



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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- Philippines' Marcos faces 'greenwashing' claims as climate spending soars
- Congressional think tank questions need for carbon tax, citing low PHL emission levels
- [Opinion] Looking forward to the Philippines' life-changing role in climate adaptation
- Climate crisis and religious environmentalism
- NDC, int'l dev't org partner to develop 'green startups'
- COP28 is a call for global action
- El Niño forecast to peak by April 2024; Marcos responds with task force
- [Opinion] COP28 and our losing battle against climate change
- [Opinion] Not doing enough to battle climate change
- Philippines woos Japan, Asean investments in renewable energy

### AL JAZEERA

#### [Philippines' Marcos faces 'greenwashing' claims as climate spending soars](#)

By: Michael Beltran

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### BUSINESS MIRROR

#### [Congressional think tank questions need for carbon tax, citing low PHL emission levels](#)

By: Beatriz Marie D. Cruz

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## **MANILA BULLETIN**

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## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[Climate crisis and religious environmentalism](#)**

By: Patria Gwen M.L. Borcena

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## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[NDC, int'l dev't org partner to develop 'green startups'](#)**

By: Kris Crismundo

The National Development Company (NDC) and Seoul-based Global Green Growth Institution (GGGI) partnered to support the development of local startups that provide green and sustainable solutions.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[COP28 is a call for global action](#)**

By: William Dar

The 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP28, served as a wake-up for all nations to do their share in building a resilient and sustainable global food system amid challenges from climate change.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[El Niño forecast to peak by April 2024; Marcos responds with task force](#)**

By: Cristina Chi

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### **[\[Opinion\] COP28 and our losing battle against climate change](#)**

By: Andrew J. Masigan

The 28th Climate Change Conference recently concluded in Dubai. As usual, the conference was chockful of presentations warning us of impending climate-induced doom. Sadly, the world is losing its fight against climate change.

### **[\[Opinion\] Not doing enough to battle climate change](#)**

By: Elfren S. Cruz

Each year the United Nations organizes an annual summit that solely focuses on the issue of climate change. The first one was held in Paris 29 years ago.

### **[Philippines woos Japan, Asean investments in renewable energy](#)**

By: Alexis Romero

Now open to full foreign ownership, the renewable energy sector is ripe for picking as a viable investment, President Marcos said yesterday as he invited Japan and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to give it a try, along with “other emerging technologies.”

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

**AL JAZEERA**

**[Philippines' Marcos faces 'greenwashing' claims as climate spending soars](#)**

By: Michael Beltran

After typhoon Doksuri battered the Philippines earlier this year, pastor Thaad Samson waded through waist-high waters while going door to door to check on his neighbours.

Seventeen towns in his home province of Bulacan were paralyzed by days of flooding after the typhoon hit the archipelago in July.

When the rains began, Samson's parish was unfazed since it sits on land "as high as the tip of a cathedral", but it wasn't long before residents were crying out for help, Samson told Al Jazeera.

"The towns which didn't used to experience flooding are now getting a taste of it," Samson said.

Samson blames reclamation projects in the region for his community's sudden vulnerability to extreme weather.

"This is not just my opinion, it's a scientific fact," he said.

In 2017, the Philippine government spearheaded 13 land reclamation projects along Manila Bay, spanning five provinces including Metro Manila and Bulacan.

While civil society groups and lawmakers sounded the alarm about potential harm to the environment, Manila pointed to massive expenditures on climate-related projects aimed at offsetting the risks and negative effects of large-scale development.

For environmental advocates like Samson, though, Manila's climate spending is nothing more than an attempt to greenwash environmentally damaging development projects like reclamation.

"They are destroying mangroves across 15,000 hectares of water. I don't see how that protects us from climate change especially when flood levels have been rising in nearby areas," Samson said.

The Philippines experiences 20 typhoons annually. According to the World Bank, flooding caused by typhoons has resulted in about 30,000 deaths during the past three decades in addition to massive economic losses.

Since 2009, climate-related spending by the Philippine government has ballooned, with most expenditure funnelled towards infrastructure.

According to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), “climate actions have been mainstreamed and institutionalised in our development plan and the National Budget. This resulted in a significant increase in the budget for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures by about 60 percent compared to the previous year’s allocation”.

For 2024, the Philippines has proposed allotting 543.45 billion pesos (\$9.74bn) for climate expenditures, a 17 percent increase in spending from the current year, which was already 60 percent higher than 2022.

Climate expenditures account for 9.4 percent of the country’s total budget, with the DBM proudly touting that the number exceeds the country’s 8 percent commitment under the latest Philippine Development Plan.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr remarked in November that economic development hinges on recognising the country’s vulnerability to climate change.

