



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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- EU chief says bloc must act over US climate plan 'distortions'
- Group calls for treaty to protect people, environment from plastic pollution

### ABS CBN

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By: Agence France Presse

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### ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

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By Katherine Lake, The University of Melbourne

This year's global climate negotiations at the COP27 in Egypt were disappointing. In particular, the international commitment to limit planetary warming to 1.5°C remains on "life support".

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### [\[Opinion\] The Philippines and the European Union: Embarking on the same journey](#)

By: Victor Andres Manhit

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a blow to the Philippine economy and exposed many gaps and weaknesses in our system that had been present for some time.

## **ENTREPRENEUR.COM**

### [\[Opinion\] Can Southeast Asia Seize Global Opportunities in Sustainability?](#)

By Eric Chin

Climate change threats loom across the world, and Southeast Asia is in a favorable position to benefit from a windfall of sustainable investment opportunities if their plans take flight.

## **MANILA BULLETIN**

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MOSCOW, Russia – At least 2,500 endangered seals have been found dead along Russia's Caspian Sea coast, the local environment ministry said.

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By: Raymund Antonio

While House Deputy Minority Leader and ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. France Castro on Tuesday, Dec. 6, urged President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to prioritize salary increase amid the 14-year-high inflation rate of 8 percent in November 2022, House Ways and Means chair and Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda offered solutions, such as sugar trade liberalization and farmer support and training.

## **MINDA NEWS**

### [P16-billion US-backed solar power plant to rise in GenSan](#)

By: Allen Estabillo

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (MindaNews / 6 Dec) – A foreign-backed homegrown company is targeting to start in January the development of a 150-megawatt (MW) agrovoltatics solar power plant, touted as a “pioneering” renewable energy project in the country.

## **MONGABAY**

### **[Indigenous peoples and communities drive climate finance reform](#)**

By: John Cannon

Protecting forests by investing in Indigenous peoples and local communities, or IPLCs, is increasingly seen as one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change and halt the global loss of biodiversity. The trouble is that a lot of the funding flow doesn't reach the IPLC-led organizations that can tackle these issues, says Lindsey Allen, executive director of the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA).

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[\[Opinion\] Climate crisis is here](#)**

By: Crispin Maslog

An innocuous story in the ocean of online news recently caught my attention. It said that an entire Pacific island nation was considering an unusual backup plan for survival: moving its entire population to another country.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **[Legarda vows to continue environmental advocacies, thanks ACB for recognizing her as ASEAN Biodiversity Hero](#)**

By: OSLL

PASAY CITY -- Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda has vowed to continue advocating for the environment as she accepted the 2022 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Biodiversity Heroes Award officially handed over by the ASEAN Secretariat on Monday, December 5, at the Ceremonial Hall of the Philippine Senate in Pasay City.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[DA, 4 other agencies to set up farmer-to-market road network](#)**

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) and four other agencies are set to sign a joint administrative order (JAO) that will set up guidelines to make farm-to-market road (FMRs) interconnected with other infrastructure projects.

### **[Strengthen public-private partnerships to boost infra dev't](#)**

By: Joel Zaldarriaga

Cooperation between the government and private sectors has long been integral in the country's economic development with the various infrastructure projects under

public-private partnerships (PPP) already operational and beneficial to the Filipino people.

## **SUNSTAR**

### **[Rama: Razon group's entry in Cebu City's waste management 'positive development'](#)**

CEBU City Mayor Michael Rama sees the impending acquisition of Filipino billionaire businessman Enrique Razon's firm of a local waste management company as a positive development in the quest to solve the city's garbage issue.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[EU chief says bloc must act over US climate plan 'distortions'](#)**

By: Agence France Presse

BRUSSELS, Belgium — EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday the bloc must act to address "distortions" created by Washington's \$430-billion plan to spur climate-friendly technologies in the United States.

### **[Group calls for treaty to protect people, environment from plastic pollution](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — A toxics watchdog group called for a global agreement that will halt the harms caused by plastic and their hazardous chemical ingredients on humans and the environment.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## ABS CBN

### [Climate change supercharges threat from forest-eating bug](#)

By: Agence France Presse

HELSINKI, Finland - Deep in the Finnish woods, the moss and blueberry shrubs hide a deadly threat to the boreal forests that are as important to the planet as the Amazon rainforest.

With chunks of their bark peeling off and needles falling from dying branches, more and more trees are being killed by the spruce bark beetle, which is venturing further and further north with climate change.

The tiny brown insects attack the *Picea abies*, one of Finland's most common tree species, and can cause massive damage to forests.

Burrowing through the bark to lay their eggs, the beetles eat their way around the spruce and kill it by stopping water and nutrients reaching the higher branches.

"The species has caused huge damage across Central and Eastern Europe, especially since 2018," Markus Melin, a scientist at the Natural Resources Institute Finland, told AFP.

With climate change, the risk of the beetle spreading is a "lot higher now", Melin added.

"We have to accept it and adapt to it. Things are changing fast up here."

While the threat is greatest in southern Finland, the sweltering summer of 2021 saw bark beetle damage "unusually high up north" in the Kainuu region of northern Finland.

"It is well known that the spruce bark beetle is one of the species that benefit most from global warming," Melin said.

The beetles thrive on weakened trees. Hot summers mean there are more water-starved spruce, while warm winters mean there is no frozen ground to brace the trees against storms.

Warm weather also speeds up the life cycle of the beetles, meaning they can reproduce faster.

"Extreme warm summers benefit the bark beetle directly. They have less mortality, reproduction is faster," Melin said.

While the beetles normally go for weak trees, once their numbers reach a tipping point they can start attacking healthy ones.

"It becomes a nasty loop," Melin said.

If foresters do not react in time by removing weakened spruce, "suddenly there are so many beetles that they can attack healthy trees" further speeding the "cycle of destruction", Melin said.

## ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

### [COP27 was disappointing, but 2022 remains an historic year for international climate policy](#)

By Katherine Lake, The University of Melbourne

This year's global climate negotiations at the COP27 in Egypt were disappointing. In particular, the international commitment to limit planetary warming to 1.5°C remains on "life support".

But hope is not lost. In fact, 2022 was an historic year for international climate policy. It marked a shift in how the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters – China, the United States, the European Union and India – deal with climate change when faced with economic and energy shocks.

In the past, climate action has been pushed to the back-burner when governments devise policy responses to global crises. But this year, amid Russia's war on Ukraine, spiralling inflation and energy shortages, tackling climate change has been central to recovery plans.

It signals climate action and economic stability are no longer seen as competing priorities – instead, national governments realise they go hand-in-hand. As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has noted, this represents a major turning point in global climate policy and a "leap into the future".

#### **A global turning point**

Russia's illegal war on Ukraine has destabilised the global energy market and caused sharp rises in food and commodity prices, worsening global inflation.

In the past, such shocks would have prompted governments to enact a fairly blinkered policy response.

During the 1970s global oil crisis, for example, governments brought in massive fossil fuel subsidies and eased environmental rules for the petroleum industry, rather than reduce oil dependency.

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2008, government responses were often similarly short-sighted. Low-interest loans to banks and other institutions, for example, perpetuated a business-as-usual economic system of high emissions.

This was coupled with years of austerity which derailed funding and investment for climate action.

Hearteningly, 2022 has seen a very different approach.

The United States, European Union, China and India have all prioritised climate change in their response to global economic crises, as I outline below.

Why? Public support for climate action is ever-growing and climate-related disasters are becoming worse. What's more, renewable energy costs continue to fall, and energy security and global competitiveness remain big concerns.

### **The EU and US step up**

In the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU made a "dash for gas" to replace Russian supply. Germany made deals to purchase gas from African countries, Australia, the US and Middle East, triggering fears climate action would be delayed.

But the EU has since made climate change action a central priority. Its RePowerEU plan, released in May, presents clean energy as the solution to the so-called energy trilemma of costs, security and environmental sustainability.

Among other measures, the plan involves:

- ramped-up targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency
- substantial home and business electrification measures including electric vehicles and heat pumps
- ambitious targets for green hydrogen.

The plan intends to eliminate reliance on Russian gas by 2027 and almost halve overall gas use by 2030.

The US took similar action this year. Its historic Inflation Reduction Act puts clean energy investment at the forefront of plans to address the cost-of-living crisis.

At least US\$369 billion will be spent on clean energy initiatives to reduce energy bills. Clean energy will be embedded in measures across the economy through tax incentives, subsidies and grants. The investment prompted one observer to predict "the climate economy is about to explode".

By aligning climate change with economic policy, the government has shifted the business narrative from risk to opportunity.

This month the Biden administration went further, with a proposal for major government suppliers to disclose greenhouse gas emissions and set science-based emissions reduction targets. Climate change is also being considered in US pension plans and company reporting requirements.

By embedding climate change in existing systems, trillions of dollars will shift into clean energy. This is likely to change the US economy forever and accelerate emissions reduction.

## **Progress in China and India**

So what about the developing economies of China and India?

In China, coal use increased in the short-term over winter this year. However, China's government has released plans for specific sectors coupling economic and energy security, and low-carbon growth.

In July, the government released an emissions reduction blueprint for urbanisation and rural development. It includes ambitious measures to increase the energy efficiency of buildings, electrify buildings and transport (including huge deployment of electric vehicle charging stations) and mandate rooftop solar on new factories and public buildings.

The government has also worked closely with provincial governments on targets to more than double the installed capacity of wind and solar by 2025.

In India, a National Electricity Plan released by the central government this year has clean energy at its core. It means renewables capacity is set to soar by 250% over the next decade.

India's government has also introduced policies to favour electrification in buildings and transport – a departure from a previous policy in which gas played a significant role in future energy supply.

## **Change is afoot**

Analysis suggests the systemic changes outlined above could mean the EU, China and India exceed their current commitments under the Paris Agreement.

This is good news – but the world still has a long way to go. Climate action must be embedded deeply in the government policies of all nations, as well as in existing economic and energy systems. This is no small task – but it's necessary to achieve the transformation required to address the climate crisis.

Of course, 2022 was also a big year for climate action in Australia. The Albanese Labor government was elected in May, and has set about implementing a climate action agenda far stronger than that of the previous Coalition government.

Australia still lags behind other comparable nations. But recent developments in the EU and US offer lessons on the way forward.

Katherine Lake, Research Associate at the Centre for Resources, Energy and Environmental Law, The University of Melbourne

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## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **[\[Opinion\] The Philippines and the European Union: Embarking on the same journey](#)**

By: Victor Andres Manhit

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a blow to the Philippine economy and exposed many gaps and weaknesses in our system that had been present for some time.

Today, almost three years after the imposition of the first lockdowns, and as we try to recover from this crisis, we find that the traditional ways in which we did business and understood business growth models have changed drastically. So, if we are to recover fast and achieve sustainable development, we need to make our economy more resilient to future shocks and other uncertainties.

A big part of the effort to become resilient is to position the Philippines as a highly progressive and viable market in the international stage — and this we can do through accessibility for trade and investment, environmental sustainability, adaptive labor market, and improved quality of life.

It's a daunting task but one that can be achieved through a multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach where the government partners with the private sector and civil society.

Our friends from the European Union (EU) recently gave us some encouraging words that the Philippine economy could achieve this feat — that in fact, we have made steps in the right direction, and that we only need to continue making the right policy decisions in order to accelerate what we have begun.

During the second day of the Pilipinas Conference, organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute and held on Nov. 21 and 22, members of the EU community shared their insights on how the Philippines is doing in the area of global trade and investment, specifically in efforts to open the economy and attract investments in particular sectors. The panel discussion called “Balancing Recovery with Progressive Development through Global Cooperation” occasioned a conversation on how to strengthen the partnership between the Philippines and the EU.

