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Why COP27 matters to PH now more than ever

Many Filipinos will wake up today not knowing that in a place called Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt, a very important two-week event called COP 27 has started, shaping up as perhaps the most consequential gathering of world leaders that will determine the future of this planet and the lives of the most vulnerable. The 110-million plus Filipinos, ironically, are part of this most vulnerable segment. And yet, again, majority of us are not even aware of COP27, which has far-reaching consequences, especially to the future generations.

COP27, short for Conference of Parties, is the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference. It opened last Nov. 6, 2022 and will conclude on Nov. 18. The Philippine contingent, composed of members from Congress, various departments, and environmental groups, is led by Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

During the opening remarks given by UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, he signaled that a "new era begins and we begin to do things differently." "Paris (COP21) gave us the agreement. Katowice (COP24) and Glasgow (COP26) gave us the plan. Sharm El-Sheikh (COP27) shifts us to implementation. No one can be a mere passenger on this journey. This is the signal that times have changed," Stiell said.

This opening couldn't be more appropriate as this year's UN Climate Conference opens against a backdrop of extreme weather events worldwide, an energy crisis propelled by the war in Ukraine, and scientific data reiterating that the world is not doing enough to tackle carbon emissions and protect the future of the planet. We don't need to look far to feel this climate crisis, as the country is still reeling from the devastating impact of Severe Tropical Storm Paeng.

The importance of COP cannot be stressed further enough as it is not only the biggest and most important annual climate-related conference, but it brings together presidents, prime ministers, CEOs, climate advocates, scientists, researchers, media, etc. in one forum to do something concrete and immediate to address climate change. In the words of Stiell, plans are already done; it is now time for action.

"The heart of implementation is 'everybody, everywhere in the world, every single day, doing everything they possibly can to address the climate crisis,'" said Stiell. "There are those that are going forward, further, and faster than everyone else. These are examples to be followed. There are those who just need to be nudged into taking further action, to go beyond business-as-usual. There are others who need support so they're able to do everything they possibly can for their countries and communities. And then there are those who still refuse to act unless others do. They will not be allowed to slow down our collective response. Let's not let positioning block progress. All of us have to do everything we are capable of doing."

The opening of the COP27 bodes well as a lot of nations have recognized the urgency to address the climate crisis. Our country's representatives will assert the call for bolder climate action and demand the delivery of what is due for developing countries. "(We) hardly produce any greenhouse gas emissions, yet (we) suffer the most and continue to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change," said Loyzaga.

As the days go by for COP27, we wait in anticipation for the outcome of various high-level meetings and negotiations. Will we be at the losing end? Or are we able to bargain well for the sake of the nation's future? We only have high hopes for COP27.



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Editorial

PH should build bilateral ties at COP27

THE 27th annual Conference of State Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP27, opened this week in the Red Sea resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and to say that global expectations for the summit are low would be an understatement. Nevertheless, it is still an important event for the Philippines and presents an opportunity for this country to strengthen its climate resiliency and response.

The prospects for cooperative global action on climate change have steadily waned since the historic adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, with actions toward reducing climate impacts and funding vulnerable countries' adaptation and mitigation efforts falling far short of promises. Even though the rhetoric and the goals remain the same, with the UN, government leaders and climate activists still proclaiming that the world can and must limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius before the end of the century, the assertions sound less convincing than ever before, and those making them sound less convinced that they are realistic.

The reality, sadly, is that the "ideal" 1.5 C target, a level at which most of the worst effects of climate change could be prevented, is no longer achievable, and the less ideal alternative target of limiting global warming to 2 C is likely beyond reach as well. Although the rate of increase has slowed, global emissions of greenhouse gases are still rising; they are on track to be about 10.6 percent higher in 2022 than in 2021.

A key agreement within the Paris accord was that the world's wealthier nations would provide funding for more vulnerable countries' climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. The Philippines' impressively bold pledge to reduce its own emissions by 75 percent by 2050 is based on the presumption that this funding will be forthcoming; only about 3 percent of the emissions reduction will be achieved by the government's own investment, with the remaining 72 percent being "conditional" on receiving outside help. The Philippines' pledge is just one example of many.

The goal of the Paris accord was that \$100 billion in funding would be provided annually for countries like the Philippines, but the closest the world has gotten to it was in 2019 when \$79 billion was gathered. Since then, the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic and its resulting

The Philippines should seek out one-on-one partnerships, building a solution to our own climate adaptation and mitigation challenges one piece at a time, rather than wait for a grand, world-scale plan that will never come.

persistent global economic chaos, Russia's invasion of, and protracted war in Ukraine, and perversely, the increasingly severe and widespread impacts of climate-induced natural disasters have diverted attention and resources from the funding of climate action. Even more distressingly, it appears that even \$100 billion per year is not nearly enough; the UN Environment Program's (UNEP) Adaptation Gap report, released just ahead of COP27, said that the adaptation needs of vulnerable countries will actually cost about \$340 billion per year by 2030.

The irony is that while the world's nations are in unanimous agreement that something must be done about climate change, they are collectively incapable of doing something about it because their shares in any collective effort must take a back seat to their immediate, individual concerns of economic stability, food security and energy security. They are still willing to do what they can to fight climate change, but those concerns place limits on what that is, and moreover, those limits change from year to year.

This is where the opportunity arises for the Philippines. No government or major institution is willing to admit that a global summit like COP27 is a waste of time, but the only way to ensure that it will not be is for those individual governments or institutions to be able to go home and tell their citizens or stakeholders that they accomplished something. Collective agreements are difficult, but bilateral agreements are comparatively easy and would provide those achievements that can be highlighted.

The Philippines should use the COP27 event to seek out these potential one-on-one partnerships, building a solution to our own climate adaptation and mitigation challenges one piece at a time, rather than wait for a grand, world-scale plan that will never come. We have been waiting for six years for the global effort to begin, and with the impacts of climate change growing visibly worse each passing year, it would be foolish to keep on waiting.



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UN chief, Gore and others give heated warnings in climate talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN
The Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt—
With the world on “a highway to
climate hell with our foot on the
accelerator,” the United Nations chief
on Monday told dozens of leaders to
“cooperate or perish,” singling out the
two biggest polluting countries, China
and the United States.



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give heated warnings in climate talks

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wasn't alone in preaching with tones of fire and brimstone to try to shake up the world's sense of urgency at this year's annual UN climate conference.

"Choose life over death," former US Vice President Al Gore urged. "It is not time for moral cowardice."

Some of the strongest pleas for action came from leaders of poor nations that caused little of the pollution but often get a larger share of the weather-related damage. Several called on developed nations for reparations, which in climate negotiations is called "loss and damage."

"Africa should not pay for crimes they have not committed," Central African Republic President Faustin Archange Touadera said, adding that rich nations were to blame for the climate problem.

"Climate change is directly threatening our people's lives, health and future," Kenyan President William K. Ruto said of the African continent, which he said is

looking at \$50 billion a year in climate change damage by 2050. Ruto said Kenya is choosing to not use many of its "dirty energy" resources even though it could help the poor nation financially, and has instead opted for cleaner fuels.

Loss and damage "is our daily experience and the living nightmare of millions of Kenyans and hundreds of millions of Africans," Ruto said.

Seychelles President Wavel John Charles Ramkalawan said, "Like other islands, our contribution in the destruction of the planet is minimal. Yet we suffer the most." He called on wealthier countries to assist in repairing the damage.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley called for a massive overhaul of international development loans and a 10 percent tax on fossil fuel companies, which she said made "\$200 billion in profits in the last three months."

