are currently the top sources of carbon emissions in the country.

He estimates around 4,500 workers employed in the power sector, and 3.2 million in the PUV sectors, will be affected if the government decides to decommission coal power plants and modernize PUVs, respectively, as part of efforts to achieve its carbon emissions reduction targets.

Implementation challenges

BESIDES incentivizing the creation of green jobs and ensuring the rights and welfare of affected workers are protected, the NGJ-HRD also contained capacity-building provisions.

A study conducted by the Institute of Labor Studies (ILS), an attached agency of DOLE, disclosed that a major challenge in promoting green jobs is the lack of professionals and workers with skills and competencies, which are necessary for implementing “environmentally sustainable activities, products and services.”

The said activities include mitigation actions (activities, products and services to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases); adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management; protection of the ecosystems and habitats and prevention of land degradation from human activities; efficiency of water and natural resources management; pollution prevention and control; environmental compliance; education and training; and public awareness.

The Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) said these emerging demands from employers have led to the creation of “green occupations,” such as Solid Waste Management Equipment Operator, Recycling Worker, Solar Technician and Urban Gardener, among others.

ILS noted that identifying the skill demands from the private sector will be crucial so schools and technical-vocational training centers could produce graduates to fill the new vacancies.

Other issues that hamper efforts of firms to implement green initiatives are existing regulatory environment constraints for businesses; inefficient infrastructure services, internal conflicts and climate change; and the lack of sustainable actions for enterprises to go green.

The NGJ-HRD has listed the measures to address such challenges, which include environmental education and skills development as well as the integration of green strategies on the industry road maps for the private sector and in the Philippine Development Plan for the public sector.

With the start of the Marcos administration, ILS Executive Director Charisma Lobrin-Satumba said some of the provisions of the plan may have to be updated to fit the current priorities of the present government leadership.

She said this may include the newly signed memorandum of agreement between DOLE and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), wherein emergency employment beneficiaries will be tapped to help in the reforestation efforts.

“The HRD plan, while it was already formulated in 2020, needs to be updated given the transition [in the government]. It will then be shared again with the [21] implementing agencies,” Satumba said.

To further institutionalize the NGJ-HRD, its provisions will be integrated in the new Labor and Employment Plan of DOLE, which is expected to be completed before the end of the year, she said.

Commercial value

BUT even with the delays in the implementation of RA 107441, the National Tripartite Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) said some companies are already engaging in green initiatives, cognizant of its inherent advantages to their operations.

“Business-wise, there is commercial value in going green or adopting green practices/processes as consumers nowadays place a lot of premium in an establishment providing green services and products,” NWPC Executive Director Maria Criselda R. Sy told the Business-Mirror in an email interview.

Likewise, she noted that green practices are also cost-efficient since these involve using locally available resources as well as conservation of energy and materials.

“This is timely amid the rising price of electricity and fuel,” Sy said.

The labor official said NWPC teaches such practices through their 7 S of Good Housekeeping modules (sort, systematize, sweep, standardize, safety, self-discipline, and sustain), which teach employers how to keep their operations clean, organized, systematic and safe—resulting in fewer wastage of raw materials, energy and water in their operations.

“The implementation of productivity programs ultimately aims to improve the bottom line [of the companies], leading to expansion and growth, thus more employment opportunities,” Sy said.

Despite the positive feedback from those who availed themselves of their “greening” modules, NWPC reported that only around 10,000 of the over 900,000 firms nationwide have implemented the programs.

Of these, 3,004 firms applied for NWPC’s Green My Enterprise (ME) module since 2012, while the remaining 7,137 made use of their 7 S of Good Housekeeping module since 2002.

Fortaleza said once the Green Jobs Act takes full effect, it will greatly help in mainstreaming such green activities and generate new employment opportunities.

“Tens of thousands of green and climate jobs can be created depending on what sector, type of technology, level of investment, and the kind of policies and programs the government employs,” Fortaleza said.

Recalibrating climate change, post-pandemic response

By Jonathan Mayuga

STILL reeling from the economic setbacks brought by the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the Philippines was again struck by one of the worst impacts of climate change—extreme weather events.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that Super Typhoon Karding, the most recent of such extreme weather events, considered the “new normal” due to climate change—devastated most of Luzon.

One of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the Philippines is the first to be affected and almost always the last to recover from a climate change-triggered event.

The estimated total damage to agriculture from Karding has already breached the P3-billion mark and the damage to infrastructure is P304 million.

On the other hand, the estimated assistance provided by the National Government and Local Government Units (LGUs) to the typhoon-affected communities combined is only slightly over P51 million.

In its wake, Karding left 12 people dead, 5 missing and 52 others injured, according to a NDRRMC report as of October 2, 2022, which is Day 8 of Super Typhoon Karding and Day 926 of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The same report said the super typhoon affected 299,127 families, or 1,072,282 persons in 7 regions, 30 provinces and 229 cities and municipalities across the archipelago.