In his keynote speech for the session, Luc Véron, the European Union Ambassador to the Philippines, emphasized that open, rules-based trade and investment is crucial to achieving sustainable economic recovery because it generates growth and, consequently, jobs. Collaboration between and among countries is important, he said.

“Beyond legislation and beyond economic agreements, global challenges can only be addressed through international cooperation — we have to embark on the same

journey. This is the only way to achieve sustainable transformation of our economies and create a better life for us and future generations,” he said.

Part of the sustainable future he envisions is tackling climate change, especially since the Philippines is one of the countries that are most vulnerable to its effects. Mr. Véron said he welcomed the revision of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Renewable Energy Act that now allows 100% participation of foreign investors in the sector.

Chris Humphrey, Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council, said that the Philippines has a dynamic and growing economy with a lot of positives — its people, natural resources, and geographical location. “It is unlocking the potential of all these great things that you have which could be the key to getting more trade and investments coming in.”

He spoke with candor as he said our trade and performance has been steady — “generally improving but far from spectacular. And spectacular is where you want to get to.”

He also sees the environment as key. “Unfortunately, you are a nation very prone to climate change issues. Improving life and accelerating work in these areas have the potential to attract more investments, particularly from Europe. These will create employment and conditions that allow for further investments in other sectors.”

Lars Wittig, President of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, meanwhile said that the Public Service Act is where they see the most groundbreaking reform made in several decades. “That was really a major change and also a shift in the whole approach and embracing of foreign investments and trade and local cooperation.”

Philipp Dupuis, Head of Trade and Economic Affairs of the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines, pointed out an imbalance in the structure of Philippine exports to the EU — “Eighty-two percent of Philippine exports are electronics, in particular semiconductors, 16% in agriculture. There is little diversification,” he said.

“And even though the EU GSP+ offers tariff freedom for 66% of the tariff lines, only a few tariff lines are actually used by Philippine exporters. There is potential here. Or an opportunity.”

Mr. Dupuis also pointed out several issues that are central to achieving growth: sustainability, the environment, climate, human rights, labor rights, and good governance. European businesses are becoming increasingly interested in the Philippines, he said, and there is a lot of potential that has yet to be untapped.

For many decades, our country has nurtured a deep and lasting partnership with the EU. The insights of the members of the EU community have great strategic value, especially as we ponder the best steps we should take to achieve recovery and

sustainable growth after the ravages of the pandemic. We at the Stratbase ADR Institute look forward to an even stronger collaboration with the EU in our bid to make our economy not only dynamic and robust, but resilient to external shocks, as well.

**[\[Opinion\] Can Southeast Asia Seize Global Opportunities in Sustainability?](#)**

By Eric Chin

Climate change threats loom across the world, and Southeast Asia is in a favorable position to benefit from a windfall of sustainable investment opportunities if their plans take flight.

At first look, it may be challenging to envision a clean and green future for Southeast Asia. The region is notorious for its environmental problems, from the haze blanketing Indonesia to the pollution clogging up rivers in Vietnam.

Worldwide, we are facing the threats of climate change, and current economic conditions threaten to choke any green initiatives before they can truly make a difference. And yet, there is a reason for optimism. Several countries in Southeast Asia have taken steps to address the issue of sustainability. If they can succeed in implementing their plans, they stand to reap a windfall of investment opportunities.

Crucially, sustainable innovation isn't just tokenism — it can be big business. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) focused assets are projected to grow to 50 trillion dollars by 2025. But can Southeast Asia seize this global opportunity?

What is the current state of sustainability in Southeast Asia?

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, as sustainability efforts vary significantly from country to country. Indonesia, for example, has been working to combat the haze caused by slash-and-burn agriculture practices, and in 2018 the government introduced a moratorium on new palm oil plantation development.

However, as an illustration of the fragility of such policy-making, the Indonesian government paused that moratorium in 2021, although it has pledged not to approve new palm oil permits in the future.

In areas that don't rely as much on agriculture, like Singapore, the approach to sustainability is much more technical. The Singapore Government has seen the importance of sustainable innovation, and its US\$133 million Enterprise Sustainability Programme (ESP) is driving businesses to develop sustainable solutions to implement in their business models.

Fruits of this effort include companies like Karana Foods, which produces plant-based meat alternatives, and collaboration with &ever, a German vertical farming company targeting an output of 1,400 kgs of vegetables and herbs daily.

Problems faced in Southeast Asia reaching sustainability

There are several problems that countries in Southeast Asia face when it comes to sustainability, but there are three main hurdles. Firstly, many countries still rely heavily on natural resources, such as timber and coal, for their economic growth. This reliance means that these countries need to be faster to implement sustainable practices, as they fear the impact on their economies.

Secondly, more data and transparency are needed to assess the state of sustainability in Southeast Asia. This lack of data hampers policy-making and makes it difficult for businesses to identify opportunities.

Singapore is addressing this as part of its ESP by working on a common disclosure portal for investors and financial institutions to access standardized data and for companies to use it as an internal ESG monitoring tool.

Thirdly, increased urbanization is putting pressure on resources such as water and energy. This is particularly apparent in Singapore, which has one of the highest population densities in the world. The country is therefore working on initiatives such as water reuse and solar energy to mitigate these pressures.

How can Southeast Asia capture sustainability opportunities?

Despite the challenges, there are some ways in which Southeast Asia can capture sustainability opportunities. Firstly, Southeast Asian countries can still rely on their natural resources for a sustainable future.

Indonesia and the Philippines are the second and third-largest producers of geothermal gas, a renewable energy source that will be in demand for decades. Singapore's solar capacity has grown more than 600% in the last five years, and Vietnam is following close behind. Southeast Asia offers wind and wave power, potential sources of renewable energy.

