

21 DECEMBER 2022, Wednesday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PH envisions biodiversity preserved

THE country envisions a future where biodiversity is restored and maintained to help build healthy, resilient Filipino communities while delivering benefits to all, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said.

In a country statement to the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, Environment and Natural Resources Sec. Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga said the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Fund must ensure clear linkages to national policy mechanisms and implementation that recognize the intersections between climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development.

"On conservation, we have planted and maintained over a million hectares of degraded forestlands, while more potential protected areas have been identified to bring us closer to our development goals and 30-by-30 targets," Loyzaga added.

She noted that these areas include

scientifically determined ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and "we regard these efforts as a source of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change".

On sustainable use, ecotourism jobs have more than doubled in the last five years, promoting practices, products and services that enhance biodiversity.

Regulations for mainstreaming biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices and nationally important agricultural heritage systems have also been implemented.

"Our high endemism and rate of species discovery, drive our will to strengthen the Nagoya Protocol's implementation to complement practical bilateral and multilateral benefit-sharing mechanisms for the utilization of genetic resources, associated traditional knowledge and Digital Sequence Information," the lady DENR chief said.

Despite these efforts, she said much

remains to be done to ensure the balance between advancing human development and protecting biodiversity.

"On means and tools of implementation, recent estimates show a more three-fold increase in public expenditure for biodiversity, with agrobiodiversity expenditures increasing nine-fold," she added.

However, these estimates also indicated that at least a P14-billion annual biodiversity funding gap exists, particularly for protection and restoration.

"We expect this gap to remain deeply significant, if not larger than previously determined. We intend to achieve our highest goals while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, and the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment," Loyzaga said.

She noted that development is not sustainable if the vulnerable are left behind.



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DENR attributes recognitions to hardworking execs, employees

By **JOEL DELA TORRE**

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has expressed its appreciation and gratitude for the numerous awards and recognition it received this year, attributing these achievements to its hardworking and dedicated workforce.

According to DENR's chief of staff Undersecretary Marilou Erni, none of these accolades would have been possible if not for the hard work and dedication of its officials and employees.

"What makes the DENR is its people. Today, we give tribute to all of you with these awards given to the Department. What a way to celebrate and end the year," Erni said during a Monday flag-raising ceremony.

The DENR was recently

named as one of the Philippines' Best Employers 2023 by the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Statista, a market and consumer data provider.

It also received awards from the Career Executive Service Board (CESB), Civil Service Commission (CSC), and the Philippine Information Agency.

As one of the Philippines' Best Employers, the DENR triumphed as the top government agency and 12th among all organizations surveyed in a large-scale and comprehensive employer study. The survey took into consideration tens of thousands of evaluations, opinions of thousands of employees and the scores of hundreds of companies.

DENR also received multiple awards under different categories during the Career Executive Service (CES) Congress held on November 22-25 in Pasay City.

The agency was named

as one of CESB's 2022 Outstanding Partners due to its "unwavering support in the Board's various programs." It was also awarded as one of the Agencies with Accurate and Timely CES Plantilla Report Submissions of its third level executives and Outstanding Institutional Partner in Learning for 2022 for its valuable contribution to the CES learning and development programs.

Of all the association of career executives nationwide, the DENR's Association of Career Executives (DENR-ACE) led by Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones was recognized for its constant and reliable support for CESB's activities and events.

DENR Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, Strategic Communication and Sectoral Initiatives Hiro Masuda was bestowed the Outstanding

CESB Panel Interviewer for 2022.

The said panel interview is the fourth and final stage in acquiring career executive service eligibility for third level officials.

On September 28, the CSC conferred recognition to the DENR Central Office for its "delivery of exemplary public service through the tireless commitment, resiliency, and priceless contributions of its government frontliners and workers amidst the pandemic."

Last month, the DENR received its fourth consecutive recognition as among the "Top Requested and Performing Agencies" in the 2022 Freedom of Information (FOI) Awards conferred by the FOI Program Management Office of the Philippine Information Agency.

