

20 November 2022, Sunday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



## DENR to digitize data resources

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

TO improve its public service efficiency and delivery and to help it come up with practical and timely environmental interventions, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will continue to digitize its data resources.

This was disclosed by DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga during the recently held "Boundless: Philippine Digital Convention 2022," where she was one of the panelists.

Loyzaga explained that the DENR will maximize its boundaries by streamlining some of its processes from a traditional paper record management system to advanced digital platforms to fully connect its central office in Quezon City to all its field offices across the country.

"We are hoping that these types of platforms will speed up the design of our different interventions and solutions that will make it more collaborative so we can be more transparent in terms of sharing that data with partners whom we know can contribute to solutions," Loyzaga said.

Under her leadership, Loyzaga said the DENR – together with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the Philippine Statis-

tics Authority (PSA) – will undertake the formulation of a tool that would help measure the full extent of the country's natural resources and environmental assets.

She said that natural capital accounting will support the development of strategies for a science-based and risk-informed stewardship of the environment.

Loyzaga underscored the importance of investing in the "Internet of Things," or IoT, which is a system of interrelated computing devices and digital machines that has the ability to transfer data over a series of networks – to be able to gather data used in observation, monitoring and analysis.

She said that adopting this kind of system will improve and speed up the DENR's "on-the-loop" process as these new technologies now relay data in real-time.

"Without these technologies and technological platforms, we would not be able to cope with some of the rapid changes that are taking place because of climate change," Loyzaga said.

She further stressed that global warming has led to extreme uncertainty in the environment; therefore, shifting to technological advances would help the DENR's core business of managing risks and making decisions that are fast and relevant to the chang-

ing times.

The Philippine Digital Convention is an annual event where global thought leaders from across all industries discuss new technologies and evolving strategies.

Aside from Loyzaga, this year's panelists also include Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) president and CEO Cecilia C. Borromeo, Shell Philippines president and CEO Lorelie Quiambao-Osial, and Summit Media president Lisa Gokongwei-Cheng.



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PHILIPPINES  
**18th National  
BIOTECHNOLOGY  
Week**

November 21-25, 2022  
Philippine Trade Training Center, Pasay City

IMAGE BY PIAN B. HUELVA, DA-BPO

## 18th natl biotech week starts on November 21

**T**HE 18th National Biotechnology Week (NBW) will be held from November 21 to 25 at the Philippine Trade Training Center in Pasay City.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is spearheading this year's NBW celebration with the theme, "Responding to the Challenges: Business Opportunities in Biotechnology," said the Department of Agriculture Biotechnology Program Office (DA-BPO).

In observance of the Presidential Proclamation 1414, s. 2007, the NBW features the wealth generating opportunities in biotechnology with its vast applications in agriculture and fisheries, human health, industry, and environment.

A series of seminars, fora and technology exhibits are among the activities lined up for the week-long celebration.

It also aims to highlight products of biotechnology through press conferences, TV and/or radio guestings, fora, seminars and technology exhibits.

The events are a collaborative efforts of the DTI with the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Environment and Natural Resources, Health, the Interior and Local Government, Science and Technology, the Commission on Higher Education, other partner institutions and nongovernment organizations, DA-BPO said.

The government departments take turns in the annual leadership of the NBW.



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# Report: Jakarta, Manila in illegal trade in wild birds



A COLASISI, or Philippine hanging parrot, is being sold in front of the Quiapo Church in Manila. GREGG YAN



A VISAYAN hornbill is being sold in Mindanao. Wild birds are plucked from the forests in Southeast Asia to supply the illegal wildlife trade. GREGG YAN



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BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

*illegal trade in wild birds*

**Y**OU miss them sometimes and ask yourself, where have all the birds gone? However, if you are a social-media savvy, you may wonder where the birds you see on the Internet come from.

### Online illegal wildlife trade

A REPORT released last month by Traffic, a leading nongovernment organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants for their biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, revealed the rampant online trade of birds from Indonesia to the Philippines.

The report titled, "Farmed or poached? The trade of live Indonesian birds in the Philippines," flags the booming trade and trafficking of Indonesia's protected wild birds in the Philippines, a country known to harbor a diverse species of endangered birds.

The report presented data on the trade of bird species native to Indonesia that do not occur naturally in the Philippines but are sold in the country.

Traffic researchers drew from online trade findings, seizure records of Indonesian bird species in the Philippines and Indonesia, and import and export records from Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for live Indonesian birds in the Philippines.

### 'On-and-off' Facebook groups

SURVEYS from January 2018 to December 2019 recorded 501 unique posts involving a minimum of 841 live Indonesian birds offered for sale by 182 traders through 20 Facebook groups.

The Facebook groups are known to be "on-and-off" as they are shut down and new ones are opened to continue the illegal activities.

According to the report, of the 25 identified species, 21 (84 percent) belong to the order Psittaciformes, or birds comprising of parrots, amazons, cockatoos, lorikeets, lories, macaws, parrakeets, and 24 are regulated by CITES.

Three of the five CITES Appendix I-listed species were among the top 10 species recorded in trade by quantity. More than half of the posts (56.5 percent) were suspected to include wild-caught birds.

### Trade data discrepancies

HOWEVER, data of Philippine imports of Indonesian bird species

between 1979 and 2019 showed massive discrepancies between exporter-reported and importer-reported quantities.