"I don't need to repeat the horror and the devastation wrecked upon this Earth over the course of

the last 12 months since we met in Glasgow," Mottley said. "Whether the apocalyptic floods in Pakistan or the heat waves from Europe to China or indeed in the last few days in my own region, the devastation caused in Belize by Tropical Storm Lisa or the torrential floods a few days ago in St. Lucia."

Ahead of this year's conference, known as COP27, leaders and experts have been ringing alarm bells that time is running out to avert catastrophic rises in temperature. But the warnings may not have the impact of past meetings because of multiple other challenges pulling leaders' attention—from midterm elections in the US to the Russia-Ukraine war.

"In the fight for life on Earth, no one is a bystander," said Jordan's King Abdullah. "Every contribution counts. COP27 has brought us together to link forces and stand our ground. We are at the beginning of a long, challenging and urgent transformation."

More than 100 world leaders will speak over the next days at the gathering in Egypt, most from developing countries demanding greater accountability from the richest, most polluting nations. Much of their focus will be on telling their stories of devastation by climate disasters, including a speech Tuesday by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif of Pakistan, where summer floods caused at least \$40 billion in damage and displaced millions of people.

"Climate change will never stop without our intervention," the summit's host, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, said.

El-Sissi, who also called for an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, was gentle compared to a fiery UN chief Guterres, who said the world "is on



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give heated warnings in climate talks



EGYPTIAN President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, center right, and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, center left, leave after a group photo at the COP27 UN Climate Summit, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on Monday, November 7, 2022. AP/NARIMAN EL-MOFTY

a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”

He called for a new pact between rich and poor countries to make deeper cuts in emissions with financial help and phasing out coal by rich nations by 2030 and elsewhere by 2040. He called on the United States and China—the two biggest economies—to work together on climate, something they used to do until the last few years.

“Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish,” Guterres said. “It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact—or a Collective Suicide Pact.”

But bad timing and world events hang over the gathering.

Most of the leaders are meeting Monday and Tuesday, just as the United States has a potentially policy-shifting midterm election. Then the leaders of the world’s 20 wealthiest nations will have their powerful-only club confab in Bali in Indonesia days later.

Leaders of China and India—both among the biggest emitters—appear to be skipping the climate talks, although underlings are here

negotiating. US President Joe Biden is coming days later than most other leaders on his way to Bali.

“There are big climate summits and little climate summits and this was never expected to be a big one,” said Climate Advisers CEO Nigel Purvis, a former US negotiator.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was initially going to skip the negotiations, but public pressure and predecessor Boris Johnson’s plans to come changed his mind. King Charles III, a long-time environment advocate, won’t attend because of his new role. And Russia’s leader Vladimir Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine created energy chaos that reverberates in the world of climate negotiations, won’t be here.

Many European leaders who spoke Monday singled out Russia as the cause of the current energy and food crises, saying the war in Ukraine showed shifting to renewable energy was a matter of national security.

“We always want more” leaders, United Nations climate chief Simon

Stiell told a Sunday news conference. “But I believe there is sufficient [leadership] right now for us to have a very productive outcome.”

In addition to the leaders’ speeches, the negotiations include “innovative” roundtable discussions that “we are confident, will generate some very powerful insights,” Stiell said.

Still, “the historical polluters who caused climate change are not showing up,” said Mohammed Adow of Power Shift Africa. “Africa is the least responsible, the most vulnerable to the issue of climate change and it is a continent that is stepping up and providing leadership.”

“The South is actually stepping up,” Adow told The Associated Press. “The North that historically caused the problem is failing.”

For the first time, developing nations succeeded in getting onto the summit agenda the issue of “loss and damage”—demands that emitting countries pay for damage caused by climate-induced disasters.

Nigeria’s Environment Minister Mohammed Abdullahi called for wealthy nations to show “positive and affirmative” commitments to help countries hardest hit by climate change. “Our priority is to be aggressive when it comes to climate funding to mitigate the challenges of loss and damage,” he said.

Leaders of poorer nations, joined by French President Emmanuel Macron, talked about the issue as one of justice and fairness.

“Our part of the world has to choose between life and death,” Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan said.

Frank Jordans contributed to this report.



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Takeaways: Calls for reparations, emissions cuts at COP27

BY PETER PRENGAMAN

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt—The first full day of the year's most important summit on climate change, known as COP27, got underway on Monday with urgent calls by leaders to slash greenhouse gas emissions as the planet warms and severe weather events become more frequent and destructive.

Scores of presidents, along with thousands of diplomats, climate negotiators, business leaders, activists and journalists descended on the Red Sea resort city of Sharm El-Sheikh to take part in discussions and negotiations slated to go through Nov. 18.

"Climate change will never stop without our intervention," said Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, opening the day's session. "Our time here is limited and we must use every second that we have."

Former US Vice President Al Gore, one of the first leaders to raise the alarm about climate change, framed the question of whether to decarbonize as a "life over death" choice by leaders. Nigeria's Environment Minister Mohammed Abdullahi, along with many others, argued that the action needed to go beyond just cutting emissions in the future. Rich nations, most responsible for climate change, must help poor nations hit hard by impacts of climate change.

"The blame game should stop," he said, adding that the country would be "aggressive" during negotiations about financing and reparations for vulnerable countries.

Here is a look some of the largest storylines on the first day of COP27:

Loss and damage

IN the world of climate negotiations, loss and damage refers to reparations. That would be rich nations, the most responsible for the emissions that have led to climate change, making reparations to developing countries that are often most impacted.

While the idea has long been around, traditionally it's been more on the fringes of climate discussions than in the forefront. On Monday, it dominated many of the talks.

For the first time, developing nations got on to the summit agenda the issue of loss and damage, and numerous leaders brought it up and urged action. The setting of this year's summit, Egypt, a developing nation in Africa, seemed to give the initiative a symbolic push.

"The damage is obvious," Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo told The Associated Press. "Those who are responsible should be very, very much aware of the need to compensate others."

Progress amid distractions

THROUGHOUT the speeches, leaders urged their counterparts and negotiators not to get distracted amid so many things competing for attention. There are the US Midterm elections on Tuesday. Now in its eighth month, Russia's invasion



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of Ukraine has pushed some countries to speed up plans to transition to green energies while others have come under criticism for turning back to dirty fuels like coal to make up the energy shortfall. And COP27 will still be happening when leaders of the world's richest nations meet in Bali in Indonesia for the G-20 summit next week.

"Today's urgent crises cannot be an excuse for backsliding or greenwashing," said Antonio Guterres, the U.N. secretary general.

On the sidelines, there was also talk about who wasn't attending the summit, and what that might say about their commitments.

Leaders of two of the biggest emitting countries, China and India, thus far appear to be skipping the talks, though they are sending underlings to negotiations. The leader of the historically top polluting country, US President Joe Biden, is coming days later than most of the other presidents and prime ministers on his way to Bali.

Egyptian activist strike

TO coincide with the summit start, jailed opposition activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah escalated a hunger strike, refusing also water, according to his family. On Monday, Agnes Callamard, secretary general of Amnesty International, warned that failure by the Egyptian government to release him would lead to his death.

Abdel-Fattah, 40, has spent most of the past decade behind bars. For many Egyptians, his detention is a symbol of the country's return to autocratic rule. For more than six months, Abdel-Fattah has been on a partial hunger strike, consuming only 100 calories a day.

Hoping to push the issue, Abdel-Fattah's younger sister, Sanaa Seif, came to Sharm el-Sheikh early Monday. She arrived on a flight from London through the Turkish city of Istanbul.

"I'm here to do my best to try and shed light on my brother's case and to save him," Seif said upon arrival.

Since 2013, el-Sissi has overseen a massive crackdown, jailing thousands of Islamists, but also secular activists involved in the country's 2011 uprising. Many other activists, journalists and academics have fled the country.