Secondly, policies encouraging sustainable innovation, like Singapore's ESP, can create a conducive environment for companies to develop sustainable solutions. These solutions can then be exported to other markets, as has been the case with Karana Foods and & ever.

Thirdly, increased urbanization can be positive. With proper planning, it can provide an opportunity to build cities that are more sustainable and resource-efficient. Singapore, the world's most urban nation, is already doing its part to assist the agricultural sector in the wider Southeast Asian region by fostering agritech venture capital, think tanks, and digitization.

Finally, the creation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) between the 10 ASEAN nations and their five non-ASEAN partners has created the largest trading bloc in the world. This presents a unique opportunity to promote sustainable practices across the region, leading to increased global competitiveness.

Southeast Asia has the potential to be a world leader in sustainability, but it faces significant challenges. However, these challenges are not unique to Southeast Asia — whereas there are inherent advantages unique to the region.

We may not see immediate results, but with the right policies in place, the region can capture opportunities to create a more sustainable future for all while reaping the once-in-a-generation economic opportunities.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [At least 2,500 seals found dead on Russia's Caspian Sea coast](#)

By: Agence France Presse

MOSCOW, Russia – At least 2,500 endangered seals have been found dead along Russia's Caspian Sea coast, the local environment ministry said.

Investigators are still working to explain why the seals washed up on beaches in Dagestan, southern Russia.

Authorities are leaning towards suffocation from gas released from the seafloor as the “main” cause of death, said Svetlana Radionova, the head of the Russian agency for natural resources.

She said she expected the first results of the investigation — which should determine if water pollution had an impact — towards the end of the week.

In an interview on Russian television Rossiya-24, Radionova recalled a similar disaster that saw 2,000 dead seals wash up on the coast of Dagestan and Azerbaijan in 2020.

The Caspian Sea, the world's largest inland body of water, is bordered by five countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkmenistan.

The seal population of the Caspian Sea has for decades suffered from over-hunting and the effects of industrial pollution.

Experts say there are now about 68,000 Caspian seals, down from more than one million in the early 20th century.

Pollution from the extraction of oil and gas there, along with declining water levels due to climate change, pose a threat to many species and put the future of the sea itself at risk.

## Record-high PH inflation draws mixed reactions from solons

By: Raymund Antonio

While House Deputy Minority Leader and ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. France Castro on Tuesday, Dec. 6, urged President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to prioritize salary increase amid the 14-year-high inflation rate of 8 percent in November 2022, House Ways and Means chair and Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda offered solutions, such as sugar trade liberalization and farmer support and training.

The Philippines’ inflation rate jumped to a whopping 8 percent last month, the highest recorded in 14 years or since Nov. 2008, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported, because of the rising prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages.

This figure is more than double the recorded 3.7 percent inflation rate in November 2021 and a small increase from the 7.7 percent inflation rate recorded in October 2022.

In a statement, Castro said the Marcos administration cannot turn a blind eye to the reality that millions of Filipinos are going hungry because of rising prices, and called it out for having enough “surplus of funds” for the controversial P275-billion Maharlika Wealth Fund (MWF), the NTF-ELCAC (National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict), and the confidential funds approved for both the Office of the President (OP) and the Office of the Vice President (OVP).

“In the spirit of the upcoming holidays, the Marcos administration should ensure that (the) people are able to provide decent lives for themselves and their families. With the record-high inflation rate of 8 percent this November, the Marcos Jr. administration cannot deny the fact that this has a huge impact on the everyday lives of ordinary Filipinos,” she said.

“We urge the Marcos Jr. administration to certify wage and salary bills in Congress as urgent. It should make concrete steps that will immediately affect the people. The government must do something to immediately relieve the people of the heavy burden of the effects of high inflation and the below living wages they receive,” the lawmaker added.

Castro stressed that the administration should prioritize lowering the prices of basic commodities and increasing the wages of Filipinos instead of focusing on the MWF.

In a separate statement, Salceda expressed no surprise that the country reached 8 percent inflation rate because he warned in August that inflation could even peak at 8.5 percent with the country ending with an annual average of 6 percent.

“We are on track to meet that number,” he said.

But while he was not surprised of the record-high number, the veteran lawmaker and economist listed suggestions to President Marcos and his economic team.

“There is an abundance of tools available to the President and his economic team to combat inflation. Immediate executive action may still take time to actually address fundamental drivers of inflation, but would be proper signaling for the public and private sectors. Inflation remains the toughest economic storm we must weather, and our ships must sail in the same direction,” he stated.

First, Salceda said that the country should “open up our food markets” because the “rigid food trade regime in crops in short supply” is also the reason food prices became the “primary driver of high inflation.”

He hit the strategy of “stubborn protectionism” of the sugar sector because it stunts the growth of the food industry, “and forces us to import more sugar-heavy finished goods.”

“We need to reconsider ways to protect our farmers in ways other than strict protectionism in our agricultural trade regime. The 38 percent year-on-year inflation in sugar can no longer be justified by protecting the local sector, which is heavily unequal on its own.”

“As such, some form of sugar trade liberalization must remain on the policy table,” he said, adding that increasing the Minimum Access Volume for corn immediately would help the domestic supply.

Climate change and pestilence are also primary drivers of inflation because farmers are unable to address these threats.

Salceda called for a “more robust and active Agricultural Training Institute, and DA (Department of Agriculture) Regional Field Offices, as well as better Municipal Agriculturist Offices will be crucial.”

He also recommended that the President issue an executive order to ease all supply bottlenecks for food and other farm producers as this will address the role of logistics and transport costs in increasing food prices.

The order should direct local government units (LGUs) to lift all hindrances and blockages across farm-to-market routes and the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to ensure the proper flow of traffic feeding into inter-island nautical routes.

## **MINDA NEWS**

### **[P16-billion US-backed solar power plant to rise in GenSan](#)**

By: Allen Estabillo

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (MindaNews / 6 Dec) – A foreign-backed homegrown company is targeting to start in January the development of a 150-megawatt (MW) agrovoltatics solar power plant, touted as a “pioneering” renewable energy project in the country.