“It is the basis on which we have to act for the future, on which we have to design our systems. We have to keep climate change in mind,” Marcos said.

Around 461.5 billion pesos (\$8.27bn), or 84.9 percent of spending, has been earmarked for flood control or railways, with much of the formerly related land reclamation in Manila Bay and the latter touted as a means of reducing carbon emissions.

Despite being tagged as climate spending, critics query whether such expenditure has more to do with supporting the government’s policy agenda than the climate and whether it may in fact be doing more damage to ecosystems.

“Our country’s entire climate program is pure lip service,” Arlene Brosas, assistant minority leader in the Philippine House of Representatives, told Al Jazeera.

“When the world asks what the Philippines is doing about climate change, we will have new trains and inept flood control to show for it, plus significantly less mangroves and farmlands,” Brosas added.

Climate spending disbursed through Special Purpose Funds (SPFs), which allocate money under broad categories of use rather than specific projects, is an emerging trend in the Philippines, according to Brosas, who argues the funds are corruption-prone and an example of “climate pork” doled out “for those uninterested in actual results”.

Under the government's plans, SPFs intended for climate mitigation and adaptation are set to increase in size next year by about 68 percent compared to the current allocation, reaching 22.47 billion pesos (\$400m).

Still, Manila is unable to say how the money will be spent apart from supporting adaptation and mitigation efforts by government corporations and local governments.

University of the Philippines Professor Timothy Cipriano, an environmental geographer with the national research group AGHAM, said the climate spending label is "technically accurate" but distracts from better solutions to climate change.

"Using infrastructure as a climate change solution is antiquated. Too often in the Philippines, we see adaptation projects drain the water from certain areas only to divert flooding to another community," Cipriano told Al Jazeera.

Cipriano said that reclamation projects in Manila Bay have impeded the release of water into the bay during heavy rains, causing increased water retention.

He said the government is using flood control projects to mitigate risks of their own creation.

The Manila Bay reclamation initiative also compromises mangroves along the Sasmuan Pampanga Coastal Wetland, a 3,500-hectare threatened area noted for its "international importance" under Ramsar Convention standards.

"The more we replace natural defences with infrastructure, the more we pay the price. Engineering interventions are limited. We've been doing this for years and flooding problems aren't getting any better," Cipriano said.

But last week, Marcos said that the country's current El Nino conditions show the need for the speedier implementation of projects to lessen the effects of climate change.

"We will accelerate the building of dams and flood control projects," Marcos said.

The government is also providing the Department of Transportation (DOTr) with 163.7 billion pesos (\$2.93bn) worth of climate funds for railway development.

The allocation amounts to 76.4 percent of next year's transport budget and is a 55.3 percent increase from the current year's railway spending.

According to a 2022 assessment by the Asian Development Bank, construction for the big-ticket, Japan-funded 873 billion pesos (\$15.64bn) North-South Commuter Railway

(NSCR) project, “will generate significant greenhouse gas emissions” averaging “508,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year for 7 years”.

The benefits of emission reduction will only be seen by 2040, according to the development bank.

Along with the Metro Manila subway, the NSCR is one of the administration’s more ambitious mass transport undertakings. DOTr chief Jaime Bautista has lauded the NSCR as economically transformational and touted investment in rail as critical to reducing emissions.

“The completion of the full NSCR line will bring greater convenience for our commuters. It will offer an efficient and comfortable transport alternative that spans a great distance,” Bautista said in October.

Cipriano cautioned against viewing railways as a green investment in the absence of a major shift to renewable energy in mass transportation.

“We have to be careful in tagging railways as green. They produce less carbon emissions but how do we produce the electricity? The Philippines is already heavily reliant on fossil fuels,” Cipriano said.

Meanwhile, the think-tank Center for Energy, Ecology and Development has estimated that investments in fossil fuel energy sources between April 2022 and March 2023 reached 1.7 billion pesos (\$30m).

Brosas accused the government of using the climate tag to attract foreign funding and loans. In 2017, over \$200bn of Metro Manila’s infrastructure-heavy flood management program was funded by the World Bank.

According to the National Economic Development Authority database, the DOTr has secured 1.7 trillion pesos (\$30bn) worth of overseas development from Japan for five key railway projects.

“The administration erroneously thinks that big-ticket construction with large sums from abroad will fix the environment. But really, it’s just a business manoeuvre,” Brosas said.

Brosas raised concerns about the financial and social costs of the projects.

“For the next five years of constructing these projects, we will be neck deep in even more debt,” she said. “We’re breaking ground without considering the eviction of hundreds of thousands of families.”