This year, the award was given to the DENR for its consistent provision of timely and active responses to around 500 to 999 requests in the eFOI portal.



SATELLITE MAPPING – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday (Dec. 19, 2022) said he wants government agencies to maximize the use of satellite mapping to help improve their operations. Marcos broached the idea during his inaugural meeting with the Philippine Space Council which he chairs. Photo courtesy of the Office of the President

PBBM PUSHES SATELLITE MAPPING IN GOV'T OFFICES *To improve services, operations*

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is advocating the use of satellite mapping in all government offices to improve their services and operations, Malacañang said on Tuesday. /Page 15

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Marcos pitched the idea when he convened the inaugural meeting with members of the Philippine Space Council (PSC) at the Philippine Space Agency's (PhilSA) conference room at CyberOne Building in Eastwood, Quezon City on Monday, Undersecretary Cheloy Garafil, officer-in-charge of the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) said in a statement.

Marcos, who concurrently serves as chair of the PSC, stressed the importance of giving government agencies access to satellite data that could have multiple uses, specifically in improving the agriculture and business sectors and in protecting the environment.

"So, that's why I was asking you that we have to make sure that the data we give [in] each different department is in a form that they can use," Marcos, as quoted by the OPS, told the PSC.

Marcos, Garafil said, sees the need to conduct a mapping of the entire country "in a slightly different

way from what was being done before."

"During Monday's inaugural meeting of the Philippine Space Council, President Marcos particularly highlighted the importance of satellite mapping which could have multiple application," she said.

To date, PhilSA and the Department of Science and Technology's Advanced Science and Technology Institute (DOST-ASTI) have jointly developed the Space Data Dashboard which features an interactive Philippine map that shows data from different satellite projects.

The dashboard is designed to provide information from satellite images, which include traffic monitoring, air quality, water quality, night lights, land cover, flood maps, landslides and disaster incidence.

Marcos is seeking the further development of a Philippine satellite map to guide both the government and its partners, Garafil said.

He believed that the use of mapping data can help potential investors such as

carbon producers in "balancing their activity" as they could be provided with the necessary information in terms of developing a particular bio-diverse area in a certain location.

"The reason we are signing an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Space Council is so that we can do mapping because... as I was explaining to you earlier, in terms of green, in terms of bio assets, there is now a way to quantify your nice fisheries, your agricultural activity," he said.

"All of that. It is in terms of how much carbon you're putting out into the air. But the beginning, the first step of that, will be to map," Marcos added.

International cooperation

Marcos also advised the PSC to maximize the Philippines' tie-ups with international imagery and mapping agencies, Garafil said.

This, as Marcos wanted to make sure that the government offices will have access to satellite data according to their needs, the Office of the President (OP) said in a Facebook post.

"The President, who chairs the PSC, directed the council to guarantee that the data provided to relevant departments are helpful and will leverage the Philippines' partnerships with international imaging agencies," the OP said.

National Space Week

Meanwhile, PhilSA recommended the issuance of a resolution declaring the annual celebration of the National Space Week from Aug. 8 to 14, Garafil said.

Garafil said the proposal to observe National Space Week, which coincides with the enactment of the Philippine Space Act on Aug. 9, 2019, aims to "promote space awareness, espouse the benefits of space and its impact on the lives of the people, celebrate the contribution of Filipinos in the field of space and inspire the future generation." PNA



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SINCE 1898
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Satellite carbon mapping for agribusiness eyed

By BETHEENA V. UNITE

Government agencies dealing with agriculture, business, and environmental protection must have an access to satellite data to maximize its use in various fields, President Marcos told the country's space council.

Marcos made the statement during the inaugural meeting of the Philippine Space Council (PSC) on Monday, Dec. 19. The President chairs the PSC.

He particularly highlighted the importance of satellite mapping which could have multiple applications.