"While there were 8,295 birds of 58 species reported by exporters, just 1,034 birds of 21 species were reported by the Philippines," the report said.

"The Philippines reported exporting 8,871 live Indonesian birds belonging to 51 species, again mostly Psittaciformes. These exports peaked in the 1990s, fell in the 2000s and rose again in the 2010s. The vast majority [95.6 percent] of the Philippine-exported Indonesian birds were declared as captive bred [source code C]," the report added.

A closer look into individual species found inconsistencies that bring into question the legality of allegedly breeding of animals within the country for export, the report noted.

Emerson Sy, one of the authors of the report, said among the 51 Philippine-exported CITES-listed Indonesian birds, 48 species had no source, or had insufficient records of legal importation, or the export commenced prior to the first reported legal importation.

Worse, the Philippines also exported six CITES Appendix I-listed species, despite there being no CITES-registered captive breeding operations for the Indonesian birds.

### Buyer and seller

THE Philippines is both buyer and seller of illegally traded wildlife, Sy told the BUSINESSMIRROR in a telephone interview on November 7.

"The Philippines is both 'a buyer and a seller' of illegal wildlife, birds included," he said.

According to Sy, if Indonesian birds are being smuggled into the Philippines, it is also highly possible that the country's native birds are being smuggled out of the country.

### 'Wildlife laundering'

SY noted that "wildlife laundering" is the most likely culprit behind, if not the unchecked, harvesting of the country's feathered friends in the wild.

He said in Filipino that some zoos are notorious for claiming to have successfully bred wild animals in their care, only to be exported to prospective buyers.

"It is time that the government regulates these so-called zoos that are allowed to farm animals without a wildlife farm permit or breeding permit as they actually are engaged in wildlife laundering. What if they are also buying illegally caught animals in the wild and passing them on as offspring of their zoo animals? We will never know," he explained.

### Report under verification

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) said the report's data and accuracy need further verification.

"We are verifying the report," DENR-BMB Director Natividad Bernardino told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview on November 8 when sought for a comment.

Moreover, Bernardino said DENR-BMB's wildlife law enforcement task force has not been remiss in its duties and responsibilities.

She said that in the past the agency has made unprecedented



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arrests and seizure or confiscation of wildlife species being traded by unscrupulous traders.

### 'Leave wildlife animals in natural habitats'

BEST Alternatives Director Gregg Yan said illegal wildlife traders and buyers should mend their ways and leave the wild animals in their natural habitats.

"Many breeders both here [Philippines] and abroad have the skills and technology to breed and raise birds," Yan told the BUSINESSMIRROR via e-mail on November 9.

As such, he said the best alternative to wild birds is to keep certified farmed birds instead.

"Common examples should include parakeets lovebirds, plus selected parrots. However, we should make sure that these non-native birds are never ever released into the wild," he ended.

### At risk of poaching

ON its web site, Traffic said Indonesia's wild birds are already at risk from poaching and the international bird trade.

It added that the triple threat of easy availability online, smuggling and doubtful legal trade in the Philippines add even more pressure.

Serene Chng, Traffic program officer, was quoted in a separate report as recommending stronger law enforcement in the Philippines and collaboration with Indonesian counterparts to investigate and disrupt cross-border wildlife crime networks that could prevent this problem from escalating.

Sy said that besides direct sales, smuggled birds caught in the wild are known to be laundered into the legal trade streams, often through the Philippine captive breeding facilities.

"This is why we have recommended

to authorities to conduct regular and thorough physical checks, and document audits of all registered keepers and breeders of Indonesian wildlife in the Philippines," Sy explained.

### 'Institutionalized' network

PREVIOUS interviews about the operation of illegal wildlife traders and well-documented arrests and confiscations would tell that Indonesian birds were previously being dropped off and received to a notorious trader from Pasay City in Metropolitan Manila.

In 2018, hundreds of birds, from black palm cockatoos and rainbow lorries to young emus were seized by authorities during a raid at an unassuming house owned by Abraham Bernales.

Bernales has been arrested by authorities three times. He was able to elude prosecution twice but was finally convicted of illegal wildlife trade.

The Indonesian birds are actually "ordered" from General Santos City in Mindanao. Authorities believe he also had contacts or sources of illegally caught Palawan wildlife.

Bernales's network is "institutionalized," authorities told the BUSINESSMIRROR. His pet shop in Pasay City was used as a front for illegal activity. He was reportedly the supplier of Indonesian birds in Calabarzon and Central Luzon, particularly in Nueva Ecija.

### How smuggling is done

ACCORDING to authorities, an island in Indonesia nearest to the Philippines is the source of the Indonesian birds. By boat, the illegal wildlife traders travel all the way to Bali Island, where the animals being smuggled into the country are checked, fed and provided water so they would not die during

transport.

Sometimes, Bernales's contact would schedule turnovers offshore to make it difficult for authorities to catch them.

Illegal wildlife traders operate discretely and are very cautious because of past arrests and confiscation made by authorities led by the DENR-BMB, sources told the BUSINESSMIRROR on condition of anonymity.

### Transboundary issue

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said that the report demonstrates that the diversity in the Asean region are interconnected, threats to the natural capital in the region are also interrelated and transboundary in nature.

"Poaching and wildlife trafficking are issues that contribute to biodiversity loss, the impact of which transcends social and political boundaries," said Lim, a former DENR-BMB director, told the BUSINESSMIRROR via Messenger on November 8.