Around 220,000 families are expected to be displaced to make way for the projects, while the national debt in August hit a record high of 14.35 trillion pesos (\$260bn).

Tony La Vina, a lawyer and associate director of the Manila Observatory, a research institute focusing on disaster risk response, cast doubt on whether this type of spending should even be considered legal.

“It’s too open-ended. Lump sums, generally are not specified and might even count as an illegal expenditure. It should be determined how the resources will be used, especially before tagging it as green,” La Vina told Al Jazeera.

The government should be more transparent in its climate crusade, he said, however, at the moment “there is no clear plan”.



## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **Congressional think tank questions need for carbon tax, citing low PHL emission levels**

By: Beatriz Marie D. Cruz

The Philippines may not need to impose a carbon tax due to its low emission levels, a policy think tank attached to the House of Representatives said.

“The Philippines produces relatively little carbon dioxide — whether it is compared to developed countries or its ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian) neighbors. This, in turn, puts into question the supposed necessity and urgency of instituting a carbon tax in the Philippines,” the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) said in a report.

Philippine carbon dioxide emissions are significantly lower compared to other Southeast Asian countries, the CPBRD said, citing data from the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research.

It emitted 148 million metric tons (MT) of carbon dioxide in 2021, compared to Malaysia (251.55 million MT) and Indonesia (602.59 million MT).

The CPBRD noted, however, that Indonesia’s population is twice that of the Philippines.

It also said that Malaysia, which has a population of 34 million, produces thrice the carbon dioxide on a per-capita basis. “This, in turn, underlines the energy poverty of Filipinos — even in comparison to their ASEAN neighbors,” the CPBRD said.

The think tank added that a 5% loss from imposing a carbon tax on electricity as well as land, air and water transport would mean a total economic loss of P236.7 billion, or roughly 1.1% of gross domestic product.

“If a carbon tax is intended to be the primary regulatory strategy to prevent further increases in overall carbon emissions, then its rate has to be sufficiently large to reduce demand for carbon-emitting activities by the aforementioned amount,” the CPBRD said.

It also said that the Philippine economy is still “wholly incapable of efficiently and painlessly transitioning to a low-carbon trajectory,” given its heavily reliance on fossil fuels and slow transition to renewables.

“Solar and wind resources account for a tiny fraction of electricity supply — despite billions spent in subsidies. The aggressive expansion of renewable assets also

demands the conversion of agricultural land into solar and/or wind farms, further aggravating existing agricultural productivity woes,” the CPBRD said in its report.

It also said that an “energy-poor” country like the Philippines would struggle to develop its industries if a carbon tax is imposed.

“The modernization of flagging agricultural and manufacturing sectors, in particular, demand the widespread adoption of energy-intensive production processes,” the CPBRD said.

Carbon taxes in the Philippines could generate revenue of up to \$7 billion by 2030, according to a study by the International Monetary Fund.

The Philippines emitted about 146.5 million tons of carbon dioxide from energy consumption in 2022, the Energy Development Corp. has estimated.

The Philippines has committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030.

Climate change could cut Philippine economic output by 13.6% by 2040, the World Bank said in a report last year.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [\[Opinion\] Looking forward to the Philippines' life-changing role in climate adaptation](#)

The Philippines has secured a board seat in the Loss and Damage Fund, which was officially launched at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

This is a welcome development as it will give the Philippines — one of the countries most vulnerable to the impact of climate change — a voice in the management of the fund that was first agreed upon during the COP27 in Egypt to provide financial assistance in support of countries struggling to cope with loss and damage caused by climate change beyond adaptation.

The Philippines, which continues to experience the impact of climate change — stronger typhoons, unprecedented flooding due to rising sea levels, heavy rains, among other weather conditions — is certain to play a key role in helping shape climate solutions. Having experienced first-hand the impact of climate change will serve the Philippines in good stead as a member of the Loss and Damage Fund Board

The Philippines will represent the Asia Pacific Group (APG) in the Loss and Damage Fund Board, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Pakistan in a term-sharing agreement. Under the arrangement, the Philippines will serve as a full member in 2024 and 2026, and will be an alternate member to Pakistan in 2025.

At least 15 countries and the European Union (EU) had pledged support for the Loss and Damage Fund.

The UAE, the host of COP28, was quick to pledge \$100 million. This was matched by Germany. France and Italy each pledged \$108.9 million.