Saudi Arabia initiative

AS expected, Saudi Arabia had a large presence, both inside the COP27 venues and outside.

On the sidelines of an event, on Monday Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged \$2.5 billion to fund regional efforts to combat climate change.

The crown prince said the money would support initial projects and the budget for the Middle East Green Initiative, which Saudi Arabia launched a year ago. Saudi Arabia had a large pavilion outside the venue dedicated to its green initiatives. Salman also said the kingdom's Public Investment Fund would target net zero carbon emissions by 2050, through a circular carbon economy approach.

Many climate change activists say the strategy and investments are simply a way for Saudi Arabia, one of the world's largest oil producers, to continue with business as usual. They say the circular carbon strategy focuses on unreliable carbon capture and storage technologies rather than phasing out fossil fuels. AP



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COP27: Global firms pump in \$12B

BY RAFFY AYENG
 @tribunephil_raf

An unprecedented \$12 billion was committed by a coalition of global big business to push the 2030 agenda to decarbonize the planet by funding green technologies.

The World Economic Forum and US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate announced at the ongoing 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Egypt the expansion of a coalition of global companies that will purchase commitments to reduce carbon emission from mainly "cement and concrete industry and other hard-to-abate sectors".

The latest expansion of the First Movers coalition, made up of 65 companies with a collective market value of approximately \$8 trillion, focuses on cleaning up one of the world's most carbon-intensive industry sectors through purchasing commitments for low-carbon technology.

"Cement is the second most consumed product globally after potable water, and the demand signal that top companies have set today for near-zero concrete will drive critical investment in next-generation technologies," US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said.

"I am also delighted with the increased commitments we have announced across our existing long-distance transport, heavy industry and carbon removal sectors. This unprecedented \$12 billion dollar demand signal will bring competitive technologies to market this decade that are needed to decarbonize so-called 'hard-to-abate' sectors of the global economy," he added.

From construction and engineering to real estate and developers, First Mover companies have committed to purchase at least 10 percent near-zero cement and concrete per year by 2030, according to the WEF.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, who heads the Philippine delegation to the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or COP27, has pressed for developed nations to take more responsibility to avert climate catastrophe.

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Yulo expressed that "the Philippine delegation in the following days will continue to assert and safeguard the country's interest in climate change negotiation, ensuring that we receive the appropriate support and assistance as a country vulnerable to climate change."

"We are one with the government in asserting our right to climate justice and reparations from historically polluting nations for what they have done. But our calls would have more force if they were backed by action to stop worse climate change," said Avril de Torres, deputy executive director of the Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development said.

"We can begin by stopping any further increase in the use of fossil fuels such as coal and gas in our energy grid, with a view to increasing the share of renewable energy," she added.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. said in his recent address to the 77th

United Nations General Assembly in New York City, that climate change reflected a historical injustice where the least responsible countries like the Philippines bear the brunt of its effects.

Mr. Marcos also called on developed countries to give more resources and assistance to less developed nations while including bills on natural gas development among his priority legislative measures and allowing the Department of Energy to increase the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix without accelerating the transition to renewable energy.

"The cement and concrete sector is the latest addition to the decarbonization effort, creating the early markets needed to scale innovative green technologies. We are thrilled to see government partners join in this effort to ensure a net-zero transition that is truly global," Børge Brende, President of the World Economic Forum, said.



COP27: What's on the UN climate talks agenda

THE UN climate conference taking place in Egypt until Nov. 18 has much to discuss, from financing the transition to clean energy to protecting the world's forests and future-proofing cities.

Here are some of the most-watched topics on the agenda in the sun-baked resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, where forecasters have warned of a possible sixth failed rainy season.

Fossil fuels and backsliding

Countries at last year's COP26 talks agreed for the first time to "phase down" coal production and trim other fossil fuel subsidies. Voluntary side deals also touted plans to curb fossil fuel financing and to limit planet-warming methane emissions, chiefly from the fossil fuel and agriculture industries.

But the energy disruption caused by war in Europe has led several European Union members to reopen or extend coal plants' life and to lock in liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments. Meanwhile, China continues to approve new coal mines, and Vietnam and Indonesia seek to boost coal production.

The backsliding by major economies on their promises to shift from fossil fuels has led some nations, especially in Africa, to call for a formal recognition that they should be allowed to develop their fossil fuel reserves.

The United Arab Emirates, a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and host of next year's COP28 talks, has said it will be "a responsible supplier"

of oil and gas for as long as the world needs.

Paying up for the damage

As host of COP27, Egypt has made the issue of "loss and damage," or compensation for losses from climate-related disasters, a focus.

Following a breakthrough at the weekend as this year's summit began, the issue for the first time is part of the UN talks' formal agenda.

Wealthy countries have resisted creating a funding mechanism that could suggest liability for historic climate damages, but developing countries are united in demanding that a Loss and Damage fund be established.

The United States and the European Union have shown more openness to having a serious discussion, but remain wary of creating a fund, especially as they face domestic pressure to deal with economic weakness and cost of living crisis caused by high energy prices.

Adapting to a warmer world

High-income countries have yet to meet their pledge to deliver \$100 billion a year in climate finance. Only \$80 billion per year was delivered in 2019. Nevertheless, the talks will address boosting that annual goal upward from \$100 billion from 2025.

To date, about a quarter of that financing has gone to projects for adapting communities for a warmer world.

Low-income and climate-vulnerable countries want to ensure that the share spent on adaptation is

doubled by 2025 - a pledge made at last year's UN climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland.

That's still shy of what experts say is needed: a report by the UN Trade and Development office estimates adaptation costs in developing countries will total \$300 billion in 2030.

'Fundamental reform' of development banks?

High-level voices have called for an overhaul of international financial institutions. At the annual World Bank meetings last month, the United States and Germany called for "a fundamental reform" of the bank to respond to challenges including climate change on a global scale, rather than country by country.

Some reformers are asking for more grants and concessional loans that would prevent lower- and middle-income countries from having to pay high interest rates.

U. Special Envoy John Kerry said in a speech last month that reforms would be crucial to "address the crisis of this moment," and that there were proposals that could "unlock several hundred billion dollars in additional MDB [multi-

national development bank] lending capacity without requiring new shareholder capital" and without risking credit rating downgrades.

Keeping 1.5 alive

At COP26, countries promised to "revisit and strengthen" their national climate plans, called Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, by the end of this year to ensure they are aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of preventing warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures.

But last month's UN "synthesis report" on NDCs submitted this year shows that only 24 countries out of 194 have updated their plans.

There may be some new momentum in Egypt. Australia's new government strengthened its pledge to cut emissions 43% by 2030, a significant improvement from its 2015 target of 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2030. Chile, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam are also expected to announce new plans.

Meanwhile, Brazil's election of Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva as president on Sunday bolsters global efforts to end deforestation. - Reuters



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EDITORIAL

Why COP27 matters to PH now more than ever

Many of Filipinos will wake up today not knowing that in a place called Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt, a very important two-week event called COP 27 has started, shaping up as perhaps the most consequential gathering of world leaders that will determine the future of this planet and the lives of the most vulnerable. The 110-million plus Filipinos, ironically, are part of this most vulnerable segment. And yet, again, majority of us are not even aware of COP27, which has far-reaching consequences, especially to the future generations.

COP27, short for Conference of Parties, is the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference. It opened last Nov. 6, 2022 and will conclude on Nov. 18. The Philippine contingent, composed of members from Congress, various departments, and environmental groups, is led by Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

During the opening remarks given by UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, he signaled that a "new era begins and we begin to do things differently." "Paris (COP21) gave us the agreement. Katowice (COP24) and Glasgow (COP26) gave us the plan. Sharm El-Sheikh (COP27) shifts us to implementation. No one can be a mere passenger on this journey. This is the signal that times have changed," Stiell said.