One such impact, she said, is the rise in new and emerging diseases.

"We should, thus, encourage collaborative and integrated approaches among all countries in the Asean in finding ways to combat wildlife trafficking, whether they are sources, transit points or markets for illegally collected wildlife," she pointed out.

Lim said the ACB is ready to facilitate cooperation among the Asean member states (AMS) to address common challenges affecting the rich and unique biological diversity in the region.

### Inter-country collaboration

DIALOGUE, scientific and policy forum are a needed to determine integrated actions that can be undertaken by both Indonesia and the Philippines, Lim pointed out.

She said there is a need to look at underlying drivers. "Other AMS can also participate in the discussion as such concern is not confined to Indonesia and Philippines alone," she added.

Lim added that strong enforcement alone could not address the issue of illegal wildlife trade.

"Providing more incentives for protecting wildlife resources in the natural habitat, education and awareness for the youth and communities near wildlife habitats and across the supply chain, disincentives to reduce the demand, and enabling policies—all these should complement strong enforcement," she said.



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# PH calls for 'climate finance' adoption in COP27

By **CRISTINA  
LEE-PISCO**

**THE Philippines called for adopting a transformational and operational definition of "climate finance" to include the principles or characteristics of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG).**

At the fifth High-Level Ministerial Dialogue on

Climate Finance of the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, on November 14, 2022, Philippine Ambassador to Egypt H.E. Ezzedin Tago said that the collective ambition of scaling up climate action should be anchored on a transparent, accessible, predictable, and efficient mobilization of climate finance.

The NCQG is the new set of climate financial support that takes into account the needs and priorities of developing countries from a floor of USD\$100 billion per year.

Manila asked for a delivery plan for achieving the USD\$100 billion that focuses on adaptation financing, scaling up climate finance grants, and streamlining access to fi-

nancing.

The country likewise stated that financial mechanisms should be based on the best available science and technologies.

Tago highlighted the need for swift and effective initiatives. "Let us all work to break down the barriers to ambitious climate finance. Let us all endeavor for climate finance that offers more sustainable re-

sults," he stated.

The dialogue was moderated by the Ministers of Maldives and Finland. States Parties shared the challenges and key areas of progress in climate finance, how the delivery and transparency of climate financing can be further enhanced, and lessons learned that can be applied to the deliberations on the new collective quantified goal.



## PH pushes for effective climate finance

THE Philippines called for the adoption of a transformational and operational definition of "climate finance" to include the principles or characteristics of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG).

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*Cristina Lee-Pisco*





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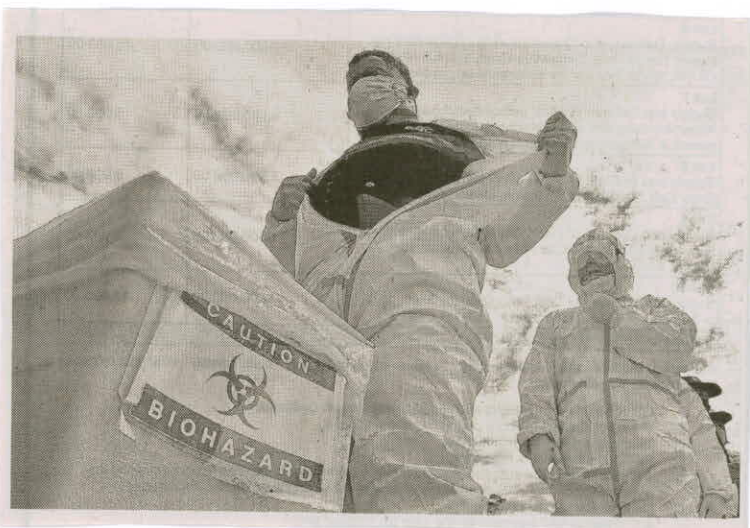
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# Plastic waste from hospitals: An emergency case



**DISPOSAL CHALLENGE** Personal protective equipment, like these biohazard gear worn by workers during Friday's Mine Safety and Environment Conference in Baguio City, go a long way toward keeping the human body safe from disease but they leave a huge plastic footprint and take a toll on the environment. —EV ESPIRITU

By DJ Yap  
@deejayapINQ

SINGAPORE—There's a ticking time bomb in Philippine hospitals and it's made of plastic.

Every year, the country produces 2.15 million tons of plastic waste, more than a third of which leaks into the open environment, while another third is thrown into landfills.

Only 345,000 tons of the nonbiodegradable material is kept in homes and less than half of that is recycled, according to Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), an international nonprofit with offices in Manila, Brussels and Washington, D.C.

That problem became magnified in hospitals at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as doctors, nurses and other medical staff had to wear all manner of single-use plastics, from head covers and goggles to coveralls and shoe protectors.

Health protocols require that personal protective equipment (PPE) be discarded after each use. This led to truckloads of plastic for disposal at tremendous cost.

At St. Paul Hospital in Dasmariñas City, Cavite province, an average of 219 kilograms of waste was produced every day—almost three-fourths or 72 percent of that volume being plastics, according to Ramon San Pascual, HCWH executive director for Southeast Asia.

Multiply that by 1,800—the number of hospitals in the country—and one can imagine the enormity of the crisis and its impact on both public health and the environment.

But there are solutions.



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Ramon San Pascual

San Pascual said it wasn't even his group that proposed these interventions.