"The reason we are signing an MOU (memorandum of understanding) with the Space Council is so that we can do mapping because... as I was explaining to you earlier, in terms of green, in

terms of bio assets, there is now a way to quantify your nice fisheries, your agricultural activity," Marcos said.

"All of that. It is in terms of how much carbon you're putting out into the air. But the beginning, the first step of that, will be to map," Marcos added.

He stressed that potential investors, for example, who are carbon producers, need to balance their activity through the use of mapping data for them to develop a particular bio-diverse area in a certain location.

However, it must begin by mapping the entire country in a slightly different way from what was being done before, he said.

"So that's why I was asking you that we have to make sure that the data we give [in] each different department is in a form that they can use,"

Marcos said.

The chief executive also advised the PSC to maximize the tie-ups with the different agencies around the world involved in imaging that may be useful for the country.

Meanwhile, during the meeting, PhilSA proposed a resolution, declaring the annual celebration of the National Space Week or Pambansang Linggo ng Kalawakan from August 8 to 14 beginning next year.

The National Space Week, which coincides with the enactment of the Philippine Space Act on August 9, 2019, aims to promote space awareness, espouse the benefits of space and its impact on the lives of the people, celebrate the contribution of Filipinos in the field of space and inspire the future generation.



BETTER GOVERNMENT

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is advocating the use of satellite mapping in all government offices to improve their services and operations, Malacañang said yesterday.

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PBBM nais magkaroon ng access ang lahat ng gov't agencies sa satellite data

BINIGYANG-DIIN ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. na malaki ang maitutulong ng satellite data sa aspeto ng agriculture, business at environmental protection.

Ito ay sa harap ng pagnanais ng Pangulo na magkaroon ng access ang lahat ng ahensiya ng pamahalaan sa satellite data.

Ipinaliwanag ni Pangulong Marcos na sa pamamagitan ng satellite mapping ay maaari nang mabilang o matukoy ang carbon production at maka-develop ng isang bio-diverse area sa isang partikular na lokasyon.

Paraan din aniya ito para malaman kung may naghihintay na magandang produksyon sa pangisdaan at gabay sa isang agricultural activity.

Mangyayari lang aniya ito ayon sa pangulo kung masimulan na ang mapping sa buong bansa habang kailangan din aniyang ma-maximize ang tie up ng Pilipinas sa iba't ibang agency sa buong mundo na may kinalaman sa Satellite imaging na tiyak aniyang kapaki-pakinabang sa bansa. **(Vanz Fernandez)**



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'Metro air quality declines during Yuletide Holidays'

AIR quality in Metro Manila is at its worst episodes during the Christmas and New Year revelry because of the firecrackers and fireworks that emit hazardous pollutants that can harm human health.

This was emphasized by experts at a webinar organized by the Ecowaste Coalition as part of its yearly "Iwas Paputoxic" campaign to remind the public against the danger and hazard of exploding firecrackers and lighting fireworks on December 24 and Decem-

ber 31 to celebrate Christmas and the coming of the New Year.

Aileen Lucero, national coordinator of EcoWaste Coalition suggested that instead of wasting money on injurious, noisy, and polluting firecrackers and fireworks, households, commercial establishments and local government units should buy food and other necessities for needy people, stressing "the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment must take precedence over toxic festivities." *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



MINING EMPLOYEES FIND EXTRA INCOME POST ODETTE

A group of employees from Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC) harvested hundreds of kilos of bangus as the Province of Dinagat Islands marked the devastation wrought by typhoon Odette exactly a year ago.

A people's organization - Valenciana Regular-Seasonal Workers Association (VARSWA) - composed of employees of CMC, a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC), collaborated with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to embark on a fish farming project for extra income for employees.

BFAR provided the trainings, DOLE provided the farm inputs and CMC provided other logistical and operational funds including the cover for the cost of the Norwegian cage, estimated at P800,000.00 including accessories, which was sourced through the mining company's yearly Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) budget.