This opening couldn't be more appropriate as this year's UN Climate Conference opens against a backdrop of extreme weather events worldwide, an energy crisis propelled by the war in Ukraine, and scientific data reiterating that the world is not doing enough to tackle carbon emissions and protect the future of the planet. We don't need to look far to feel this climate crisis, as the country is still reeling from the devastating impact of Severe Tropical Storm Paeng.

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not be stressed further enough as it is not only the biggest and most important annual climate-related conference, but it brings together presidents, prime ministers, CEOs, climate advocates, scientists, researchers, media, etc. in one forum to do something concrete and immediate to address climate change. In the words of Stiell, plans are already done; it is now time for action.

"The heart of implementation is 'everybody, everywhere in the world, every single day, doing everything they possibly can to address the climate crisis,'" said Stiell. "There are those that are going forward, further, and faster than everyone else. These are examples to be followed. There are those who just need to be nudged into taking further action, to go beyond business-as-usual. There are others who need support so they're able to do everything they possibly can for their countries and communities. And then there are those who still refuse to act unless others do. They will not be allowed to slow down our collective response. Let's not let positioning block progress. All of us have to do everything we are capable of doing."

The opening of the COP27 bodes well as a lot of nations have recognized the urgency to address the climate crisis. Our country's representatives will assert the call for bolder climate action and demand the delivery of what is due for developing countries. "(We) hardly produce any greenhouse gas emissions, yet (we) suffer the most and continue to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change," said Loyzaga.

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World on 'highway to climate hell,' UN chief warns at Cop27 summit

HUMANITY is on a "highway to climate hell", the UN secretary general has warned, saying the fight for a liveable planet will be won or lost in this decade.

António Guterres told world leaders at the opening of the Cop27 UN climate summit in Egypt on Monday: "We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing... And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

"We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator."

He said the world faced a stark choice over the next fortnight of talks: either developed and developing countries working together to make a "historic pact" that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set the world on a low-carbon path – or failure, which would bring climate breakdown and catastrophe.

"We can sign a climate solidarity pact, or a collective suicide pact," he added.

He said the world had the tools it needed to re-

duce greenhouse gas emissions, in clean energy and low-carbon technology.

"A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains," he said. "The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch. One thing is certain: those that give up are sure to lose."

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, the president of Egypt, said in his opening address to the summit that poor and vulnerable people around the world were already experiencing the effects of extreme weather: "The intensity and frequency of climate disasters have never been higher, in all four corners of the world, bringing wave after wave of suffering for billions of people. Is it not high time today to put an end to this suffering?"

More than 100 heads of state and government from around the world gathered in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on Monday for two days of closed-door meetings and public events to discuss the climate crisis.



GUTERRES

Rishi Sunak, the British prime minister, will attend for one day, along with Olaf Scholz of Germany, Emanuel Macron of France, and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission. Joe Biden, the US president, will come later in the week, after the US midterm elections.

Mia Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados, will set out a new initiative on climate finance for the developing world, and African leaders including William Ruto of Kenya, Macky Sall of Senegal, and George

Weah, the president of Liberia, are at the talks. The crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, is also at the meeting.

From Wednesday, the world leaders will hand over to officials and ministers for the rest of the fortnight of talks. However, the summit promises to be a fraught and difficult one, with little chance of a breakthrough.

Countries are meeting in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, a worldwide energy and cost of living crisis, and rising global tensions. Rich and poor countries are at loggerheads as big economies have failed to cut greenhouse gas emissions quickly enough, and the poorer countries bearing the brunt of the climate crisis are receiving little of the financial assistance they need and that has been promised.

The Cop27 conference got off to a slow start, with negotiators spending more than 40 hours over the week-end wrangling over what would be on the agenda. In the end, it was agreed that the vexed issue of loss and damage – which refers to

the worst impacts of the climate crisis, which are too severe for countries to adapt to – would be discussed.

Poor countries suffering loss and damage want a financial mechanism that will give them access to funding when disasters such as hurricanes, floods and droughts strike, destroying their infrastructure and tearing apart their social fabric.

It is not likely that these talks will provide a final settlement on loss and damage, but countries are hoping for progress on ways of raising and disbursing finance.

At most UN climate summits, activists and protesters play a key role. However, Egypt clamps down on dissent and its jails are full of political prisoners. Sisi's government has promised that climate activist voices will be heard, but their activities have been curtailed, with protesters kept at a separate site and required to register in advance to be granted permission for even minor demonstrations.

The Guardian



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Malaig

“There will be gadflies pointing an accusing finger at the highly industrialized West and Europe as being the greatest polluters and culprits.

I was born in the once-sleepy town of *Wato* along the shoreline of mythical Lake Lanao. It was bucolic. Life was simple until modernity and progress spawned in and out-migration and activated residents. Our barrio (now barangay) is called Malaig, a name up until recently was a source of wonder for my generation where the name came from. But *Malaig* is a portmanteau of the *Maranaw* words “*mala*” (big) and “*ig*” (water), which simply means “big water.” Why is that so?

The topography of *Malaig* is such that on its northwest side are Mount Gurain and hills brimming with virgin forest and thick foliage of trees. It was green and full of rare species of animal life, flora and fauna, and greenery, an iconic view one sees only nowadays in movies. Now, they are bald and barren. Words like deforestation, climate change, and global warming were unknown then. Our common belief was that trees are an essential part of nature and that if you cut or uproot one, another will spring out naturally. No need to reforest, nature will do it. They were a common source for building homes. Commercial logging and “*kaingin*” or slash and burn did not reach my barrio.

Boundaries of *sitios* were commonly marked by rivers, springs, and brooks. *Malaig* is bounded by rivers that separate it from Barangay Salipongan and the rest. The rivers then were pristine flows of water rich with marine life. I fondly remember bathing in our river and fishing for freshwater riches like crabs, shrimps, and mollusks. There was a bottomless flow of clean and healthy mineral



SOUTHERN VOICES
 MACABANGKIT B. LANTO

water for everybody to enjoy. That was then.

Last week, my barangay was hit by a huge flow of mud water cascading from the mountains and higher grounds. The current was thunderous according to the residents, who took a video recording and uploaded it on social media, that the rumblings caused tremors on the ground. There was a rush of “big water” carrying debris, wastes, and uprooted logs which destroyed houses along the path of the cascade. Houses were destroyed and hopefully, no life was lost (as I write this piece). Traffic was cut because of washed-away bridges. Now, we know that *Malaig* was referred to by the old folks as the big flood that occasionally hit the area. In other words, as early as before our generation knew the devastating effect of destroying the watershed and the water impounded by the roots of trees was already felt by the residents, thus, the word *Malaig* or big volume of water.

We are not sure if the heavy downpour and landslide that hit *Malaig* were an after-effect of tropical storm “*Paeng*” or “*Queenie*” which came on the heels of “*Paeng*”. Meteorologists have no explanation for the phenomenon.

All these thoughts came

to mind as world leaders, Presidents, Ministers, and heads of non-government organizations are presently meeting at the Red Sea tourist resort of Sharm el Shiek in Egypt. The 2-week (6-18 November) COP27 Climate Summit sponsored by the United Nations, for the nth time will confront the issue of the devastating effect of climate change and global warming which, if not arrested, will lead us to doomsday. There will be gadflies pointing an accusing finger at the highly industrialized West and Europe as being the greatest polluters and culprits. On the opposite side are the optimists who claim that if only countries will comply with their Paris Agreement to reduce carbon emissions there is a chance that the earth will be saved.