#### Innovation by hospitals

"Innovation was generated by the hospitals themselves, some ... in partnership with us, as a result of the sheer situation that emerged from COVID-19," he said in an interview with the Inquirer.

"When COVID ... happened in March 2020 then expanded and expanded, initially the hospitals had a crisis of shortage of PPE," he recalled.

"So they began looking for alternatives. They saw they can use reusable, washable PPE, and at the same time, it won't contribute to pollution," he added.

This was what St. Paul's Hospital in Iloilo City did.

"What is good about St. Paul's is they had been working with us as a 'clean hospital' prior to COVID," San Pascual said about the 265-bed tertiary hospital managed and owned by the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres.

According to him, the hospital "realized early on that there's too much use of plas-

tics. They're paying so much for hauling and disposal [which have caused] harm to the environment."

#### Waste reduction, savings

By customizing PPE to become washable, the Iloilo hospital was able to save tens of millions of pesos in a matter of months.

From April to December in 2020, St. Paul's saved P65 million from dispensing with disposable PPE. The hospital also saved 33.7 percent from waste expenses through recycling between January and November that year.

San Pascual, in his presentation, also cited the Cahaya Qalbu Clinic in West Java, Indonesia, which came up with its own system of reducing plastic waste through washable PPE.

The outcome was even more dramatic—a 90-percent reduction in medical waste and, in turn, a 90-percent increase in savings.

"Without talking to each other," the Philippine and Indonesian hospitals arrived at similar solutions and achieved the same goal, San Pascual explained to the Inquirer.

#### Hospital interventions

On Nov. 9, San Pascual presented a number of interventions on the plastic problem facing health systems at the 7th World One Health Congress held at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in this city-state.

He centered his talk on four practical and doable actions that any hospital management could perform on its own:

The use of washable or customized reusable PPE with silver taffeta cloth; a COVID-19 waste audit, with proper segregation of PPE after their doffing and reprocessing; a digital waste registry, or intensified waste management with color-coded trash bins; and sustainable procurement, like one with a mechanism for the return of used plastics like dialyzers and dialysis tubings to their suppliers.



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START WITH REFILLING, REUSE STATIONS

## 'SACHET-FREE FUTURE' DOABLE WITH GOV'T HELP, SAY ADVOCATES

By Mariejo S. Ramos  
@MariejoRamosINQ

Climate-minded groups are on a mission to get rid of those small ubiquitous plastic packets used as packaging for shampoo, toothpaste and dishwasher soap, among many other products, for a "sachet-free future" for every Filipino.

Realizing the huge impact of plastic pollution, individuals from more than 20 private institutions, innovation hubs, sustainability firms, non-profit organizations and the government have signed a public manifesto calling for an end to sachet packaging and encouraging refilling stations for products instead.

In the manifesto, the signatories asked the Food and Drug Administration to legalize mainstream refilling of products, especially cosmetics like liquid soap and shampoo.



**Citing a recent study by Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, the signatories noted that 52 percent of the country's total plastic waste is composed of single-use plastics, mainly sachets**

**Reducing footprint**  
They said promoting refilling systems for those products as a starting point "can spark significant change in how Filipino consumers patronize household products" in sustainable packaging and "enable them a reasonable way to further reduce their plastic footprint."

The signatories said this move could also be an opportunity for the Philippine government to further fulfill its commitments in the Paris Agreement concerning climate mitigation and adaptation and for businesses to be able to support this path to sustainability.

Among the signatories were environment advocate Anna Oposa of Save the Philippine Seas, French ambassador Michèle Bocoz, Commissioner Rachel Herrera of the Climate Change Commission, Juan Carlos Hechanova of MakeSense Asia and Teddy Baguilat Jr., former Ifugao representative and governor.

The signatories also called for the mainstream adoption of refill-and-reuse systems in *sari-sari* stores, where 67 percent of Filipinos buy their daily household needs.

"As consumers, we seriously recognize the extensive effect of sachet pollution not just on

the environment but also on the overall quality of human life including but not limited to the industries we work in, our communities, our sources of income, our physical health, and the well-being of our families and loved ones," the manifesto said.

**52% single-use plastics**  
Citing a recent study by Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, the signatories noted that 52 percent of the country's total plastic waste is composed of single-use plastics, mainly sachets.

They said around 20 percent of plastic waste ends up in oceans, risking the safety of coastal communities and some major industries, including shipping and fishing.

Earlier, No Other Year For Plastics (Noypi) coalition convened by MakeSense Asia and its partner organizations put up an online petition calling on corporations and manufacturers to provide "a more sustainable and Earth-friendly alternatives to sachets."

They asked consumers to reduce the purchase of sachet packaging in supermarkets and *sari-sari* stores.

The petition by Noypi has so far collected more than 10,000 signatures. INQ



A FUTURE WITHOUT PLASTIC? The Philippines produces 2.15 million tons of plastic waste every year, mostly single-use items like sachets. Over a third of the plastics leaks into the open environment like this trash hill in San Juan City. **INQUIRER PHOTO**



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## Management of coastal resources requires review

**R**EPORTS on the Philippine decision to import fish shine light on the need for better, more effective administration of coastal areas and municipal waters. The Department of Agriculture recently issued guidelines for importing 25,000 metric tons of frozen fish species, including round scad or *galunggong*. The guidelines also cover the importation of bigeye scad, mackerel, bonito and moonfish for wet or public markets during the closed fishing season that stretches from this month to January 2023.