A total of 58,172 houses were damaged, with 7,150 having been completely destroyed during the onslaught of one of the strongest typhoons ever to make landfall in the Philippines.

The damage to infrastructure, which includes roads, schools, utility services facilities, and other government infrastructure, is also enormous, with an estimated cost reaching P304,245,310.

Worst, the damage to agriculture is P3,076,968,120.04. According to the NDRRMC, a total of 104,500 farmers and fisherfolk were affected when the typhoon ravaged 166,630.11 hectares of crops.

Preparing for the worst

TO Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, vice chairman of the Climate Change Commission (CCC), as far as the Philippines is concerned, we are on track in preparing for the worst impacts of climate change.

The CCC is the lead policy-making body of the government tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate government programs and ensure mainstreaming of climate-change action

in national, local and sectoral development plans towards a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines.

In a telephone interview on October 1, Borje said climate change is becoming an overarching governance issue that needs to be addressed, not just domestically, nationally but internationally.

“You know how it is. It is an issue of systems and the Philippine situation cannot be disaggregated from the global scenario. Be that as it may, you know the Philippines has been working very hard to prepare for the worst impacts of climate change. In fact, our national panel of experts has already identified 10 of those risks and we are making headway, I think, when it comes to the impacts of climate change for a quick onset,” he said.

According to Borje, the Philippines has established a very reliable system for quick-onset events like super typhoons, wherein the state weather bureau predicts when and where it will hit, and what is the worst-case scenario. This allows concerned national government agencies and LGUs to reduce the risk of disaster, minimize if not totally prevent casualties, and mount a post-disaster response.

Early warning system

“I NOTE that when it comes to early warning systems, our PAG-ASA has a particular capacity. Our NDRRMC, also together with other government agencies, to help address quick-onset events such as typhoons,” he said.

How, he asks aloud, can the government truly commiserate with those impacted the most by disaster? “One of the metrics...is the number of fatalities and casualties. We have observed, significantly, there’s a reduction. But every life matters. That is why it is important for our government to continue working very hard in ramping up our capabilities to address the impacts of climate change. And may I say, not just for quick-onset events but also for slow-onset events. This requires coordinated approaches and work on the adaptation part, essentially, and then the issue,” he said.

Indeed, he said the Philippines is more prepared today than a decade ago.

‘A developing thing’

“THE government has provided resources for this. But the question is, it is also a developing thing. Always, it moves. Because the challenges continue to change. It is important that we continue to adapt our approaches. I would say that based on the metrics, when it comes to quick-onset events, we have significantly improved. But is that the only approach we want? Again, every life matters,” he reiterated.

According to Borje, while closely looking at the impacts of extreme weather events, the Philippines is also monitoring slow-onset events—for mitigation—while strengthening disaster preparedness through national and local responses.

Borje said the Philippines remains committed to implementing Republic Act 9729, or the Climate Change Act of 2009, and Republic Act 10121, or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010.

The Climate Change Act, the law that created the CCC, promotes the mainstreaming of climate change into government policy formulations and establishes the framework, strategy and program on climate change, while the DRRM Act of 2010 aims to strengthen the country's disaster risk reduction and management system, provide a framework for national disaster risk reduction and management, and institutionalize a national disaster risk reduction and management plan.

Local climate change action plans

ACCORDING to Borje, the CCC continues to push LGUs to create and allocate funds for the implementation of their local climate change action plans.

The Climate Change Act of 2009, as amended, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations recognize the role of local governments as frontline agencies in the formulation, planning and implementation of climate action plans in their respective areas, consistent with the provisions of the Local Government Code, the National Framework Strategy for Climate Change, and the National Climate Change Action Plan.

The DILG Memorandum Circular 2014-135, on the other hand, provided that city and municipal local governments consider climate change adaptation as one of their regular functions, supported by provincial governments through technical assistance, enforcement and information management.

Over the past decade, much has been done to improve the crafting of local climate change action plans, he pointed out.

"We have modified warning systems already. We have a series of rainfall advisories and classifications," he said.

"If we zero in on LCCAP, 79 percent [of LGUs] has LCCAP. But is that enough? The 21 percent still needs to have an LCCAP. We want to see everybody to be fully involved. We are working on, even as we speak, we are also working at capacitating not just the LGUs but the higher educations for LCCAP," he pointed out.

Although the CCC is primarily a policy coordination office, Borje said the agency is mandated by law to partner with relevant government agencies, to work on increasing the adaptive capacities of communities and the government at the national level.

"It is important that we continue to work on providing assistance and direction to our national government institutions. Adequate budgets should be allocated," he added.

Increasing budgets

TO monitor the progress of government budget allocation for climate change-related programs, projects or activities, the CCC has partnered with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

Borje said for tagging climate change expenditures, there has been a 56-percent increase in the 2023 budget as proposed by national government institutions (NGIs).