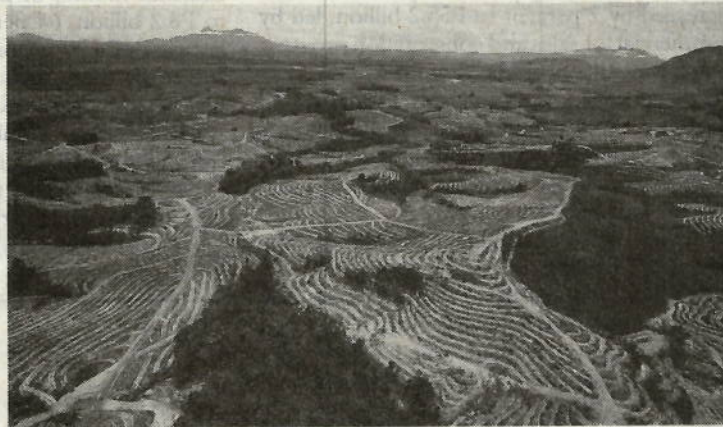
Meantime, the tragedy that my townmates just experienced was an eye-opener and wake-up call for them. It was a blessing in disguise. Now, more than ever, they will be vanguards of our environment. It was a good thing only material things were lost and not lives. They could organize themselves into “environment warriors” to combat the cutting of trees in the mountain ranges. The local town government should play a focal role in this renewed crusade to prevent environmental disasters.

“On the opposite side are the optimists who claim that if only countries will comply with their Paris Agreement to reduce carbon emissions there is a chance that the earth will be saved.

amb_mac_lanto@yahoo.com



Major food firms detail plans to end deforestation by 2025



An aerial view of a cleared forest area under development for palm oil plantations in Kapuas Hulu district of Indonesia's West Kalimantan province. (Reuters Photo)

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt—The world's largest food trading companies detailed a plan on Monday to eliminate deforestation from their supply chains for soy, beef and palm oil by 2025, a step seen as essential to averting catastrophic climate change.

Destruction of forests - like the Amazon rainforest to make way for farm fields and ranches or Indonesian jungle for palm oil - emits huge amounts of greenhouse gas each year, helping to drive climate change.

The roadmap, launched at the COP27 United Nations climate summit in Egypt, comprises 14 firms including Cargill, Bunge, Archer Daniels Midland, Louis Dreyfus Company, Brazil's JBS and China's COFCO International.

The firms said the plan helps put the world on track to limit global warming to an increase of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the threshold beyond which scientists say climate change risks spinning out of control.

The roadmap "represents a significant sector milestone in eliminating commodity-driven deforestation in line with a 1.5°C pathway," COFCO International CEO Wei Dong said in a statement.

Many of the firms had previously committed to eliminating deforestation by 2025, with the plan establishing milestones along the way that vary slightly by sector.

The environmental advocacy group Mighty Earth CEO Glenn Hurowitz said that 2025 was not soon enough, calling for all deforestation to be ended immediately.

"The roadmap's insistence that individual companies undertake best efforts to establish individual cut-off dates for deforestation no later than 2025 means the bulldozers will keep running and the destruction will continue," he said in a statement.

The industry has a spotty record of meeting past deforestation commitments.

In 2010, hundreds of the world's largest consumer brands as part of the Consumer Goods Forum pledged to reach "net zero" deforestation by 2020. But as the deadline approached, Cargill said that the food industry would fail to meet the goal.

The plan also calls on firms to establish targets for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and to begin disclosing their emissions from land use change in 2024. —

Reuters



Climate change, totoo! – PBBM



Paul's Alarm

By Paul Gutierrez

KAHAPON ay ginunita natin ang anibersaryo ng Bagyong Yolanda na kumitil ng libu-libong buhay at nanira ng bilyong pisong halaga ng mga ari-arian at pananim sa bansa. Ito ang tinatayang pinakamapaminsalang bagyo na tumama sa bansa at kinilala sa buong mundo dahil sa iniwang bakas nito.

Sa pananalasa ng Bagyong Yolanda, mas lalong nagiging maingay ang mga kampanya patungkol sa climate change o pagbabago sa klima ng daigdig. Dahil sa patuloy na pagtaas ng temperatura ng daigdig na nagresulta ng mga sakuna gaya ng matitinding pagbaha, tagtuyot, heat waves at malalakas na bagyo na talagang nagiging banta sa lahat ng may buhay sa daigdig.

Banta ng United Nations, magiging mas mainit ang panahon dahil sa mas mabilis na pagtaas ng temperatura sa daigdig o global warming.

At syempre, dito sa Pilipinas na nasa 20 bagyo ang dumadating sa atin taun-taon ang isa sa pinakanaapektuhan sa mas lumalakas na bagyo. Nito lamang nakaraang Bagyong Paeng, nasa halos 160 ang nasawi, isa sa pinakamataas na bilang ng mga nasawi gawa ng bagyo. Kabilang pa dito ang milyung-milyong ari-arian na nasira.

Kung magpapatuloy at walang gagawin ang mga pamahalaan sa daigdig, isa tayo sa pinakamaapektuhang bansa kung lalong lalakas ang mga bagyong darating sa atin taun-taon.

At ikinatutuwa natin na alam ni Pangulong Bongbong Marcos ang nangyayaring ito sa ating kalikasan. Aniya, prayoridad ng gobyerno ang pagpapaganda at pagpapalakas ng "disaster preparedness at response".

Mahalaga ito dahil hindi kaagad-agad mapipigilan ang lumalalang climate change pero maaaring mabawasan ang epekto nito kung magiging maagap at

mahusay ang mga paghahanda at mapalakas ang pagtugon ng gobyerno sa ganitong mga sakuna.

Kinilala din ang pagpapahalaga at pag-iingat sa ating mga ecosystem o mga likas na yaman na tumutulong para mabawasan ang epekto ng climate change. Matatandaan na nitong Bagyong Paeng, kumalat din sa social media ang pagkilala sa nagawa ng Sierra Madre para mabawasan ang lakas ng bagyo.

Maging mga eksperto ang nagpapatunay dito na sa tuwing bumabangga ang bagyo sa kabundukan ng Sierra Madre ay nababawasan ang lakas nito.

Ayon mismo kay PBBM, "Kapag may pagkakataon, ay lagi ko bini-bring up ang climate change. Hindi ito biro na. Ito ay totoong-totoo na. Kaya't hindi makakatulong ang paglalapastangan natin sa ating mga kabundukan, ilog o dagat."

Sinabi pa ni PBBM na mababawasan ang epekto ng climate change sa pagtatanim ng mga puno. Dahil alam naman natin na kung ano ang nagagawa ng mga puno hindi lamang sa paglilinis ng ating hangin lalo na sa mga mapaminsalang greenhouse gases kundi para makatulong sa mga kabundukan na makalikha ng tubig at mapanatili ang magandang klima.

Pero dahil sa nakalbo na rin ang ating mga kabundukan dahil sa kagagawan din ng mga tao, sadyang ang mga malalang pagbaha at mga landslide ay bagay na kakaharapin lalo na ng mga mahihirap.

Inaasahan natin sa pagbibigay prayoridad ng gobyerno sa pagharap sa climate change ay mas umigting ang mga kampanya at implementasyon ng mga batas na pumuprotekta sa ating kalikasan.

Kailangan din ang tuluy-tuloy na edukasyon sa mga mamamayan lalo na sa mga kabataan. Kailangang magamit ang mga paaralan at maisama sa agenda ng mga ahensiya ng gobyerno ang mga programa na magpapalakas sa pagtugon natin sa climate change.