"This project was stalled, first because of the pandemic, and then when Odette destroyed the cage and the fish nets, so this is our first partial harvest since and interestingly on the anniversary of Odette," shares Lorenzo "Jojo" Cuares, Jr., President of VARSWA.

VARSWA has about 50 members, all regular-seasonal employ-



Good size. Jojo Cuares shows off the newly harvested bangus from the Norwegian fish cage in the background provided by Cagdianao Mining Corp.

ees of CMC. The mining company assisted in forming this people's organization and provided seed capital.

For VARSWA members, bangus farming is a natural choice since the inland coastal waterway provides the best condition for cage culture and, according to BFAR, suitable for bangus farming as to water quality and that there are no strong waves because of the surrounding mountains.

Cuares says they are expecting to account at least 3,000 kilos of bangus in this particular harvest from just one cage. He explains that the members of VARSWA will get a 70% dividend share out of their net income which they will

divide equally. The bangus sell between P180 to P220 per kilo depending on size.

"We will each earn a little from this harvest after all the expenses are accounted for, this kind of income is not enough as a main source of livelihood but a very good and a welcome extra income," he adds.

Sherrie Ann Cardoniga, Enterprise Development and Livelihood Coordinator, Community Relations Department, explains that the role of CMC is to guide the members of VARSWA in order that they efficiently manage the project until it becomes sustainable that they run it themselves without intervention from the mining company, which is the essence of the SDMP programs.

"There are factors and principles the members have to learn including efficient business management and, most importantly, protection of the environment for sustainability as they take advantage of the natural resources available to them," Cardoniga says.

"We know that to earn bigger we need to expand our production like add the quantity of our fingerlings, but we are consulting the technical experts on how to do so without adversely impacting the environment and to ensure that this livelihood becomes truly sustainable," Cuares ends.



Mining employees find another source of income following onslaught of typhoon Odette

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Group seeks stronger support for global plastics treaty

BY JED MACAPAGAL

ENVIRONMENT group World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines is optimistic the country will sustain its participation in the negotiations on the crafting of a global plastics treaty.

The group said the country's delegation to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1) that concluded its meeting last December 2 in Punta del Este, Uruguay is a good start to reduce plastic waste in the Philippines but noted this is "just the first step in the two-year negotiations process."

"WWF-Philippines is committed to participating and providing support to the INC1 process, and we have aligned our work to make the vision of no-plastic in nature a reality. We strongly hope the



Big step. The Extended Producers Responsibility Act is seen to reduce the substantial impact of plastics in the environment. (WWF Photo)

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Philippines would continue to show leadership and commitment on the global stage to end the problem of plastic pollution," said Katherine Custodio, WWF-Philippines executive director, in a statement.

The INC1 groups more than 145 countries with a preference for a treaty with specific and common, global rules which may include bans on the most problematic forms of plastic and product requirements to ensure reuse and circularity.

WWF-Philippines said this is the first time governments have met to negotiate global-level regulations to stop the plastic pollution crisis.

The negotiations are set to be concluded in 2024. The next negotiations will be held in May 2023 in Paris which may result in the creation of an inclusive treaty with efficient control measures applicable at various levels. These could include financial, technical and technological mechanisms to carry out a just transition at a global level.

The Philippines' Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022, which lapsed into law early this year, amended the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 and obliged enterprises or through their Producer Responsibility Organizations to recover or offset their generated plastic product footprint by 20 percent in 2023 and to 80 percent by 2028.



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Zero waste advocates call for systems change

INSTEAD of just pausing on environmentally damaging practices, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific is using the strength of the movement to celebrate International Zero Waste Month this January.

Leveraging its wide international network, GAIA boldly takes the lead to put genuine zero waste work into action despite the many false narratives, fed by corporations, international financing institutions and other governing bodies. Through science-based and proven solutions to waste, the alliance works on the premise that zero waste opens opportunities to

address bigger climate challenges. Zero waste is climate action, and the Zero Waste Month with its theme, "Zero Waste for Zero Emission," hopes to show just that.