Yan Amante, president and chief executive officer of Embrace Nature Power 1 Corporation (ENPC-1), said preparations are underway for the construction of a solar farm and power plant in a 120-hectare property spanning portions of Barangays Conel and Mabuhay here.

She said they are investing around \$285 million or roughly P16 billion into the project, which is set to break ground in the third week of January.

“We will be employing 1,500 workers for the construction phase, which will be completed in 12 months,” Amante said in her presentation to the city council on Tuesday.

ENPC-1, which is based in Purok Guadalupe in Barangay Conel, is 60-percent owned by a local company and the 40-percent equity by an undisclosed United States-based funder, she said.

The project area covers a total of 61 hectares in Barangay Conel and 59 hectares in Barangay Mabuhay that are part of a Forest Land Grazing Management Agreement held by the family of Grace Leyson Beronio.

The company has partnered with a Croatian energy firm for the adoption of the agrovoltatics technology for the project, which she said will be among the first of its kind in the country.

Amante said agrovoltatics is primarily a combination of energy and agricultural activity, with the solar panels installed at least two to three meters above the ground and with the land below utilized for growing various crops.

For the Conel-Mabuhay project, she said they are initially planning to plant upland rice and ginger and later on develop a green tea plantation on the ground hosting the over 200,000 solar panels.

“The project adopts a symbiotic design unlike the traditional solar farms wherein the ground remains unused and barren,” Amante said.

It will help mitigate the impact of climate change as well as prevent flashfloods and landslides or erosion, she said.

When eventually operational, the solar power plant would be a cheaper power alternative for local electric cooperatives as its generation charge could only reach P5.90 per kilowatt-hour (kwh), she said.

Amante said that would translate to an actual power rate of P8 to P9 per kwh, which is below the average P10 to P11 rate here charged by South Cotabato 2 Electric Cooperative (Socoteco 2).

It will also benefit other areas in the country as the solar power plant will be connected to the Mindanao power grid through the Mabuhay-Klinan substation of the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines, she noted.

For the city, Amante said it could earn around P225 million annually in income and corporate taxes in the eighth year of the company's operations or after the seven-year government tax holiday for renewable energy projects.

The plant will hire 50 local workers for its operations and more manpower, possibly including able senior citizens, for its agriculture projects.

"It can also be promoted for tourism since it is considered as a pioneering project here in the Philippines," she said.

Vice Mayor Rosalita Nuñez expressed full support to the project, which she described as "something very unique."

"We're very happy seeing this project come into fruition... We don't see any problem passing a resolution interposing no objection for this," she said, responding to a request from the company made through City Councilor Froebel Kan Balleque.

Records from the Department of Energy showed that ENPC-1 submitted the required permitting documents for the solar power project in March 2018.

The company conducted public consultations last September with residents of the project site and other concerned stakeholders.

## MONGABAY

### [Indigenous peoples and communities drive climate finance reform](#)

By: John Cannon

Protecting forests by investing in Indigenous peoples and local communities, or IPLCs, is increasingly seen as one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change and halt the global loss of biodiversity. The trouble is that a lot of the funding flow doesn't reach the IPLC-led organizations that can tackle these issues, says Lindsey Allen, executive director of the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA).

"Right now there's incredible dissonance between what the evidence shows works for protecting tropical forests and supporting communities, and where the majority of funding flows," Allen said in an email to Mongabay. "This has to change. It is impossible to end deforestation without a much larger portion of funding reaching organizations in tropical forest countries, and especially Indigenous and community organizations."

In response to this disconnect, IPLC organizations are banding together to develop funding mechanisms to which big donors can contribute. In support of these efforts, U.S.-based CLUA, which itself is a collective of several private foundations, is working with a broader group of philanthropic climate donors to develop what Allen calls "a 'plumbing' system for this finance." The goal is to move funds more effectively to places where they can have the most impact.

Scientific research has brought the important role that IPLCs play in managing forests into sharp focus. Traditional lands hold 36% of remaining intact forests, which contain vast amounts of carbon critical to meeting global climate goals. But in many places, IPLC rights aren't legally recognized. These organizations also face a number of hurdles blocking the path of financing from donors' endowments. IPLC organizations often can't comply with monitoring and reporting requirements, and the funding they receive may not be flexible enough to be tailored to on-the-ground priorities.

What's more, IPLC organizations are often small and too numerous for donors to interact with directly. That can make communication difficult, said Levi Sucre Romero, an Indigenous Bribri leader from Costa Rica, in a recorded text message to Mongabay.

"We realized that it is difficult [or] impossible to work with everyone or talk to everyone at the same time," said Sucre, also the co-president of the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities. GATC represents traditional communities in 24 countries covering 60% of Earth's tropical forests.

Funding has begun to flow toward climate projects, especially since the announcement of a \$1.7 billion commitment from governments and private funders announced at the 2021 U.N. climate conference. But IPLC leaders and Indigenous rights advocates have raised concerns that only 7% of the \$321 million delivered in the pledge's first year went straight to IPLC groups.

Sucre said projects aimed at restoring forests, thereby securing the carbon they contain and the biodiversity they support, do need more money. The Rights and Resources Initiative figures it will cost \$10 billion to formalize IPLC claims by 2030 to limit the rise in global temperatures. But, Sucre said, the 2021 pledge has opened the door to new conversations around funding and helped IPLCs understand what has been blocking access to that money.

One response from the global IPLC community has been to create a set of geographically focused funds that act as clearinghouses for donor funds, distributing large grants in smaller tranches to local organizations. IPLC-led funds, including the Mesoamerican Territorial Fund in Central America, the Nusantara Fund in Indonesia, and the Podáali Fund in Brazil, are built around the Shandia platform, which centers on IPLC control of how the money intended to address climate change and land degradation is spent.