Most Filipinos likely feel disappointed about importing fish like galunggong, which locals have dubbed "the poor man's fish." Indeed, round scads used to be plentiful in local waters, and the abundant supply kept prices low. Earlier this year, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. even told journalists that the need to import round scads was "unacceptable." As part of the remedy, the government hopes to invest in fish ports and other infrastructure. About P5.1 billion was included in the proposed 2023 budget, which will soon be finalized by Congress.

Regrettably, this program does not address the more fundamental issues that are blamed for dwindling aquatic resources — destructive fishing methods, poorly enforced laws and negative impact of climate change. For now, importation is necessary for food security. But more needs to be done to address the problem in the long run.

In addition to hard engineering planned by the government, programs to rehabilitate coral reefs and mangrove forests across the country should also be considered. Together, they create an ecosystem that protects fish and other marine wildlife and enables them to thrive.

Unfortunately, coral reefs and mangroves are rapidly disappearing. Citing a 2017 study by the Department of Science and Technology, Anna Varona of Haribon Foundation said in a forum that only 2 percent of the country's coral reefs were "healthy." She blamed plastic pollution and dynamite fishing, which persists despite laws prohibiting it.

As for mangroves, about 500,000 hectares of coastal areas spanned across the country in 1918. By 1994, that had shrunk to some 120,000 hectares. But thanks to replanting programs, mangrove forests recovered somewhat, but they only covered 250,000 hectares, according to a 2020 report. Because the Philippines is an archipelago, it has a long coastline that could be planted to more mangroves.

Some of the reasons for the loss of mangrove forests include clearing coastal areas for shrimp farms, as well as tourism and residential development. Granted, those also generate economic returns, but there should be a balance because a healthy mangrove forest has many advantages.

### Added benefits

Protecting and rehabilitating coral reefs and mangrove forests can potentially do more than address the dwindling fish supply. For one, these programs can be a job-generating project for people living in coastal areas. That can also have a great impact on reversing poverty, because fisherfolk are among the poorest of the poor Filipinos.

Creating job opportunities for them could help discourage dynamite fishing and similar destructive methods. If fishermen and others in their family have alternative means of livelihood, perhaps they will be less prone to resort to illegal means of supporting their families. Also, tapping them to rehabilitate coral reefs and mangrove forests might keep them from destroying those precious resources.

The second point is about the special powers of mangroves, which are particularly helpful against climate change. Mangroves capture more carbon emissions than terrestrial forests. Mangroves also perform better than concrete seawalls in protecting coastal communities from tidal surges and severe weather caused by climate change.

More to the point of this editorial, mangroves help protect coral reefs by stabilizing shorelines, remove plastics and other pollutants, and improve the quality of the water. And like corals, mangroves provide nursery habitat that maintain fish stock.

In the long term when coral reefs and mangrove forests are nursed back to health, local fishermen might not need to venture too far out to the open sea to catch enough fish to support their families. And for the rest of the country, there should be more than enough local supply of fish like galunggong and others like it.



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# Church leaders call for compensation, climate justice

**T**HE environmental conference on climate crises called COP27 in Egypt is coming to a close this week and the voice of the Catholic Church calling for climate justice and restitution payments for the loss and damage caused by the industrial nations against the poor was heard. Many in the hard-hearted rich industrial countries refuse to admit and accept their responsibility and liability for causing the climate crises.

These are the powerful hidden forces of industry that capture government departments and compromise and bribe politicians and bend them to their will. Their will is for all to deny that there is a climate crisis and leave the world as it is, consuming fossil fuel non-stop. The planet is heading for a cliff at full speed, as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, with the deniers and obstructers' foot hard down on the accelerator. The tipping point of no return will soon be reached when the heating cycle of the planet continues indefinitely. Life on Earth will be unbearable for creatures, plants and humans, experts say.

Paying reparations for harm being done to poor nations is an urgent matter of conscience, according to Archbishop Nicolas



REFLECTIONS

**FR. SHAY  
CULLEN SSC**

Thévenin, Apostolic Nuncio to Egypt and deputy head of the Holy See's delegation. He said the rich industrial countries must pay compensation for polluting the planet and damaging the lives and environment of everyone else. In other undiplomatic words, the rich nations must stand up and pay up.

"It is imperative that we build bridges of solidarity. Those who are most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change are urgently calling for real support in this moment of crisis." He said "to ignore them [those affected by the climate crisis] would be a failure of conscience."

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* teaches that all humans have to save the environment and the planet from the destructive forces of irresponsible governments and industry that cause global warming and the massive disasters that are happening around the world.

The damage to small countries from floods, typhoons and drought is immense and is brought upon them by irresponsible gov-

ernments that approve coal and oil power stations and are paying oil companies a trillion dollars in subsidies to explore for more oil and gas. This is extreme hypocrisy and a total contradiction of their statements in the past and today at COP27 where they vow to reduce carbon dioxide and methane levels in the atmosphere. In fact, they are increasing the emissions of CO2.

The Philippines has 28 polluting coal-fired plants, and industry moguls and some government cronies and politicians under their influence are demanding to build 20 more coal plants. Public opinion is steadfast against anymore and clamor for the free renewable power from nature. The tycoons and the government must invest in low-cost renewable energy-generating sources like wind, solar geothermal, hydro and biomass. The oil companies worldwide are among the worst in causing CO2 and toxic contamination.