GAIA and its members line up initiatives to educate and spark conversations about waste management solutions from gatherings and forging alliances to film festivals and more. Through a showcase of results-backed learning from experts and experienced individuals from around the world, the alliance aims to send the message that zero waste is one of the critical ways to achieve zero emissions, waste-to-energy incineration is a

false solution and a step backward, and that zero waste systems ensure just transition for all.

International Zero Waste Month is made possible through the generous support of the Plastic Solutions Fund in partnership with the following media outlets: *Advocates* (Philippines), *Bandung Bergerak* (Indonesia), *Business Ecology* (China), *The Business Post* (Bangladesh), *The Manila Times* (Philippines), *Pressenza* (Global), *Sunrise Today* (Pakistan), *The Recombobulator Lab* (Global) and *Republic Asia*.

Zero Waste Month celebrations have originated in the Philippines



■ The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives calls for the celebration of Zero Waste Month.
CONTRIBUTED POSTER

since 2012 when youth leaders issued a Zero Waste Youth Manifesto.



Global 'peace pact' signed to protect nature

MONTREAL, Canada (AFP) – Countries reached a historic deal on Monday, Dec. 19, to reverse decades of environmental destruction threatening the world's species and ecosystems, in what the UN chief hailed as "a peace pact with nature."

After the marathon COP 15 biodi-

versity summit in Montreal ran into the small hours, chair Chinese Environment Minister Huang Runqiu, declared the deal adopted and banged his gavel, sparking loud applause.

"We are finally starting to forge a peace pact with nature," UN Secretary-General Antonio **▶ 7**

Guterres said, hailing the accord.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said the deal was a "foundation for global action on biodiversity, complementing the Paris Agreement for Climate."

And the United States hailed the outcome as a "turning point," voicing appreciation for the role of frequent adversary China. State Department spokesman Ned Price called the deal "sweeping and ambitious."

American President Joe Biden supports the deal and has launched his own "30 by 30" plan domestically, but the United States is not formally a party to the biodiversity convention because of opposition by Republicans in Congress.

After four years of fraught negotiations, more than 190 other states rallied behind the Chinese-brokered accord aimed at saving Earth's lands, oceans and species from pollution, degradation and the climate crisis.

"We have in our hands a package which I think can guide us all to work together to hold and reverse biodiversity loss, to put biodiversity on the path of recovery for the benefit of all people in the world," Huang told the assembly.

He overruled an objection from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had refused to back the text, demanding greater funding for developing countries.

Biggest conservation deal ever

The deal pledges to secure 30 percent of the planet as a protected zone by 2030, stump up \$30 billion in yearly conservation aid for the developing world and halt human-caused extinctions of threatened species.

Environmentalists have compared it to the landmark plan to limit global warming to 1.5C under the Paris agreement, though some warned that it did not go far enough.

Brian O'Donnell of the Campaign for Nature called it "the largest land and ocean conservation commitment in history."

"The international community has come together for a landmark global biodiversity agreement that provides some hope that the crisis facing nature is starting to get the attention it deserves," he said.

"Moose, sea turtles, parrots, rhinos, rare ferns and ancient trees, butterflies, rays, and dolphins are among the million species that will see a significantly improved outlook for their survival and abundance if this agreement is implemented effectively."

The CEO of campaign group Avaaz, Bert Wander, cautioned: "It's a significant step forward in the fight to protect life on Earth, but on its own it won't be enough. Governments should listen to what science is saying and rapidly scale up ambition to protect half the Earth by 2030."

Indigenous rights

The text pledges to safeguard the rights of Indigenous people as stewards of their lands, a key demand of campaigners.

But observers noted it pulled punches in other areas -- for example, only encouraging businesses to report their biodiversity impacts rather than mandating them to do so.

The 23 targets in the accord also include saving hundreds of billions of dollars by cutting environmentally destructive farming subsidies, reducing the risk from pesticides and tackling invasive species.