IPLC leadership around these issues has spurred donors to create complementary systems that link directly with these IPLC-designed mechanisms. CLUA, for example, is working with 13 private philanthropies on the Forests, People, Climate Collaborative to bring more money to IPLCs and to funnel as much as possible through these IPLC-governed mechanisms.

“We believe that most often, [territorial funds] understand, can access, and are best placed to support the landscape of local organizations in ways multi-million-dollar funders can’t,” Allen said.

The 13 private donors involved have committed a combined \$780 million toward climate projects in tropical forest countries, specifically in the Amazon, the Congo Basin and Indonesia. They hope to raise a total of \$1.2 billion over the next five years. Allen said the group plans to utilize existing territorial funds and help create new ones where necessary.

Forests, People, Climate will also work to lower the hurdles that IPLC groups face. Allen said IPLC groups often struggle with donor requirements around reporting on the progress of funded projects, which diverts energy and resources away from the actual work that will benefit climate mitigation.

“We’ve heard the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities describe it best when they ask for ‘results-based reporting’ rather than ‘receipts-based reporting,’” she said. “To put it another way: would funders rather use the limited hours of a frontline Indigenous leader to pull together a community response against illegal mining invasions, or to pull together her expense reports?”

Still, accountability is essential, Allen added, and reporting and other administrative tasks may be cases in which IPLC organizations could choose to work with intermediaries such as international NGOs, development banks and consulting groups.

They “each play different roles in this ecosystem and the question is: who is best positioned to deploy funding for what?” she said. Forests, People, Climate aims to help determine when working with an intermediary will benefit the project on the ground.

Sucre said he’s heartened by the changing course of the conversation because it now centers on how best to support IPLCs. The Forests, People, Climate Collaborative was announced Nov. 7 during the U.N. climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Sucre said the GATC will continue to work with the CLUA and the funders to work out a governance structure at the U.N. Biodiversity Conference beginning Dec. 7 in Montreal.

The environmental NGO Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) has reported on the dearth of IPLC support, noting in a 2021 report that less than 1% of climate-related aid goes directly to these groups. RFN has also worked as an intermediary with IPLCs in places like Indonesia.

Torbjørn Gjefsen, policy team leader at RFN and the lead author of the 2021 report, welcomed such steps to re-channel funding. (RFN receives funding from the Ballmer Group, which is also among the 13 funders of Forests, People, Climate.)

“There is growing philanthropic interest in funding efforts to protect nature and safeguard rights, which is both welcome and needed,” Gjefsen said in an email. “But it is important that this growth is coordinated and informed by the experience and insights of those that have provided funding for this over time, to make sure it reaches the places it is needed the most and where it will have the greatest effect.

“This is something the ‘Forest, People, Climate’ initiative can contribute to,” he added.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [\[Opinion\] Climate crisis is here](#)

By: Crispin Maslog

An innocuous story in the ocean of online news recently caught my attention. It said that an entire Pacific island nation was considering an unusual backup plan for survival: moving its entire population to another country.

The nation is Kiribati, thousands of miles northeast of Papua New Guinea in the south Pacific. Kiribati President Anote Tong told media that his Cabinet, fearing climate change could wipe out their archipelago, had approved a plan to buy nearly 6,000 acres on Fiji's main island, Viti Levu.

Some or all of Kiribati's population of 103,000 could move there when their islands are submerged—in a matter of decades, according to current forecasts. The nation straddles the equator near the International Date Line, and many of its coral atolls rise just a few feet above sea level.

For the Kiribati people, moving won't be a matter of choice but of survival, said Tong. Seawater is contaminating underground freshwater resources more often, while rainfall, storm, and tidal patterns are changing.

Other unusual options that Kiribati is considering to mitigate the impact of climate change include shoring up some islands with sea walls and even building a floating island, much like a giant oil platform anchored to an atoll.

Gloomy forecasts. Kiribati's plight dramatizes a growing climate change crisis in the island nations of the Pacific and other archipelagos of the world. According to United Nations (UN) forecasts, Kiribati and neighboring Tuvalu, as well as the Marshall Islands, may be completely inundated by the rising waters of the Pacific by 2050.

And a new report by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology on climate change in the Pacific Ocean says the region is getting hotter, sea levels are rising, rainfall is changing, and equatorial winds have weakened. And cyclone intensity is likely going to be greater.

To their credit, the Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) have pledged to make a token financial contribution toward global efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

But global climate change will occur regardless of future emissions, and adapting to the changes will be vital—and urgent for PICTs, where impacts are expected to be intense.

Funding for adaptation. The costs of responding to climate change can be astronomical. Although accurate estimates have not been finalized, they could easily amount to

billions of dollars. Where will the money come from? There is a range of funding sources available to support climate change adaptation initiatives in the region, from foundations and philanthropists to public donations.

Funds administered by the UN Global Environment Facility include the GEF-Pacific Alliance for Sustainability Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Special Climate Change Fund. Funds from these facilities are in excess of \$21 billion, but they are not exclusively for the Pacific.

There is also the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience, which is part of the Strategic Climate Fund, a multidonor trust fund with resources of \$975 million.

But regardless of where the money comes from, it will not be enough. These island states need to set priorities. And the challenge is to implement them effectively and to take a long-term view on planning for adaptation and resource management.

The clock is ticking for these Pacific island countries as they face their uncertain future. The world must rally to their side because their entire cultures, their way of life, and their lives are at stake.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [Legarda vows to continue environmental advocacies, thanks ACB for recognizing her as ASEAN Biodiversity Hero](#)

By: OSLL

PASAY CITY -- Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda has vowed to continue advocating for the environment as she accepted the 2022 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Biodiversity Heroes Award officially handed over by the ASEAN Secretariat on Monday, December 5, at the Ceremonial Hall of the Philippine Senate in Pasay City.