The Papal encyclical has inspired many to join the *Laudato Si* Movement (LSM) of committed lay people, priests, religious and, hopefully, bishops. Working together with many organizations, they are committed to saving the planet by raising awareness and inspiring action

to reduce global warming and carbon dioxide emissions.

The objectives are "to urge political, business and social leaders to commit to ambitious climate action to solve this urgent crisis and keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius (relative to pre-industrial levels). They can be found at [www.Laudatosi.org](http://www.Laudatosi.org)

The one group they overlooked to mention by name is that of the bishops of the world. They need to be inspired, motivated and challenged to act and help save the creation from global warming. Sadly, not all bishops in the United States support Pope Francis on his stand in *Laudato Si*. Many are silent and some misleading on climate change, says a research by Creighton University in Nebraska.

If bishops around the world took up the call of Pope Francis and began their own environmental-changing project in their diocese and plant at least 1,000 tree saplings and care for them, that would be a great contribution. They could teach by example and encourage every parish to have its own tree planting project. They could offer a prize for the best effort.

The bishops and priests can roll

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church leaders call for compensation, climate justice

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## Church

up their sleeves and get out of the comfort of their palaces, rectories and cloisters and lead the people in planting trees. It's a powerful way to teach the Gospel values and inspire and unite a parish. Action for climate justice is a great encouragement to the youth and the next generation so that they will see life-giving forests. If bishops are called leaders, then they should lead by example. In the Philippines, a few brave courageous bishops have stood for human rights and justice and sacrificed themselves for the sake of the poor and exploited and got arrested and charged. We need many more bishops to build faith and follow the example of Jesus of Nazareth and courageously take a stand for the environment.

It is a matter of faith, too, as Jesus taught that truth, goodness,

love and action for justice will overcome evil. The willful pollution and causing a climate crisis against the creation is evil. We must act. As St. James said, "Faith without action is dead" (James 2:26) When people act together to do good and help each other, that is faith in action.

The forests give life, oxygen, water, and protection from storms and landslides. Trees are fantastic absorbers and digesters of CO2. They give off clean, healthy oxygen in return. Planting trees is an action that communities and schoolchildren can do together. If the bishops and priests in a diocese were to join them in a tree-planting project, the people would not faint in shock. They would applaud and be inspired to do even more to save the "common home." This year, instead of buying a cut tree for Christmas, plant one instead.

[www.preda.org](http://www.preda.org)



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# Threat of a walkout mars COP27

EU officials would rather 'have no decision than a bad decision';

draft kicks major decisions to COP28

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT—Some European delegates threatened to walk away as countries struggled to reach agreement at the COP27 climate talks in Egypt on Saturday.

With the talks already in overtime, officials from the 27-country European Union said they were worried about a lack of progress overnight and even the possibility of backsliding from parts of the COP26 climate deal agreed in Glasgow, Scotland, last year.

"All (EU) ministers ... are prepared to walk away if we do not have a result that does justice to what the world is waiting for—namely that we do something about this climate crisis," EU climate policy chief Frans Timmermans told reporters on the sidelines of the summit.

"We'd rather have no decision than a bad decision."

The UN climate agency later published the latest draft proposal that would kick many of the most controversial decisions on the fund into next year,

when a "transitional committee" would make recommendations for countries to then adopt at the COP28 climate summit in November 2023.

The draft posits that the summit would agree to "establish a fund for responding to loss and damage."

The recommendations would cover "identifying and expanding sources of funding"—referring to the vexed question of which countries should pay into the new fund.

## 'Rise to the occasion'

The Egyptian COP27 president urged parties to "rise to the occasion" and unite around a final deal, while defending the version so-far drafted.

"The text does keep the 1.5 alive," said Sameh Shoukry, who is Egypt's foreign minister.

Negotiators said they had not seen a fresh draft of an overall deal since Friday morning, although they had reviewed separate draft compromises for deals on the stickiest issues.



IMMOVABLE OBJECT An attendee poses for a picture near a model Earth during the COP27 climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on Saturday. —REUTERS

That draft had reaffirmed past commitments to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, but did not meet demands by some, including the European Union and Britain, to lock in country commitments for more

ambitious efforts to curb climate-warming emissions.

Dutch climate minister Rob Jetten said many countries were unhappy at lack of progress on commitments to cut emissions to keep global temperatures



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from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius—the threshold at which scientists say the effects of climate change will get much worse.

“It’s simply not good enough,” Jetten told Reuters on the sidelines of the summit. “We’re still waiting for some texts, but it feels like we’re backtracking on Glasgow and that will be unacceptable.”

Friday’s draft for an overall deal also did not take on a suggestion by India that has been backed by the EU and Britain to ask countries to phase down all fossil fuel use, instead of just coal.

**Support unclear**

The fractious issue of so-called loss and damage payments to countries already being hit by climate impacts had negotiators scrambling Saturday to hash out a deal for a fund to help countries being ravaged by climate-driven floods, droughts, megastorms and wildfires.

In what the European Union

hoped would be a breakthrough on the issue, it agreed Thursday to back the demand of the G77 group of 134 developing countries to set up a special fund.

But while some climate-vulnerable countries such as the Maldives expressed support, it was unclear whether the world’s two biggest economies and polluters—China and the United States—would sign on.