Magandang nakapagpahayag si PBBM sa kaniyang prayoridad na harapin ang climate change. Isang malaking hakbang ito na maprotektahan hindi lamang ang ating kalikasan kundi maging ang buhay ng mga mamamayan.

Kaya galaw-galaw kayo dyan DENR!



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Legal shield for environment crusaders

THE Commission on Human Rights has urged the government to provide legal protection for environmental defenders and climate activists who promote climate awareness and education.

The CHR noted that the country plays an important role in leading and demanding climate action in the global arena as it is the fourth most climate change-vulnerable country in the world.

This, as international communities come together for the 27th Climate Change Conference of Parties November 6 to 18 in Egypt with the theme "Rise Up: Moving Beyond Climate Talk to Climate Action".

November is dedicated to the promotion of environmental education across all sectors of society by virtue of

Republic Act 9512 or the National Environmental Awareness and Education Act.

"We must meet the 1.5° target of the Paris Agreement to prevent the irreversible harms of climate change," the CHR said.

It stressed that people's lives and human rights are prioritized when the climate crisis is addressed with expedient urgency.

Earlier, Environment and Natural Resources Sec. Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, the head of the country's delegation to CoP27, said the damage caused by Severe Tropical Storm Paeng is a "reminder of the devastating impacts of climate change".

Apart from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, representatives from the Departments of

Finance, Agriculture, Energy, and the Climate Change Commission, climate scientists and climate and development experts composed the Philippine delegation to CoP27.

"We call for concrete actions from all governments to review and enhance their nationally determined contributions," the CHR said.

"We forward our recommendations to the Philippine government to ensure equality and non-discrimination in climate adaptation and mitigation measures through our National Inquiry on Climate Change report," it added.

The CHR appealed to local leaders and lawmakers for the creation of legally binding instruments to strengthen the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



NIA plants 85K trees in Sultan Kudarat

AROUND 73,673 timber seedlings and 11,700 fruit trees were planted by officials of the National Irrigation Administration-Sultan Kudarat Irrigation Management Office (NIA-Skimo), military personnel and members of people's organizations in Sultan Kudarat.

The tree-planting activities were held simultaneously in Sitio Jojo and Sitio Avengers in Chua village, Bagumbayan town.

The land planted upon by the officials covered 141 hectares in the Kabulnan River watershed.

The activity is part of the national greening program and the climate change initiatives of the government.

NIA-Skimo also announced that it is in line with the rehabilitation efforts of the office to revive forest land through tree replacement.

Moreover, tree planting is also one of the major component activities for the improvement and sustainability of the Kabulnan 2 Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project (K2MIPP) watershed.

The NIA Region 12 K2MIPP is a P32.2-billion project that started in 2018. It intends to provide dependable irrigation and water supply to Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao.

FRANZ SUMANGIL



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MARAMI ang naitalang patay kabilang na ang pagkasira ng maraming ari-arian makaraan manalasa ang bagyong Paeng mula sa Mindanao hanggang sa Luzon kaya nailagay pa sa State of Calamity ang apat na rehiyon sa bansa.

Pero ang mapait na balita ay yung mga namatay nang dahil sa rumagasang tubig na may kasamang lupa o putik kaya pati mga bahay ay nasira lalo na roon sa Mindanao kung saan naitala ang pinakamaraming namatay sa unang mga araw pa lamang ni Paeng.

Kamakailan ay umikot sa iba't-ibang lugar ang Pangulo upang matanaw nito ang pinsalang idinulot ni Paeng. Nagimbal ang Pangulo sa kanyang nakita kaya agad nitong ipinag-utos ang pagtanim ng mga puno. Aba'y hindi biro ito, taumbayan!

Ito ang bagong direktiba ng Pangulo lalo na roon sa tinatawag sa Ingles na "flood-prone areas" o yung mga lugar na madalas tamaan ng baha o kaya ay yung mga lugar na posibleng tamaan ng nakamamatay na baha sa darating na panahon.

Natitiyak kong ang kanyang nakita ay mga

EKSPERTO Joie O Sinocruz PhD



Magtanim ay hindi biro

kalbong kabundukan na sinira ng ilegal man o ligal na pagtotroso. Kasama rin sa mga sumisira ng kabundukan ang ilegal man o ligal na pagmimina.

Hindi ko sinasabing itigil ang ligal na pagtotroso, hindi ko rin nais ipatigil ang ligal na pagmimina dahil kailangan natin ito. Subalit kailangan masiguro ng gobyerno na responsable ang mga ito sa pagpapantiling makulay ang ating mga kabundukan.

Pero ang katotohanan na ito ay matagal nang problema. Matagal nang ipinanawagan ng maraming sektor ng lipunan sa gobyerno ang pagbibigay ng sapat na atensiyon upang labanan ang banta ng pang-aabuso sa ating kalikasan.

Hindi na bago ang mga ganitong eksena kaya hindi tama o wasto na sisihin natin ang Pangulo sa pinsalang naging hatid ng Paeng dahil noon pa man ay marami nang ganitong mga pangyayari pero kapag lumipas na ay tulayan nang nalilimutan.

Sana sa direktibang ito ng Pangulo na sa unang yugto pa lamang ng kanyang pamumuno sa bansa ay magkaroon ng tunay na epekto upang muling buhayin ang ating kabundukan para makatulong sa pagpusa o pagpigil sa tiyak na kapahamakan na dulot ng nakamamatay na baha.

Madaling sabihin na magtanim pero sa totoo lang ay hindi madaling gawin ito dahil kailangan ng isang matigas na Pangulo upang masigurong matutupad ang aktibidad na ito na magliligtas sa ating kalikasan na siya rin magliligtas sa ating mga kababayan sa tuwing may bagyo.

Para sa komento o suhestiyon:
eksperto1971@gmail.com



HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is set to sign an executive order (EO) reserving idle government lands for housing projects.

In a press release issued Monday, Malacañang said the EO will implement Section 24 of Republic Act No. (RA) 11201, which mandates several government agencies to jointly identify idle state lands suitable for housing and rural development.

Under RA 11201, an inventory will be conducted by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), De-

partment of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Land Registration Authority (LRA) to identify these lands, estimated to be more than 16,000 hectares, to be used for socialized housing.

Marcos said the EO "will not create new regulations but will just enforce the existing law."

According to the President, putting all these government assets will "ensure flexibility in deciding which of these lands should be used for housing."

Marcos is set to meet with

banks and financial institutions to assist the DHSUD in realizing its goal of building 1 million housing units per year or 6 million by the end of his term.

RA 11201 gives the housing agency power to take and administer government lands that have been idle for 10 years or more and use these for urban development.

Under RA 11201, the housing department is empowered to own and administer government-owned lands that have not been utilized for the purpose they have been originally reserved or acquired for at least 10 years and identified as suit-

able for urban development.

DSHUD Secretary Jose Acuzar earlier told the President that it had acquired the commitment of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) to the government's housing program.

In late October, Marcos called on government financial institutions and private banks to assist government efforts to address the country's housing backlog of more than 6.5 million.

He said giving incentives to private entities would further encourage them to take part in the building and financing aspects to support the housing program.

PNA



House approves 11 bills on fruitful Day One session

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE House of Representatives led by Speaker Martin Romualdez on Monday night approved on third and final reading 11 national and local bills that seek to promote the safety of private and public buildings and infrastructure, protect the environment, and boost tourism in the country.

Next page

House...

From A1

"We immediately buckled down to work on the first day of our resumption of session. It was a productive day," Romualdez said.

He said Mondays are usually devoted to House members' privilege speeches on their concerns, aside from referral of numerous bills, resolutions, and communications to the various committees and tackling unfinished business.

"But yesterday (Monday), we managed to pass bills of national and local importance, thanks to the cooperation of every House member," Romualdez said.