"Thank you very much, it's truly a great honor. It's not all about me – it's honoring the work that we do with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, with various government agencies such as the DENR especially the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), the collective work of my staff and me, the local governments, our civil society organizations, the academe, the media, and many more," she said.

In her message during the event, Legarda also emphasized the significance of bringing awareness about the importance of caring for the country's protected areas.

She mentioned that she has worked with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on documenting these areas through a television program entitled 'Our Fragile Earth', which aims to foster national consciousness and cultivate a culture of engagement so that the public will be compelled to do something to protect the environment and the country's natural resources.

As the principal author and co-sponsor of the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) Act, Legarda said that passage of the measure in 2018 is "a big step forward".

She explained that when she entered the Senate in 1999, there were only 13 protected areas, but through the implementation of the law, more ecologically critical areas in the country, including open seas, coastal areas, wetlands and tropical forests, are protected and preserved.

"We now have a total of over a hundred biodiversity areas declared as protected areas, but, even if an area is not legislated, it should still be protected. That's what I always say," she stressed.

As a senator, Legarda has authored the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Philippine Clean Air Act, Renewable Energy Act, Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, National Environmental Awareness and Education Act, Climate Change Act, and Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, among other environmental measures.

"Is it not so ironic that we are considered the mega-biodiverse country in the world but still number one in the world risk index? So, I guess I was born in this land to do that mission – to protect not the 94 that I legislated, not even the total 114 now, not just to legislate the pending ones, but to ensure that every declared and undeclared protected areas and species are protected for the benefit of the humankind," she said.

"That is my passion. That is the cause for my existence in this world, and I'm happy and honored to join the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes," Legarda added.

The conferment of the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Award was led by ASEAN Sustainable Development Directorate Director Dr. Ky Anh Nguyen, together with ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim; ACB Biodiversity Information Management Unit Director Dr. Arvin Diesmos; and DENR-BMB National Parks Division Chief Meriden Maranan.

The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Awards ceremony was held last November 2, 2022 in Bogor, Indonesia. Legarda joined the event online.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [DA, 4 other agencies to set up farmer-to-market road network](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – The Department of Agriculture (DA) and four other agencies are set to sign a joint administrative order (JAO) that will set up guidelines to make farm-to-market road (FMRs) interconnected with other infrastructure projects.

The JAO will be signed among officials of the DA, Departments of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Interior and Local Government (DILG), Trade and Industry (DTI) and Tourism (DOT) this month.

“FMR approved na. Mayroon na tayong national timetable (The FMR is approved. We already have a national timetable),” Marcos, who also heads the DA, made this announcement in a video released by Malacañang to reporters.

“Lahat ng agencies that are involved, departments that are involved will be signing... by December, before the end of the year, para ma-approve na ang plano para sa pag-construct ng FMR (All agencies and departments involved will be signing it by December to approve the plan to construct FMRs),” he added.

DA and DPWH, in particular, earlier formulated a regional FMR network overlaying the proposed FMR projects with the Strategic Agriculture and Fisheries Development Zone (SAFDZ)/Network of Protected Areas for Agriculture and Agro-Industrial Development (NPAAAD) and production areas.

The two agencies have also spearheaded an inter-agency workshop on locating and mapping agriculture and fisheries production areas, markets, trading posts, existing road networks and road conditions and the proposed FMRs.

A total of 43,223 kilometers is proposed for FMR projects as of October this year.

There is a requirement of 131,410 kms (110ha/km) of the country to cater to the 14 million hectares of production areas for agriculture and fisheries.

As of October this year, a total of 67,255-km FMR were completed, leaving a backlog of 64,155 kms.

Meanwhile, Marocs said the government is trying to find import substitution for urea and petroleum-based fertilizer.

“But we are looking at all the technologies available, including biofertilizer perhaps as an import substitute,” he said.

Last July, Marcos directed the DA to come up with a FMR masterplan that will serve as a guide for the government to promote food security and empower rural communities.

He said FMRs are the “first step” to solving some of the country’s supply chain problems.

Marcos underscored the importance of ensuring that agricultural infrastructure is “climate-change resistant” such as projects that are not prone to landslides and other calamities.

## Strengthen public-private partnerships to boost infra dev't

By: Joel Zaldarriaga

Cooperation between the government and private sectors has long been integral in the country's economic development with the various infrastructure projects under public-private partnerships (PPP) already operational and beneficial to the Filipino people.

One of the oldest infrastructures built under PPP was the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), an 84-kilometer road infrastructure connecting Metro Manila to the northern portion of the Philippines. According to its operator NLEX Corp., the expressway currently services 278,000 motorists daily.

Having been in service for decades now, the 5.3-kilometer north and south viaducts of the project crossing the swampland in Candaba, Pampanga are currently up for retrofitting due to safety concerns amid the volume of traffic and large trucks crossing the viaduct.

At a recently held House committee meeting chaired by Deputy Speaker and 3rd District Rep. Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales, NLEX Corp. officials led by lawyer Romulo Quimbo Jr. said that the company would shell out PHP8 billion for the construction of a third highway that would be built between the two existing northbound and southbound viaducts.

The construction will add one and a half lanes per direction to cater to the cargo trucks and heavy vehicles. Construction is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2023 while completion is set by the end of 2024.

NLEX Corp. said it would implement a traffic scheme to avoid inconvenience and disruptions on the part of the motorists and commuters.

Concerned government agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation (DOTr), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) expressed support for the planned new roadway.

Apart from the new viaduct, five local bridges that will cross the expressway are also expected to be constructed with the help of the DPWH, to provide easier and faster access to NLEX.

Once completed, the new highway would ensure the integrity and safety of the expressway, ultimately for the welfare of the motorists and the commuting public.

In our heavily challenged economy, the Marcos administration is banking on the development of more infrastructure projects as the long-term solution to decongesting heavy traffic and provide a better quality of life to the Filipinos.

With the ramped-up infrastructure program, cooperation of the private sector must be strengthened through more PPP programs as they generally execute faster than those funded by foreign loans.