The EU’s offer came with the stipulation that the funding come from a broad base of countries including China, and that only “the most vulnerable countries” benefit from the aid.

Complicating matters, US Special Climate Envoy John Kerry—a powerful force in climate diplomacy—tested positive for COVID-19 after days of bilateral in-person meetings with counterparts from China and the EU to Brazil and the United Arab Emirates.

A deal at COP27 must be made with support from all of the nearly 200 countries present. —REUTERS





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## UN climate change summit shows 4 signs of progress

**S**OMETHING significant is happening in the desert in Egypt as countries meet at COP27, the United Nations summit on climate change.

Despite frustrating sclerosis in the negotiating halls, the pathway forward for ramping up climate finance to help low-income countries adapt to climate change and transition to clean energy is becoming clearer.

I spent a large part of my career working on international finance at the World Bank and the United Nations and now advise public development and private funds and teach climate diplomacy focusing on finance.

Climate finance has been one of the thorniest issues in global climate negotiations for decades, but I'm seeing four promising signs of progress at COP27.

### Getting to net zero—without greenwashing

**FIRST**, the goal—getting the world to net zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050 to stop global warming—is clearer.

The last climate conference, COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, nearly fell apart

over frustration that international finance wasn't flowing to developing countries and that corporations and financial institutions were greenwashing—making claims they couldn't back up. One year on, something is stirring.

In 2021, the financial sector arrived at COP26 in full force for the first time. Private banks, insurers and institutional investors representing \$130 trillion said they would align their investments with the goal of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius—a pledge to net zero.

That would increase funding for green growth and clean energy transitions, and reduce investments in fossil fuels.

It was an apparent breakthrough. But many observers cried foul and accused the financial institutions of greenwashing.

In the year since then, a UN commission has put a red line around greenwashing, delineating what a company or institution must do to make a credible claim about its net-zero goals.

Its checklist isn't mandatory, but it sets a high bar based on science and will help hold companies and investors to account.

### Reforming international financial institutions

**SECOND**, how international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) are working is getting much-needed attention.

Over the past 12 months, frustration has grown with the international financial system, especially with the World Bank Group's leadership.

Low-income countries have long complained about having to borrow to finance resilience to climate impacts they didn't cause, and they have called for development banks to take more risk and leverage more private investment for much-needed projects, including expanding renewable energy.

That frustration has culminated in pressure for WB President David Malpass to step down. Malpass, nominated by the Trump administration in 2019, has clung on for now, but he is under pressure from the US, Europe and others to bring forward a new road map for the WB's response to climate change this year.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Motley, a leading voice for reform, and others have called for \$1 trillion already in the international financial system to be redirected to climate resilience projects to help vulnerable countries protect themselves from future climate disasters.



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At COP27, French President Emmanuel Macron supported Mottley's call for a shake-up in how international finance works, and together they have agreed to set up a group to suggest changes at the next meeting of the IMF and World Bank governors in spring 2023.

Meanwhile, regional development banks have been reinventing themselves to better address their countries' needs.

The Inter-American Development Bank, focused on Latin America and the Caribbean, is considering shifting its business model to take more risk and crowd in more private sector investment.

The Asian Development Bank has launched an entirely new operating model designed to achieve greater climate results and leverage private financing more effectively.

### Getting private finance flowing

THIRD, more public-private partnerships are being developed to speed decarbonization and power the clean energy transition.

The first of these, "Just Energy Transition Partnerships," announced in 2021, was designed to support South Africa's transition away from coal power.

It relies on a mix of grants, loans and investments, as well as risk sharing to help bring in more private sector finance. Indonesia expects to announce a similar

partnership when it hosts the G-20 summit in late November.

Vietnam is working on another, and Egypt announced a major new partnership at COP27.

However, the public funding has been hard to lock in. Developed countries' coffers are dwindling, with governments, including the US unable or unwilling to maintain commitments.

Now, pressure from the war in Ukraine and economic crises is adding to their problems.

The lack of public funds was the impetus behind US Special Climate Envoy John Kerry's proposal to use a new form of carbon offsets to pay for green energy investments in countries transitioning from coal.

The idea, loosely sketched out, is that countries dependent on coal could sell carbon credits to companies, with the revenue going to fund clean energy projects.

The country would speed its exit from coal and lower its emissions, and the private company could then claim that reduction in its own accounting toward net zero emissions.

Globally, voluntary carbon markets for these offsets have grown from \$300 million to \$2 billion since 2019, but they are still relatively small and fragile and need more robust rules.

Kerry's proposal drew criticism,

pending the fine print, for fear of swamping the market with industrial credits, collapsing prices and potentially allowing companies in the developed world to greenwash their own claims by retiring coal in the developing world.

### New rules to strengthen carbon markets

FOURTH, new rules are emerging to strengthen those voluntary carbon markets.

A new set of "high-integrity carbon credit principles" is expected in 2023. A code of conduct for how corporations can use voluntary carbon markets to meet their net zero claims has already been issued, and standards for ensuring that a company's plans meet the Paris Agreement's goals are evolving.

Incredibly, all this progress is outside the Paris Agreement, which simply calls for governments to make "finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse-gas emissions and climate-resilient development."