Other countries that pledged financial support are: the United Kingdom, \$50.6 million; Ireland, \$27.1 million; EU, \$27.1 million; Denmark, \$25.6 million; Norway, \$25.4 million; Spain \$21.8 million; United States, \$17.5 million; Netherlands, \$16.3 million; Canada, \$11.8 million; Japan, \$10 million; Finland, \$3.3 million; and Slovenia, \$1.6 million.

The Philippines has been advocating for new and additional resources to help cushion the impact of climate change on vulnerable countries, stressing that it should be accessible, stable, predictable, adequate, and distributed equitably.

The Loss and Damage Fund is distinct from the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund, the two other UN-related climate funds.

The Green Climate Fund, created in 2010, is the world's largest multilateral fund mandated to support developing countries raise and realize their NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) ambitions toward low-emissions, climate-resilient pathways. On the other hand, the Adaptation Fund — established under the Kyoto Protocol of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change — finances projects and programs that help vulnerable communities in developing countries adapt to climate change. Initiatives are based on country needs, views and priorities.

With lessons learned from the experience the country has had in dealing with, and adapting to climate change, we look forward to the Philippines' meaningful and life-changing role in climate adaptation while seating in the Loss and Damage Fund Board.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### Climate crisis and religious environmentalism

By: Patria Gwen M.L. Borcena

Religious actors have been animating the religious community and the larger society for decades now. Over the recent years, a growing number of religious leaders and groups have responded to issues and problems about the environment and natural resources.

No less than the Catholic Church's head, Pope Francis, released his trailblazing encyclical about the environment and social justice, "Praise Be to You—Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home" in 2015. In the Philippines, where the majority are Catholics, this encyclical has inspired many Catholic religious leaders and organizations, resulting in generating bolder environmental enthusiasm or promoting "ecological citizenship" by integrating care for creation with their pastoral duties, supporting environmental groups, and/or engaging in the climate discourse at various levels. Other sectors of Philippine civil society recognize the strategic importance of involving the church in environmental campaigns and advocacies. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) manifested a significantly improved religious environmentalism inspired by "Laudato Si'" by issuing important pastoral statements and creating the inter-commission for the National Laudato Si' Program. "Laudato Si'" has also resulted in interfaith conversations. The Third Interfaith Dialogue on Creating a Climate-Resilient Nation through Empowerment of communities and religious group was held last Nov. 23. For the first time, the Climate Change Commission co-organized this interfaith dialogue with Living Laudato Si' Philippines and the Aksyon Klima Pilipinas network. Representatives from the Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Islam, Iglesia Filipinas Independencia, and indigenous peoples signed a manifesto calling for a paradigm shift and immediate action during the 28th Conference of Parties (COP) for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Important interfaith conversations about climate change were also held at the international level these past few years. Former UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres observed that during COP21: "The Pope's encyclical, along with mobilisation by many other faith groups across the globe, provided a clear moral imperative for taking climate action, supporting the Paris Climate Change Agreement ...". With the hope of influencing COP28, a Global Faith Leaders Summit on Climate Change occurred in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) last Nov. 6-7. This gathering of leaders from different religions and indigenous traditions was very timely and strategic given UNFCCC COP28's venue in Dubai, UAE. This year, a Faith Pavilion was set up for the first time in the history of UN conferences on climate change. This themed pavilion was hosted by the Muslim Council of Elders in collaboration with the COP28 presidency, the United Nations Environment Programme, and various coalitions

of global partners. Pope Francis also signed their interfaith statement. Guided by “Laudato Si” and “Laudate Deum,” the global Catholic letter addressed to the COP28 presidency was signed by the Laudato Si Movement and other organizations.

Inspired by his heartfelt concerns for our planet and moved by a great sense of urgency, Pope Francis wrote “Laudate Deum,” (translated as “Praise God,” which is the title of his apostolic exhortation issued on Oct. 4, 2023, Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi). This papal document which provides a brief critical discussion about the global climate emergency serves as an important sequel to his encyclical, “Laudato Si’.” Pope Francis called for a reconfiguration or recreation of multilateralism or “a way of togetherness” that addresses the climate crisis and considers the voices of those from “below” (the vulnerable sectors). In his address to COP28, Pope Francis challenged: “It is up to this generation to heed the cry of peoples, the young and children, and to lay the foundations of a new multilateralism.”

Filipino church leaders such as Bishop Gerry Alminaza, the first CBCP official delegate to the UNFCCC’s COP (chair of the National Laudato Si’ Program), and Fr. Edwin Gariguez (Goldman Environmental Prize awardee) joined the clamor for a stronger decision against fossil fuels to be stated on the COP28 agreement.