Funding fight

At times, the talks looked at risk of collapsing as countries squabbled over money.

How much the rich countries will send to the developing world, home to most of the planet's biodiversity, was the biggest sticking point.

Developing countries had been seeking the creation of a new, bigger fund for aid from the Global North. But the draft text instead suggested a compromise: creating a fund under the existing Global Environment Facility (GEF).

That concern was echoed by the Democratic Republic of Congo, home to the Congo Basin, a rich haven of biodiversity.

Current financial flows for nature to the developing world are estimated at around \$10 billion per year.

A DRC delegate spoke up in the plenary to demand annual funding rise to \$100 billion — but Huang declared the framework passed, angering DRC's allies.



How Chinese diplomacy helped seal historic nature deal

By AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

MONTREAL, Canada — Expectations heading into a UN biodiversity conference in Montreal were about as low as they could be.

But a broad recognition that it was now or never for nature — and a flurry of late diplomacy by China — helped seal a “historic” deal on a night of high drama.

Dubbed the “ugly duckling” of global policy, the COP15 negotiations were snubbed by world leaders who had just attended a far higher-profile climate summit in Egypt.

Beijing, which held the presidency of the talks, at first appeared to have a hands-off approach, and the defining issue — whether the rich world would pledge enough money so their developing counterparts could protect vanishing species and habitats — seemed too great to surmount.

“For months, there was the question: Where is China?” a high-level source close to the matter told AFP.

What's more, relations between China and Canada, which had to step in to host the event because of China's strict Covid rules, have deteriorated in recent years.

Canada's 2018 arrest of Chinese telecommunications executive Meng Wanzhou at the request of the United States was followed quickly by China arresting two Canadians.

Just last month, Chinese leader Xi Jinping was caught on camera scolding Canada's Justin Trudeau over a sleight.

What's more, “it's strange to have a Chinese presidency on North American soil,” said the high-level source — and early signs did nothing to dispel assumptions that China in charge would mean a weakening of ambition.

In the first week, China let Canada run the show shepherding talks on the key issues, from finance to the cornerstone target of protecting 30 percent of land and oceans by 2030.

But as the clock ticked down, it was China that took charge of the text, in an approach described as “gentle” diplomacy: having subject experts and political representatives work in a calm, even environment, according to another diplomatic source.

“China closed out the deal and cornered the developing countries with the \$30 billion financing pledge by 2030,” said a third source, a European negotiator.



CHINESE MINISTER of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu (left) and Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (right), attend a plenary United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, on Dec. 19, 2022. (AFP)

When countries of the Global North sought more ambitious targets from the South, China responded by telling them they'd need to up their financing. And Beijing acted as a neutral arbiter, not aligning itself with the Group of 77 as it normally does.

“They've taken the risk of putting their own reputation on the line for something many thought they weren't the natural leaders of,” said Lee White, a British-Gabonese conservationist and minister of water, forests and environment of Gabon.

Nor is China a natural champion of environmental issues, having badly polluted its air and waters and degraded much of its land through agricultural production — a process it is trying to reverse through a greenification campaign.

“Countries that destroy their biodiversity end up regretting it — I think the Chinese probably got to that point and are now trying to put things right,” said White.

High drama

The passage of China's compromise text wasn't smooth sailing.

A plenary session to ratify the text was postponed Sunday several times to accommodate last minute holdouts, though delegates were eventually asked to take their seats by around 9 p.m., and wait. And wait, and wait, and wait.

Some left the main hall to take naps, with several Western delegates expressing irritation that the session was not being adjourned until the next day.

It was around 3 a.m. that the session finally began. A new text had

been uploaded, and participants were once more buzzing at the prospect of a “peace pact for nature.” When delegates gathered in the vast plenary hall, drama struck.

A delegate from Democratic Republic of Congo refused to back the accord, demanding more funds.

The conference chair, China's environment minister Huang Runqiu, brushed this off, declaring the deal “approved” and whacking down his gavel to loud applause. DRC's ally Uganda branded it a “fraud” and a “coup,” but the accord passed.