Negotiators seem reluctant to mention this widespread reform movement in the formal text being negotiated at COP27, but walking through the halls here, they cannot ignore it. It's been too slow in coming, but change in the financial system is on the way. *Rachel Kyte Tufts University/The Conversation (CC) via AP*



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## Climate damages key flashpoint at UN COP talks

SHARM EL SHEIKH, Egypt (AFP) – Climate negotiators were grappling for an agreement Saturday at the UN COP27 in Egypt after high-stakes talks went deep into the night with key sticking points over funding for countries wracked by climate disasters and ambition in tackling global warming.

The meeting at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh has been dominated by the controversial issue of climate “loss and damage” funds to help developing nations cope with the impacts of increasingly intense and costly floods, heatwaves and droughts.

Wealthy nations, long reluctant to discuss the issue over fears of liability, have accepted that vulnerable nations are facing devastating impacts.

But there are disagreements over who pays and which countries are considered particularly affected.

With nations struggling to find common ground, Britain and several other countries circulated new suggestions trying to break the deadlock late Friday.

The issue was among a daunting list of outstanding areas of contention at the COP27 talks, where representatives from nearly 200 countries have gathered with the aim of driving forward action on climate change as the world faces a worsening onslaught of weather extremes.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who chairs the COP27 talks, told delegates on Friday – the day talks were officially due to end – that

the negotiations would go into Saturday.

“I remain concerned at the number of outstanding issues,” he said.

Delegates are looking to find agreement on emissions-cutting ambitions and reaffirm a goal to limit average warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels, which scientists say is a safer guardrail to avoid the most dangerous impacts.



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**DOH 'bureaucracy'**

HCWH also partnered with the Department of Health (DOH) in other interventions—particularly the COVID-19 waste audit and the registry of discarded waste.

The DOH asked the group to perform the audit on five pilot hospitals, which San Pascual said “had no choice” but to comply.

Yet the audit, while compulsory, turned out to be “very helpful” to those hospitals, he

said, as he noted how they realized soon enough that “not everything should be considered infectious,” and that “protecting public health is also about protecting it from plastic pollution and this can be done side by side.”

But encouraging those endeavors was not easy, he admitted.

“We’re dealing with the bureaucracy in DOH, which is complex,” San Pascual said, adding that, ultimately, HCWH wanted “to encourage DOH ... to mandate hospitals to look thoroughly at their waste management system and to include sustainable solutions.”

**Too cautious**

The hardest challenge for these institutions is “overcoming fear,” he said.

Most doctors and nurses were not comfortable with the idea of multiple-use PPE, while many among the public had also become too cautious amid the surge in cases early during the pandemic.

But San Pascual said health-care workers must reject the notion that hospital gear should be used only once.

“You don’t need to overuse gloves. Infection can be prevented with a simple washing of hands,” he said.

“What we observed in many hospitals not only in Asia but [in] different parts of the world ... is that the biggest contributor to plastic waste is the use of medical gloves,” he pointed out, adding that a typical doctor or nurse may discard as many as 10 gloves a day.

“It’s disposable, single-use and made up mostly of plastic,” San Pascual said. “Imagine the environmental pollution that is creating.”

He said it’s important that not only middle managers and staff become reoriented in the use of their plastic articles “but also the top leaders” as well of any hospital.

San Pascual credits the management of hospitals like St. Paul’s in Iloilo and Indonesia’s Cahaya Qalbu Clinic for being more open to “an easy exploration to find alternatives.”

“What makes them innovative ... is their understanding and acceptance of the problem,” he said. *INQ*

*Note: This solutions story was written for the Journalism in the Age of Pandemics 2.0 program supported by World Association of News Publishers and Temasek Foundation.*



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# Climate progress on 2023 APEC agenda in San Francisco

BANGKOK, Thailand (AFP) — Asia-Pacific leaders will gather in November 2023 in San Francisco with climate high on the agenda, Vice President Kamala Harris announced Saturday, offering an opportunity for a rare US visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Harris, who is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, announced the week beginning Nov. 12, 2023 for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, as this year's meeting wrapped up in Bangkok.

"There is no better place to host APEC 2023 than California, a state known for economic innovation," Harris said.

She said that President Joe Biden's administration would focus the summit on sustainability and moving economies away from carbon as part of the fight against climate change.

"We will promote economic growth and prosperity for the American people, and people throughout the Indo-Pacific region," she said, using another term for

the Asia-Pacific.

During the talks in Bangkok, Harris asked leaders to prepare new targets for reducing emissions from the power sector in time for next year's summit, a US official said.

She also proposed an APEC-wide goal on slashing methane, one of the most powerful greenhouse gases, which is released from oil and gas production and agriculture.

The official said Harris asked for specific commitments as most APEC

nations already have longer-range goals on zeroing out the emissions responsible for climate change.

APEC, born in the 1980s, is focused on trade rather than political questions and each year offers an occasion for leaders of the 21 members to meet on the sidelines.

The APEC forum this year took place immediately after a summit in Bali of G20 economies, where Xi met Biden in their first meeting as heads of state.

Harris also spoke to Xi at the APEC

summit, part of a renewed effort by the world's two largest economies to prevent tensions from spiraling out of control.

Xi last visited the United States in 2017, meeting then-president Donald Trump at his Florida estate, but relations between the two countries later sharply deteriorated over trade, Taiwan, human rights and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Russia is also an APEC member but, unlike with Xi, the United States has made clear that it will not deal as normal with its President Vladimir Putin after he ignored warnings and invaded Ukraine in February.