In a way, Pope Francis and the COP28 collective statements from civil society networks can be described as “prophetic.” Their collective positive energy, shared hope, and fervent prayers also helped in achieving a landmark COP28 agreement which commits the world to “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade ...” with the goal of keeping the global temperature limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

As the world moves forward with the COP28 deal, religious environmentalism can contribute more effectively at various levels given the promotion of the leading role of religious leadership in combating climate change, and endorsement of the religious discourse that calls for tangible actions toward sustainable development.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [NDC, int'l dev't org partner to develop 'green startups'](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

The National Development Company (NDC) and Seoul-based Global Green Growth Institution (GGGI) partnered to support the development of local startups that provide green and sustainable solutions.

On Wednesday, NDC General Manager Anton Mauricio and GGGI Country Representative Marcel Silvius signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will provide capacity building and capital to green-based startups.

Under the MOU, GGGI will provide technical and vocational education training, technical assistance, and experts' advice to companies that are engaged in the waste management, sustainable forestry, and green circular economy.

For NDC's part, the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) investment arm, it can provide financing from its traditional equity funding, debt financing, the Startup Venture Fund (SVF), or combination of these schemes to startup entities once they mature and their products and services are commercially viable.

"The MOU signing between the NDC and GGGI marked a key opportunity for NDC to tap into the technical expertise and assistance that could be offered by GGGI in helping NDC -- with an overall thrust for signing-on more green-based start-ups. This is a perfect alignment with NDC's forward-thinking investment priority sectors -- one key highlight would be in the area of sustainability, balancing the country's needs today for tomorrow's preservation," the NDC said in a statement.

Silvius said the GGGI, whose president is the former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, focuses its initiatives on helping developing countries like the Philippines that are being affected by climate change.

GGGI is a treaty-based international development organization dedicated to supporting and promoting projects in developing and emerging economies that will transform them into a green growth economic model.

On the other hand, Mauricio highlighted that NDC supports projects that are pioneering, developmental, sustainable, inclusive, and innovative.

He mentioned that climate change mitigation is one of the priority sectors of NDC for investments.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### COP28 is a call for global action

By: William Dar

The 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP28, served as a wake-up for all nations to do their share in building a resilient and sustainable global food system amid challenges from climate change.

I can even call COP28 a call for global action to avert the deterioration or destruction of our food production system amid the scourge of extreme weather changes.

Hosted by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to January 12, COP28 also highlighted the need to shift to new paradigms in food production, including regenerative agriculture.

At the end of the conference, 198 parties including heads of states united behind the UAE Consensus that outlines, among many others, the measures and actions that we must take to create climate-resilient food systems to ensure food security over the long term for a growing global population.

Specifically, the parties made a declaration "to work collaboratively and expeditiously to pursue the following objective," which are:

- Scale up the adaptation of activities and responses to reduce the vulnerability of farmers, fisherfolk and food producers to the impacts of climate change or extreme weather conditions.
- Promote food security and nutrition by increasing efforts to support vulnerable groups through social protection systems and safety nets, among many others.
- Support workers in agriculture and food systems, including women and youth, whose livelihoods are threatened by climate change.
- Strengthen water management in agriculture and food systems.
- Adopt complementary measures such as reducing food wastage and promoting sustainable aquatic blue foods, among many others,

Specific actions



In scaling-up activities to protect food producers from the impacts of climate change, there are already ongoing efforts in the Philippines to provide financial and technical support to food producers to make them resilient amid extreme weather changes.

However, more that needs to be done in this area.

Specifically, more must be undertaken in also conserving and protecting our environment, including soil and water resources. And this is where the paradigm shift to regenerative agriculture must be made, as the current or traditional system of growing food has done more harm to the environment.

Hence, food producers need to be trained and capacitated to shift to adopt regenerative agriculture practices. Also, their communities or areas are provided with infrastructure like farm-to-market roads and irrigation, and early weather warning systems to make the food producers even more resilient to extreme weather changes.

I also back the declaration that promoting food security and nutrition should include programs targeting vulnerable groups like Indigenous peoples, small food producers, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, among others. Also, these groups of people are provided with social protection systems and safety nets, including school feeding projects for their children.

Furthermore, the workers in agriculture and food production, including women and the youth, are assisted, so they can have decent work and diversified incomes. The latter is very important as extreme weather events can wipe out the incomes of food producers who do not have any other sources of livelihood.

Now, let me discuss strengthening the integrated management of water in food systems that I believe is of great urgency not only in the Philippines but globally. First, let me state that water is no longer a finite resource, and we all must consciously strive to optimize its utilization in growing food. This can be done by adopting technologies that optimize water utilization like drip irrigation or the alternate wetting-drying method in cultivating rice.