The private sector is our frontliner for economic development, besides playing a huge role in nation building. They drive growth, generate jobs, and contribute to tax revenues that fund services and investment for our people.

In developing countries, the private sector generates 90 percent of jobs, funds 60 percent of all investments and provides more than 80 percent of the country's revenues.

As the Philippines recovers from the effects of the pandemic, the private sector will remain the engine of economic growth, and tapping their help is more than just our token of appreciation for their role in economic development.

To boost their business confidence is also to lure more foreign investments in the country, especially if coupled with government support such as concrete decisions, stronger policies to promote growth, giving incentives to ensure that they can thrive, and sustaining institutions that implement, oversee and regulate these policies as this is the enabling environment that encourage businesses to invest further.

## SUNSTAR

### [Rama: Razon group's entry in Cebu City's waste management 'positive development'](#)

CEBU City Mayor Michael Rama sees the impending acquisition of Filipino billionaire businessman Enrique Razon's firm of a local waste management company as a positive development in the quest to solve the city's garbage issue.

If ever the Razon group would enter a business deal with the City Government, Rama said in a press conference Monday, Dec. 5, 2022 that he would endorse the matter to the City Council for its approval.

Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc. (Piwsi), a Prime Infra subsidiary, has announced in a press statement that it is set to fully acquire ARN Central Waste Management Inc., which currently receives around 1,000 tons of Cebu's, including Cebu City's, municipal solid waste on a daily basis. Prime Infra is Razon's infrastructure arm that focuses on building assets that support the most urgent sustainability priorities — energy, access to clean water, waste management, and viable critical infrastructure.

Piwsi has projected that its investment will bring Cebu City's waste management to be at par with world-class materials recovery facilities in other developed countries like Singapore.

ARN Central Waste Management Inc., the operator of a private landfill in Barangay Binaliw, is the first waste management business that Prime Infra is developing and upgrading in the country.

The Cebu City Government started to throw its waste at ARN's landfill in May 2019 through a hauling service provider.

Rama said that he does not know yet the worth of investment that Piwsi will shell out to improve the waste management system.

#### **'Positive development'**

The mayor added that he does not want to issue a conclusion on the effect of Razon group's entry into the city's garbage management, but the mayor considers this as a "positive development" and should be realized "as soon as possible" because "time is of the essence" in addressing the issue on garbage.

In 2018, some councilors opposed the construction and operation of the Binaliw landfill, citing health and sanitation concerns and the absence of transparency in the methods it will use for solid waste management.

The sanitary landfill has been receiving garbage from around 40 haulers coming from the cities of Cebu and Mandaue and the towns of Compostela and Consolacion.

According to Rama, it will now be the role of the City Council to hear out what innovation or improvement Piwsi will bring to the Binaliw landfill and how this would improve the garbage management system of the city.

Last Oct. 21, operators of ARN Central Waste Management Inc. said they want to acquire additional lots near their property in order to establish a “buffer zone” where they can plant trees that can help absorb the foul smell coming from the landfill.

The landfill is currently sitting in a 10.4-hectare property in Barangay Binaliw.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [EU chief says bloc must act over US climate plan 'distortions'](#)

By: Agence France Presse

BRUSSELS, Belgium — EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Sunday the bloc must act to address "distortions" created by Washington's \$430-billion plan to spur climate-friendly technologies in the United States.

EU countries have poured criticism on Washington's landmark Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), seeing it as anti-competitive and a threat to European jobs, especially in the energy and auto sectors.

The bloc must "take action to rebalance the playing field where the IRA or other measures create distortions", von der Leyen said in a speech at the College of Europe in the Belgian city of Bruges.

The act, designed to accelerate the US transition to a low-carbon economy, contains around \$370 billion in subsidies for green energy as well as tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries.

Von der Leyen said the EU had to work with the US "to address some of the most concerning aspects of the law".

But she said that Brussels must also "adjust" its own rules to facilitate public investment in the environmental transition and "re-assess the need for further European funding of the transition".

French President Emmanuel Macron seized an opportunity on a state visit to Washington for talks with US President Joe Biden last week to air deep grievances over US-EU trade.

The White House touts the IRA as a groundbreaking effort to reignite US manufacturing and promote renewable technologies.

Commenting on the issue Sunday, French minister delegate for industry, Roland Lescure noted in a broadcast interview that "competition must be strong and fair -- we must coordinate to ensure we are on a level playing field.

Lescure added that US subsidies were distributed "a little more swiftly and effectively than ours."

By way of example, he said: "For an electric vehicle in the United States you have a \$7,000 subsidy but it has to be American down to the circuitry.

"In France, you have 6,000 or 7,000 euros according to your wage and the vehicle can come from China."

## [Group calls for treaty to protect people, environment from plastic pollution](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — A toxics watchdog group called for a global agreement that will halt the harms caused by plastic and their hazardous chemical ingredients on humans and the environment.

Representatives of almost 200 nations gather in Punta del Este, Paraguay to discuss measures to combat plastic pollution.

EcoWaste Coalition urged governments present at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1) to adopt a strong treaty that will ban toxic chemicals in plastics, put a cap on the unrestrained production of plastics and their additives, and disallow the burning of plastic wastes in cement kilns and incinerators, including waste-to-energy facilities.

The treaty should also bar plastic waste exports in order to halt toxic pollution and environmental injustice, the group added.

“The plastics treaty must uphold the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment,” said Aileen Lucero, national coordinator of EcoWaste Coalition.

Health Care Without Harm also called for transparency for chemical information in plastics, stressing the need for publicly available information about toxic ingredients in plastic materials and products throughout the lifecycle.

The meeting in Uruguay comes after the parties at the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi agreed to create an intergovernmental committee to negotiate and finalize a legally binding plastics treaty by 2024.

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the total plastic in the ocean has increased 50% in the past five years despite an increase in policies to fight plastic pollution.

**=END=**