The House also approved on second reading several tax bills that were principally authored and sponsored by Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda.

These bills were House Bill 4102, or the Single-use Plastic Bags Tax Act, HB 4122, or the VAT on Nonresident Digital Service Providers, and HB 4339, or Package 4 of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program.

"With this, the House wraps up with all the priority tax measures of the Duterte-era Comprehensive Tax Reform Program, and is ready to move on to tax collection reforms, as prioritized by the Marcos administration," Salceda said.

One national measure approved was HB 5087. Authored principally by Deputy Speaker and Pampanga 3rd District Rep. Aurelio Gonzales Jr., it seeks to include the National Building Code as a subject in engineering and architecture courses and as part of licensure examinations for these professions. *(See full story online at manilastandard.net)*



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
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Panel okays bill promoting environment-friendly goods, services

A measure that promotes environment-friendly goods and services passed the scrutiny of the House Committee on Sustainable Development Goals.

Committee chair CIBAC Party-List Representative Bro.

Eddie Villanueva said House Bill 1272 seeks to promote in government the culture of procuring "green" or environment-friendly goods and

services in order to lead the country's direction toward sustainable development.

The measure aims to institutionalize in government procurement the concept of sustainable development or green procuring wherein the government meet its needs by purchasing goods and services that benefit not only the organization but the entire society

and economy as well while minimizing or causing no hazard or damage to the environment.

The bill will be consolidated with House Bill 5747 or the Sustainable Procurement Bill authored by Villanueva and with other similar bills before it will be reported to the plenary for deliberation.

"Sa gitna po ng mga nara-

nasan nating bagyo, pagbaha, sakuna, kalamidad at kahirapan sa nakalipas na mga linggo o buwan, kailangan nating maging seryoso sa pagta-trabaho at pagpupunyagi upang makamit ang mga sustainable development goals na ito lalo na sa pangangalaga sa ating kapaligiran at paglaban sa kahirapan," Villanueva in a speech during the meeting.



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Panukalang patawan ng buwis ang single use plastic bags pasado na sa Kamara

LUSOT na sa ikalawang pagbasa ng Mababang Kapulungan ang House Bill 4102 o Single-Use Plastic Tax Act.

Sa ilalim ng panukala ay papatawan ng P100 excise tax ang bawat kilo ng single-use plastic.

Ipinasok din sa panukala ang pagtataas ng buwis ng 4% kada taon simula sa Enero 1, 2026.

Ang kikitain mula sa naturang buwis ay ilalaan sa mga programa ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) alinsunod sa

Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

Sinabi ni House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Joey Salceda, kapag naging batas ang naturang panukala ay tiyak mahihikayat nito ang publiko na gumamit ng environmental-friendly na alternatibo sa plastic bags para maprotektahan ang kalikasan.

Diin ni Salceda, mas makatwiran ang pagpataw ng excise tax sa mga plastic bag, kaysa sa tuluyang i-ban o ipagbawal ang paggamit nito.



Namria signs agreement with Nippon Foundation-Gebco

THE National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (Namria) and Nippon Foundation-General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (Gebco) agreed to work together to further the global understanding of ocean science.

Namria, the country's central mapping agency, has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Nippon Foundation-Gebco to collaborate on the Seabed 2030 project.

Namria Administrator Peter Tiangco said the Philippines wanted to become a geospatially empowered nation.

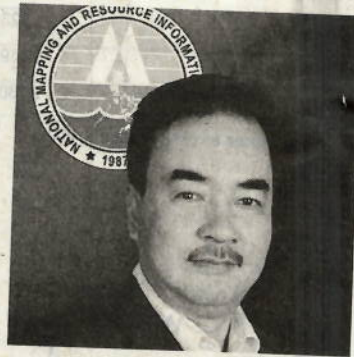
"Namria strives to become a center of excellence not only in support of this national aspiration but also to help progress the global effort, led by Seabed 2030, to expand our understanding of the ocean. We acknowledge the vital role a complete map of the ocean floor plays in helping us protect the planet — the blue planet — and we are delighted to join this endeavor," he said.

Namria, an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is mandated to provide mapmaking services and to act as the central mapping agency, depository and distribution facility for natural resources data in the form of maps, charts, texts and statistics.

Through its Hydrography Branch, the agency conducts hydrographic surveys to analyze oceanographic data used primarily in navigation, research and marine management.

Jamie McMichael-Phillips, director of the Seabed 2030 Project said, "Our partnership with Namria is a significant development for the project. As a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the Philippines has become the first member state to sign up to Seabed 2030, demonstrating its commitment to developing our understanding of ocean science and working toward Sustainable Development Goal 14: to conserve and sustainably use the oceans.

"We look forward to working with colleagues at Namria to progress our



■ **Namria Administrator Peter Tiangco.** PHOTO FROM THE NAMRIA WEBSITE

goal of 100 percent of the ocean floor mapped by the end of the decade," Phillips said.

All data collected and shared with the Seabed 2030 Project is included in the Gebco global grid, which is free and publicly available.

Seabed 2030 is a collaborative project between The Nippon Foundation and Gebco to inspire the complete mapping of the world's oceans by 2030, and to compile all bathymetric data into the freely available Gebco Ocean Map. Gebco is a joint program of the International Hydrographic Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and is the only organization with a mandate to map the entire ocean floor.

Seabed 2030 was formally endorsed as a Decade Action of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Namria's other technical branches are the Mapping and Geodesy Branch, which is in charge of national geodetic reference frame development and topographic base map production; the Resource Data Analysis Branch, which manages land and coastal resource mapping, land classification and thematic mapping activities; and the Geospatial Information System Management Branch, which oversees the sharing and dissemination of data that help create essential base maps.

GENIVI VERDEJO



Promoting sustainability through borderless collaboration, ESG reporting, insight sharing

ON top of a myriad of factors that can disrupt business operations, including a changing business environment and economic uncertainties that stir global financial markets, businesses are now increasingly concerned about how they can help address environmental issues, and for good reason. The effects of climate change are more apparent, with a study released by the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization showing that in 2021, greenhouse gases, the primary cause of climate change because they trap heat within the atmosphere, spiked to hit new record levels. They warn that these levels will continue to rise through 2022.

These environmental issues are cause for alarm, and has triggered increased participation from government, nongovernment organizations and businesses to join hands in preventing further environmental damage through sustainability initiatives.

In our previous article, we talked about how to successfully create champions that promote sustainability practices employed in the



FROM WHERE
WE SIT

**CHRIS
FERAREZA**

workplace. There, we mentioned how vital it is that all personnel realize that they all play a part in reversing climate change effects. This comes in the form of engagement in small measures that when practiced continuously, help contribute to attain bigger environmental goals like reducing carbon emissions.

Engaging in sustainability initiatives has become a need instead of an alternative or add-on initiative. In the Philippines, results of Grant Thornton's International Business Review show that 42 percent of Philippine mid-market firms surveyed are ready and likely to invest in sustainability reporting and initiatives.

But while many firms have expressed willingness and are keen to jump in when it comes to promoting sustainability, the tricky part is: how and where to start?

Engage in sustainability reporting

As more companies put sustainability at the heart of their corporate governance policies, they reap several benefits, the most valuable of which is the improvement of their brand's reputation and goodwill. For those operating in countries where rules about sustainability, or environmental, social and governance (ESG) programs are set, the immediate benefit is being able to comply with such rules. But, as they comply and fully embrace sustainability or ESG, the more rewarding and fulfilling benefits, and gains come their way. They also become more active and diligent in measuring and accurately reporting the impact of their business undertakings to people, the environment and the economy.