Regenerative agriculture also provides the system to rejuvenate sources of water like rehabilitating watershed areas and recharging aquifers.

And lastly, after successfully making food production systems resilient to climate change, we must also put in place complementary measures such as restoring and reviving the natural ecosystem, enhancing soil health, maintaining biodiversity, reducing food wastage and promoting sustainable aquatic blue foods.

## Moving forward

The participants of COP28 have set 2030 as the year to attain all the five objectives and this needs concerted action.

Hence, I believe it is necessary for all countries to convene conferences and workshops at the national and local levels to realize the goals and objectives set forth by COP28 for 2030.

More importantly, these conferences and workshops must gather not only the farmers, fisherfolk or food producers but also policymakers, bureaucrats, the business community, members of the academe, among others. I say this because we must involve as many sectors and actors to ensure that the global community by 2030 has made significant strides in establishing a food production system that is resilient to climate change, not destructive to ecosystems and biodiversity, and benefiting the producers themselves and their communities.

And while science and technology will have a big role in attaining those goals, let me state what will count more is humanity uniting as one to build a resilient and sustainable global food system.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [El Niño forecast to peak by April 2024; Marcos responds with task force](#)

By: Cristina Chi

The possible dry spells and drought brought by El Niño could peak in April next year or a month earlier than initial estimates, according to the latest forecast by the Department of Science and Technology.

In response, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has revived a government task force to start early preparations and resolve possible interventions, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro said on Tuesday at a Palace briefing.

While all areas in the country are expected to feel the effects of the weather phenomenon, as many as 63 provinces may experience severe drought conditions brought by El Niño at its peak, DOST Secretary Renato Solidum said in a TeleRadyo interview.

“All provinces will be affected depending on the month, but the peak will be in April where 63 provinces will experience below rainfall levels of 21% lower,” DOST Secretary Renato Solidum told TeleRadyo Serbisyo.

The DOST secretary added that the effects of the weather phenomenon will gradually decrease from April to June, which means rainfall could be back to normal levels in May or June.

Teodoro on Tuesday announced that the president has revived a 2001 executive order creating the Task Force El Niño, which will be chaired by the defense chief and co-chaired by the DOST secretary.

The defense secretary explained that the executive order will establish an inter-agency cooperation on the national level to tackle issues related to the potential problems caused by El Niño.

“But we know the first responders are the local government units. So the DOST will inform them on the conditions whether or not they can declare a state of calamity and use their calamity funds,” Teodoro added.

The executive order is expected to be released this week.

## [Opinion] COP28 and our losing battle against climate change

By: Andrew J. Masigan

The 28th Climate Change Conference recently concluded in Dubai. As usual, the conference was chockful of presentations warning us of impending climate-induced doom. Sadly, the world is losing its fight against climate change.

Global warming is accelerating. Since the start of the industrial revolution 263 years ago, coal, oil and gas powered man's insatiable appetite for electric power. The unabated use of fossil fuels has caused global temperatures to rise by 1.2 degrees Celsius since the industrial revolution began.

Experts warn that should global temperatures increase by 2 degrees Celsius, the consequences on the planet will be severe. Natural disasters like heat waves, super typhoons, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and fresh water scarcity will occur with alarming frequency. Worse, rising sea levels will reclaim many coastal areas back to the ocean, including many parts of the Philippines.

With clear and present threats, the urgency to reduce carbon emissions has reverberated worldwide. Nations, including the Philippines, pledged to reduce their carbon emissions.

During the Climate Change Conference in 2015 (COP21), governments from around the world made commitments to limit global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrialization levels, while pursuing efforts not to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. Countries that are parties to the Paris Agreement submitted their targets and plans for decarbonization. These are known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

With clear and present threats, the urgency to reduce carbon emissions has reverberated worldwide. Nations, including the Philippines, pledged to reduce their carbon emissions.

During the Climate Change Conference in 2015 (COP21), governments from around the world made commitments to limit global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrialization levels, while pursuing efforts not to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. Countries that are parties to the Paris Agreement submitted their targets and plans for decarbonization. These are known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

But is the world on track towards achieving the targets set forth by the Paris Agreement? Not either. This is because the ambition not to exceed the 2 degrees Celsius threshold by 2050 was not realistic in the first place.

See, the technologies needed to generate clean power without environmental consequence does not exist yet. Sure, one would argue that energy derived from solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, hydrogen, biogas and nuclear emit substantially less greenhouse gases than fossil fuels. But building these renewable energy plants requires such massive amounts of raw materials that its net effect, in terms of environmental degradation, is more damaging than using fossil fuels. Let me cite an example.