An exultant Steven Guilbeault, Canada's environment minister, downplayed the drama — insisting the process was upheld by the United Nations and disagreements on this scale were commonplace at such summits which he had been attending for 25 years.

“I've never seen a presidency text tabled and have so much support for it from the get-go,” with the vast majority of countries signing up right away, he enthused.

On cooperation with China, he told AFP: “We both decided to set aside our differences... to focus on what unites us,” adding: “What China and Canada have accomplished together in our relationship is symbolic of what we've accomplished here together, more than 196 countries.”

While China took center stage, the United States participated only in a supporting role.

President Joe Biden supports the pact's goals and announced his own “30x30” plan domestically — but political opposition by Republicans prevents the US from signing on to the convention on biological diversity.



Gates upbeat on climate innovation, even if 1.5°C target out of reach

WASHINGTON — When it comes to climate change, Bill Gates considers himself a realist — even if that means admitting the world has no chance limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Given “the overall scale of our industrial economy ... we’re going to have to do mind-blowing work to stay below 2 degrees,” he said.

But on meeting the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal? No one wants to be “the first to say it,” but the math shows it’s no longer within reach, Mr. Gates said in a video interview with Reuters.

The software-developer-turned-philanthropist was nevertheless upbeat about climate innovation — ticking off numerous areas advancing low-carbon technologies with funding from the Breakthrough Energy Group, which Mr. Gates founded in 2015.

Mr. Gates has invested more than \$2 billion toward climate technologies, including direct air capture, solar energy and nuclear fission. The 14-year-old fission company under the Breakthrough umbrella, TerraPower, aims to have a demo reactor running by 2030.

These things take time, said Mr. Gates, co-founder of Microsoft Corp MSFT.O.

Mr. Gates spoke with Reuters ahead of the release of his annual letter — reflecting on 2022 and describing what he’s most excited about in the year ahead.

He transferred \$20 billion of his funds to the Gates Foundation’s endowment, which plans to increase philanthropic spending on public health and education from \$6 billion to \$9 billion in coming years.

He also praised Warren Buffett for his contribution, which Mr. Gates said totaled \$45 billion since 2006, counting Berkshire Hathaway BRKa.N stock appreciation.

Breakthrough Energy, however, operates separately from the Gates Foundation charity. In his letter to shareholders, Mr. Gates explains that the climate problem is too enormous for philanthropy alone to tackle.

“There’s not enough money, and so you have to have some innovation,” he told Reuters. “The idea that it can be done by brute force, there’s just no chance.”

Companies need investment and technical support to prove their low-carbon ideas beyond the pilot phase — and then to scale up manufacturing, he says. But any Breakthrough Energy profits are funneled back into the group or to the foundation.

Some of the companies under Breakthrough that are developing Direct Air Capture (DAC) — technology designed to pull CO2 straight from the atmosphere — have their sights set on some \$3.5 billion in newly announced US contracts to build DAC plants and fund research grants.

“We have a number of Direct Air Capture (DAC) companies that will bid on being a part of those projects,” he said, noting that the recent Inflation Reduction Act legislation has boosted prospects for climate innovation. He did not elaborate on the DAC companies’ plans.

In manufacturing, the steel and cement industries have made “fantastic” progress, he said, a change from his worries about that sector just two years ago.

Manufacturing is responsible for about a third of global climate-warming emissions.

Now, “there’s no area of climate mitigation that I feel like ‘Oh, that’s really completely uncovered,’” he said.

Instead, with the world set to push past 1.5C of warming, he said the challenge is shifting toward helping people adapt to a harsher, hotter future.

“In addition to mitigation, which will still be the biggest part (of Breakthrough Energy’s investment), we’ll also fund adaptation-related work.” That could include technology to help control forest fires, using coral reef type structures to create barriers to flooding, or development of crop strains that can withstand drought. — Reuters