“I think this was subject of the advisory budget of the Department of Budget and Management. It’s an ongoing partnership with the CCC. In 2022 kasi, the budget was 289.7 billion. This time around for the NEP 2023, umakyat na siya to 453.2 billion so that is 56 percent increase for climate change projects for NGIs,” he explained.

Meanwhile, Borje said the budget tagging activity revealed a 44-percent increase in NGI participation before the submissions in 2022.

“Before it was 145, now it is 210,” referring to the number of NGIs actively taking part in the budget process.

“Be that as it may, we want to increase our target participation. Our target participation is at 70 percent. Right now, even with that significant increase, it is still at around 60 percent. We want it to be 70 percent. That is one of the things that we are currently working on when it comes to ongoing programs, mainstreaming climate change and the adaptation and mitigation programs,” he said.

Consultative mechanism

UNDER the Marcos administration, Borje said the CCC will pursue a consultative mechanism to broaden participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as the private sector when it comes to crafting climate change action plans.

“We have formalized for the first time the consultative mechanism for civil society organizations. We now have at least 4; and for the private sector, we have so far 1. But we want the CCC to play an important part for policy formulation. It is up to us to continue working with stakeholders and provide the space for discussion,” he said.

“We want to work for a climate-smart and climate-resilient society,” he quipped.

According to Borje, fighting climate change under a post-pandemic scenario requires a whole-of-government approach, as well as international support.

“We recognize that this problem requires not just a whole-of-government approach. We need to negotiate for the Philippines when it comes to commitment. Our national system is part of a global system and as President Marcos says, we contribute so little when it comes to greenhouse-gas emissions and we bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change,” he said.

Support, Borje stressed, must come primarily from the international community, particularly the so-called “carbon industry.”

Climate change financing

DESPITE efforts to increase the budget for climate change actions, the Philippines is compelled to depend on the international community for climate change-related programs, projects and activities.

In a separate telephone interview, Albert Magalang, chief of the Climate Change Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources- Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB), said the Philippines introduced—at the Conference of Parties (COP) meeting last December—what he describes as “a game changer” in climate negotiations.

Instead of emission reduction and removal, the Philippines is pitching the call for emission avoidance, Magalang said.

Under the emission reduction scheme, claiming support is hard because of the baselining and modeling to show the country’s emission reduction.

Low-carbon emitter

“But our emission is very small. Very, very small. In truth, the equivalent support they’ll give you is also very small. It’s getting smaller and smaller and one can’t access it right away,” Magalang said. Thus, he explained, what the Philippines and other developing countries want now is emission avoidance.

Under the concept or mechanism of emission avoidance, activities like not putting up a new coal-fired power plant guarantees a point in emission avoidance.

“And even the conversion of forest to agricultural land or any other land use, its avoidance,” he said.

Emissions are considered environmental risks, he said, and avoiding them should be considered in seeking climate financing from developed countries.

Another emission avoidance score that needs to be considered, he said, is the use of “green technology” or technologies that avoid carbon emission.

Adaptation and mitigation, according to Magalang, should go hand in hand.

Climate change mitigation, he said, should address the challenge of limiting greenhouse-gas emission (GHG) to a minimum, while adapting to the worst impacts of climate change to make sure that communities are resilient and the ecosystem and people are protected against various risks.

Sustainable development

IN Magalang’s view, low-carbon development can be achieved, using the right technology.

He said this even as the Philippines, a low-carbon emitter, still has what he calls a remaining “carbon budget” to use.

“Development is not really a problem. We really need development. We still have carbon budget for development. But, it does not sit well with our goals,” he explained.

He noted that the Philippines is not yet fully industrialized, by way of explaining why the country’s GHG emission remains low.

Philippine GHG emission is only around 0.3 percent compared to the global GHG emission. “It is not even 1 percent, our contribution to the global GHG emission,” he noted.

Nevertheless, Magalang said the Philippines can opt for low-emitting technologies or non-GHG emitting technologies and demand support from developed countries to sustain development.

“We are entitled to green financing. That’s why every time there’s climate negotiations, we are reminding developed countries of that promised support,” he ended.

Recalibrating for post-pandemic recovery

IN conclusion, Borje said recalibration of climate change actions for post-pandemic recovery forms part of the work that the entire government is doing.

“And this is where the demand for more climate change mainstreaming is coming. In fact, for all of our LGUs and national government agencies, there is a realization because this is a system that we cannot divorce climate change or disaggregate from the realities because the direction that we are taking is, we want to bounce back from the pandemic,” he said.

Recently, however, the principle that is well accepted by the international community is the “build back better approach” or “build forward better,” according to him.

“We argued that for the Philippines, our approach is different and that is the ‘build right at first sight approach.’ Why? Because we have limited resources. We cannot afford to rebuild and rebuild. We have to make sure that every time we come up with a project for our LGU or national government, the project must be done right; and the best science and climate-resilient response to the problems as identified by the national panel of experts.

“It is an enlightened approach for our government. We want to say that with President Marcos’s vision, this is happening and the commitment further strengthens, our capacity for climate change is on track and something that is committed,” he concluded.

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