For example, to replace a 50-megawatt diesel turbine engine with a wind farm will require 15 wind turbines, each 150 meters tall (as high as a 45-story building). To build the 15 wind turbines requires 15,000 tons of iron ore, 25 tons of cement and 450 tons of advance plastics. If the 50 megawatts is generated by solar power, the raw material needed will be 150 percent more.

It is said that by the year 2050, the global demand for copper, iron ore, aluminum, silver, lithium, graphite cobalt, nickel, manganese, silicon, chromium, zinc and rare earth materials will have to increase by more than a hundred-fold if the world migrates to electric vehicles and derives at least half of its electric power from renewable sources. Thousands of new mineral mines will have to be built.

Consider that to produce just 10,000 tons of silver, a mine will generate enough toxic sludge to fill a reservoir measuring two miles long and 25 meters high. Three hundred mines with similar output and toxic waste must be built to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Too, consider that to extract just one ton of lithium from brines requires 1.9 million tons of water. Multiply this by 100 and you can imagine the impact on the world's fresh water supply.

The thousands of mines that must be built, occupying large swaths of earth, will have to be written-off as "wastelands," given the toxic byproducts they generate.

And then there is the issue of waste disposal. Where do we dispose of the megatons of metals, glass and plastics used by de-commissioned renewable energy plants? Where do we dispose of the dysprosium, indium, neodymium and uranium after their useful lives?

The intention of the Paris Agreement is noble but the technology to make it viable is not there yet. Until more efficient power-generating technologies are developed, the intention to mitigate climate change without environmental consequences is a losing battle.

## [Opinion] Not doing enough to battle climate change

By: Elfren S. Cruz

Each year the United Nations organizes an annual summit that solely focuses on the issue of climate change. The first one was held in Paris 29 years ago.

Easily one of the most important goals of these climate talks is to cut the use of fossil fuels. This is considered as the main source of greenhouse gases. I found it a bit ironic that this year's climate summit meeting was being hosted in Dubai, which is one of the main oil producers in the world.

Prior to the actual summit, there was widespread speculation that the petroleum companies and the so-called petro states were going to lobby against any statement that would address reducing the use of fossil fuels. On the other hand, climate activists have been gearing up every summit for a total ban on fossil fuels. The summit meeting had to be extended by one day because of the difficulty of arriving at a common statement. In the end, there was some small measure of success because for the first time, in the more than three decades of international meetings on climate change, all the parties finally agreed that there must be a deliberate move away from using fossil fuels in energy systems.

The fossil fuel-based systems generate vast wealth and has made some countries in the Middle East unbelievably wealthy. However, they also produce the bulk of the world's emissions.

The Earth is already 1.2 degrees C warmer than in pre-industrial times. Remember that the goal was to ensure that the world would not breach the targeted 1.5 degrees C. However, all the signs indicate that this 1.5 degrees C target would be breached sooner than later.

One of the worst signs is that China, which is the biggest source of emissions, is still building coal-powered plants, which are even worse than fossil fuel plants. In the final text of this year's climate summit statement, there is a call for parties to transition "away from fossil fuels in energy systems and to accelerate action so as to achieve net zero by 2050."

Net zero is "a target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."

The climate summit final statement also included a provision that greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut by 43 percent by 2030 and 60 percent by 2025 relative to 2019 levels. These targets are considered necessary if the world is going to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees C by the end of this century.

However, the summit noted that even if all the current plans of the different countries are met, reductions look closer to 5 percent, which is absurdly much lower than the target of 43 percent. At this 5 percent rate, even the best case scenario sees a rise of 2.1 degrees C to 2.8 degrees C. It is clear that there is a need for more urgent and larger deduction.

According to some reports, the lobbying by petroleum companies and petro-states was effective, as evidenced by the fact that any call for a phaseout or even just a phase down of fossil fuels was removed from the final statement.

There was strong objection to any call for a phaseout, especially from countries that have vast reserves of fossil fuels. These countries include Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, UAE, Kuwait and Russia.

In the climate summit two years ago, there was an agreement that the rich countries most responsible for global warming should pay the poor countries for the “loss and damage” that they suffer. The small island countries in the Pacific have seen a rise in sea levels which have endangered all their coastlines as a result of climate change. These countries, though, in terms of their contributions to pollution, are negligible.

It was decided in last year’s climate summit that a loss and damage fund would be established. The rich countries promised that between 2020 and 2025, an amount of \$1 billion a year would be delivered to poor countries to finance activities that would protect them from the negative effects of climate change.

This commitment has not been fully realized, although there are already discussions of setting up an institution that will handle the financing for this type of funds. In fact, I read that the Philippines is one of the countries that has offered to be the site for the headquarters of this loss and damage fund.