Like other leaders in various professions, assurance and advisory professionals now have bigger roles to play when it comes

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Promoting

to making advances in ESG initiatives within their firms. This responsibility entails leading by example and inspiring clients, other businesses and stakeholders who are ready to do more in terms of sustainability or ESG to adopt similar programs and comply with standards.

One specific area in which sustainability advisors and assurance providers alike can help is in sustainability reporting. This comes in the form of preparing proper disclosures outlining the activities and choices companies make to engage in and promote sustainability. As regulatory oversight becomes stricter, the sustainability advisor's role extends to providing insights on whether a company's sustainability report includes quantitative and qualitative data that are not only reflective of ESG pursuits, but are also accurate, relevant and timely. A McKinsey article described sustainability reporting as one which includes company disclosures that detail "frameworks and standards to

follow, which stakeholders to address and which information to make public."

Make headways through borderless collaboration

Assurance leaders now perform an integral function to assist in making transparent sustainability reports. And they can achieve more when they collaborate with stakeholders, and other audit and advisory professionals.

This imperative is not solely the responsibility of audit and assurance professionals. Businesses that are part of a larger business network or group likewise gain more by sharing best practices with other entities comprising the network or group. Free flow sharing of innovative ideas and strategies fosters continuous learning, opens new avenues for filling in knowledge gaps and helps leaders improve decision-making.

Share analyses, audit approaches

Jumping in on this discussion, Grant Thornton leaders emphasized in an article that audit and assurance leaders must show renewed commitment to share internally global audit data analytics approaches currently being developed and "to start dedicat-

ing resources focused on how to deploy data analytics better in their firm." This initiative matters most in the mandatory audit of sustainability reports.

Their role also includes suggesting new sustainability programs that client companies can invest in, particularly those that involve audit data analytics other than those already existing and recommended by their internal strategy group.

The onslaught of bigger environmental issues calls for more drastic actions. Effective collaboration coupled with the commitment to share best practices and spark continuous learning to be able to better comply with sustainability or ESG standards are key. We are far from fully addressing the looming climate crisis, but the sooner we make conscious efforts to combat it, we are a step closer to reaching this goal.

Chris Ferareza is a partner for advisory services at P&A Grant Thornton. P&A Grant Thornton is one of the leading audit, tax, advisory and outsourcing firms in the Philippines, with 24 partners and more than 1,000 staff members. We'd like to hear from you! Tweet us: @GrantThorntonPH, like us on Facebook: P&A Grant Thornton and email your comments to pagrantthornton@ph.gt.com. For more information, visit our website: www.grantthornton.com.ph.



PERSPECTIVE

Radical environmental groups emerge as newest political force in Europe

BY TU DONG

IN the past two weeks, environmental groups in Europe have staged a series of protests — including throwing mashed potatoes at a painting of Claude Monet and hurling tomato soup at a Vincent van Gogh painting to remind people of environmental issues — which have drawn global attention.

These radical environmental groups in European countries started their relevant actions in 2021. They have now upgraded their methods and an immediate reason is the setback in the European Union's energy transition process. Another reason is that environment-related affairs are gaining increasing attention and support with the EU population.

The EU has committed to playing a role as the global climate political leader, and has formulated and implemented a series of green environmental protection policies. Among them, the transformation and upgrading of energy structure which is an important part. However, due to the different energy structures within each member state, the goal of shifting away from fossil fuels to renewable energy has not progressed as planned. From the European energy crisis that started last year to the Russia-Ukraine conflict this year, European countries have begun to rethink

their previous "one-size-fits-all" timetable for green energy transition.

While the energy crisis caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict may further strengthen the EU's will to continue its pursuit of clean energy in the medium and long term, the current European energy gap caused by Western sanctions against Russia can hardly be filled by clean energy any time soon. To make up for this gap, even Germany, a leading member state on the road to energy transition, has gone back to burning coal to ensure heating this winter, and other countries affected by high energy prices, such as Hungary and Poland, have turned to cheaper and more polluting energy sources.

In addition, EU greenhouse gas emissions increased by 5 percent in 2021 compared to 2020 due to the post-pandemic economic recovery, and Europeans have experienced several rounds of extreme heat last year and this summer. All these factors have prompted radical environmental groups to take more eye-catching means to awaken the public to the issue of climate change.

Second, environmental protection issues have an increasingly strong public opinion base in Europe, and environmental political forces are on the rise. In the 2019 elections for the European



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parliament, Green parties in EU member states suddenly emerged and achieved historic results in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Austria and the Netherlands, according to statistics from the European Greens website. The European Green parties' soaring popularity reflects a trend in European politics that cannot be ignored: people in EU member states, particularly the youth, expect more from the EU in terms of addressing climate change. As green energy and emission reductions become "political correctness," radical environmental groups are resorting to extreme actions to draw more public attention to this issue.

Finally, the recent actions by radical environmental groups can be interpreted as a signal that those groups are shifting toward a political force — to be specific, a significant radical left-wing force. In recent years, the influence of traditional mainstream political parties has declined greatly, and has been replaced by the rise of extreme political forces. Compared to the prominence of the radical right, the radical left has faded. Thus, such actions by radical environmental groups are an attempt to compete with the radical right for voters who are disappointed with traditional mainstream parties.

The issue of combating climate change

resonates better with young Europeans. At a time when the leadership of Europe's radical right-wing parties is becoming younger, reaching out to more young people is a solid foundation for these organizations to grow into strong political forces in the future.

There are divergent views within European society on recent environmental actions. Some doubt that whether this approach really captures the essence of solving the problem at a time of high energy prices and soaring inflation. When the EU's energy transition process is suffering setbacks, the series of radical actions are aimed at not only attracting public attention but also making preparations for the environmental organizations to develop into a more influential political force. The implications of this for future political development in Europe will be complex.

GLOBAL TIMES

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Clean energy initiative backed

THE LAST MOHICAN



By **MARIO FETALINO JR.**

INSURANCE businesses find ways to grow and sustain their funds.

For the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), such endeavor is a priority because the agency has to ensure it can provide its over 2.5 million members and pensioners their benefits when they fall due.

Thus, the state pension fund needs to make investments that can yield high dividends. This can allow GSIS to further strengthen its actuarial life and provide opportunities to further diversify its funds.

Recently, the GSIS partnered with ACEN for an energy project. It has invested in ACEN's Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) initiative for the South Luzon Thermal Energy Corporation (SLTEC) amounting to P2.2 billion.

The move is in line with the call of the government to support infrastructure programs and initiatives to promote clean energy.

The partnership was sealed after GSIS and Ayala-led ACEN signed a memorandum of agreement on November 7, 2022 at the ACEN headquarters

in Makati City.

The GSIS subscribed to the ACEN backed 8.98% redeemable preferred shares of SLTEC. The proceeds will allow ACEN to transition the current state of SLTEC to a fully renewable energy supplier.

"We will fully support investments that prioritize optimal environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors or outcomes consistent with our corporate social responsibility," GSIS President and General Manager Wick Veloso said.

GSIS's investment will, in effect, provide bridge financing to support ACEN's transition to reach Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, transition its generation portfolio to 100% renewable energy by 2025, and live away from coal

plants by 2040.

On the other hand, Veloso said the venture will help improve GSIS programs and services that will ultimately redound to greater members' experience.

Meanwhile, ACEN was grateful for GSIS valuable support. "We thank GSIS for providing us the funding that would help us achieve our commitment to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050," ACEN President and CEO Eric Francia, said.

As the listed energy platform of the Ayala Group, ACEN aspires to be the largest listed platform in Southeast Asia, with a goal reaching 20GW of renewables capacity by 2030.

For comments, please call or text 09569012811 or email lastmohican2004@yahoo.com