More than 120 countries have already signed up with a pledge that will lead to the tripling of the world’s renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 gigawatts by 2030.

The Bloomberg New Energy Finance Research Group has said that meeting this goal would be “hard but achievable.”

According to the Financial Times, global efficiency rates would be doubled if every government adopted policies that matched: “lighting standards in South Africa; building codes in Turkey; car fuel economy standards in the US; electric motor regulations in the EU; policies for heavy industries in India and air conditioner regulations in China.”

The UN climate summits are important steps forward but we are still a long way from achieving climate goals. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, the world must take climate change more seriously.



## Philippines woos Japan, Asean investments in renewable energy

By:Alexis Romero

Now open to full foreign ownership, the renewable energy sector is ripe for picking as a viable investment, President Marcos said yesterday as he invited Japan and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to give it a try, along with “other emerging technologies.”

In a speech at the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) leaders’ meeting here, Marcos said promoting the use of clean energy is important in ensuring a sustainable future. He added that the Philippines needs partnerships as it transitions towards the use of sustainable, just, affordable and inclusive energy.

“I would like to invite our AZEC partners, including Japan, to invest not only in the Philippine renewable energy industry, but also in other emerging technologies and introduce energy efficiency and conservation measures,” the President said.

ASEAN member-countries, Japan and Australia comprise AZEC.

Marcos enumerated policies that seek to promote the renewable energy sector, including tax incentives and the lifting of foreign ownership limits.

The Philippines has also set in place a framework for building a robust offshore wind industry, he added.

“Investors in the Philippines can also now avail of the simplified rules for building renewable energy facilities and may also avail of additional incentives such as income tax holidays and duty-free importation of capital equipment,” the Chief Executive said.

Marcos said the first wind farms in Southeast Asia were built in Ilocos Sur province during his term as governor.

He revealed that the Philippines seeks to raise the renewable energy share in its power generation mix to 35 percent in 2030 and to 50 percent in 2040. This would amount to about 3.3 billion tons of avoided greenhouse gas emissions over the 2023-2050 planning horizon, almost doubling the country’s targeted emission reduction from the business-as-usual for the same period, Marcos added.

Marcos also thanked Japan for its interest in partnering with the Philippines for the creation of a roadmap for energy transition.

“I hope that this collaboration will pave the way for the creation and realization of the AZEC Center, which I have been informed is currently being organized,” he added.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida affirmed the importance of achieving a common goal of “net-zero emissions through various pathways” and of a triple breakthrough of simultaneously achieving “de-carbonization, economic growth and energy security.”

He also assured AZEC members that Japan would continue to contribute to achieving de-carbonization in Asia.

#### Joint statement

At the same meeting, leaders of the AZEC countries issued a joint statement highlighting their commitment to adopt various measures toward de-carbonization to address climate change. They vowed to advance cooperation toward carbon neutrality and net zero emission to contain the increase in the global average temperature to well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The AZEC leaders also agreed to promote policy support and collaboration in tangible projects through tailored approach towards de-carbonization with the use of various technologies such as heat pumps, scaling up renewable energy, energy storage, regional interconnectivity and improving grid flexibility, as well as the use of nuclear energy, including small modular and other advanced reactors.

They also committed to foster public-private partnerships to fast-track energy transitions through the creation of specific energy transition projects.

During Marcos’ visit here, the Philippines signed nine business deals worth P14 billion, a development that officials said reflected investors’ interest in the Philippines, officials said.

The agreements, inked during a business roundtable meeting yesterday, involved mutual cooperation in sectors like infrastructure, manufacturing and business process outsourcing.

“I think the number that was given to us for today, just for those pledges...it was nine companies but to the value of P14 billion. But some of these are extensions of already existing contracts. They will expand their operations,” the President told reporters.

Trade officials said the new signed agreements and pledges may create a total of 15,750 jobs.

Presidential adviser on investment and economic affairs Frederick Go said more than 20 companies also updated Marcos on their pledges from his Japan visit last February.

He said the amount of actualized investments from the President's trip earlier this year has reached P169 billion.

According to Marcos, the letters of intent signed in February and those inked yesterday worth a total of P771.6 billion or about \$14 billion in pledges from Japanese investors. The commitments may generate some 40,000 jobs, the President said.

"Your interest in doing business with us will surely help achieve mutual economic growth between the Philippines and Japan," Marcos told investors during the meeting.

In a statement, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said among the entities involved in the agreements were the state-run Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) and Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corp. for Transport and Urban Development, set to collaborate on studies relevant to the development of the New Clark City.

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