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DENR chief: Let's invest in science, tech for biodiversity conservation

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
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DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Loyzaga has underscored the need to invest in science and technology to boost biodiversity protection and conservation amid the challenge posed by climate change.

Investing in science and technology, she said, will allow conservationists to gain new insights and tools in the protection and restoration of the country's biodiversity.

At the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the largest conference in the world focused on biodiversity, Loyzaga spoke about, "Innovations for a Nature Positive and Net Zero Future." The conference was recently held in Montreal, Canada.

As a panelist in Conservation International's flagship event, Loyzaga bared that protection and restoration comprise over 80 percent of the biodiversity financing gap, thus making it extremely important to fill this void through the accumulation of investments for biodiversity conservation.

Designated by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. as his representative, Loyzaga cited the importance of investing heavily in science and technology, particularly on improving the technical capacity of the different offices concerned with the restoration of damaged or destroyed ecosystems across the country.

"Climate change adds another layer of complexity to these tasks. We know that ecosystems and community interactions are dynamic, thus there is a continuous need to address

the socioecological roots and drivers for vulnerability and development," Loyzaga said.

She explained that improving the technical capacity of concerned government agencies will enable the successful review and assessment of national resources, including terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.

This process, according to the DENR chief, would engage the private sector to use "spatial finance" that would help them accelerate the integration of nature-based solutions into their core value cycle that defines how they could offer their services with ease.

Improvement in technology would also facilitate constructive monitoring and analysis of data that would help in decision-making for regulations and legislation towards an adaptive management, she added.

"We must raise the flag for regeneration beyond restoration targets for this high ambition for nature-positive investments. Not just nature and communities bouncing back, but we need to invest in bouncing forward to anticipate future needs and risks," Loyzaga pointed out.

Loyzaga also reiterated the President's message in his first State of the Nation Address, that the preservation of the environment is preservation of life. This would mean that economies depend on air, water, food and energy sustained by a healthy environment, and not the other way around, she explained.

To attain this, Loyzaga encouraged both private sector and government to work across silos by investing in the restoration of the country's ecosystems and biodiversity.



Tree-planting pivotal for future generations

A lawmaker has urged Filipinos to learn to engage in tree-planting activities to widen the country's whole-of-nation reforestation efforts as he renewed his call to boost the country's greening program.

In his proposed Senate Bill 1539, Senator Ramon Revilla Jr. is seeking to require all graduating elementary, high school, and college students of public educational institutions to plant at least 10 trees each as a prerequisite for graduation.

Revilla said the bill complements the government's National Greening Program — ensuring “the cultivation of socially-responsible citizenry” of the future generations of Filipinos.

The solon also backed his fellow lawmaker, Senator Cynthia Villar who chairs the Senate Committee on

Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, in urging the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to take the lead on the government's greening program.

“DENR should not only focus on the planting of the seedlings but should also assure its survivability,” Revilla said.

He also encouraged the public to only plant species endemic to their respective region.

Under the proposed measure, trees shall be planted in any of the forestlands, mangrove forests, protected areas, ancestral domains, civil and military reservations, urban areas under the greening plans of local government units, inactive and abandoned mine sites, and other suitable lands.

LADE KABAGANI



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

World view

'Put down that burger?'

By MICHAEL GRUNWALD

The New York Times

Earth is in the midst of the worst mass extinction since an asteroid wiped out the dinosaurs 66 million years ago – and this time, the asteroid is us. Human beings are displacing the planet's other species at an unprecedented rate, a disaster that the landmark UN Biodiversity Conference known as COP15 is focused on last week in Montreal. We're a unique menace, but we at least have a unique ability to recognize it and do something about it.

The first step toward recovery, of course, is admitting your problem, and the conference's draft plan warns up front that a million species will face extinction if we don't clean up our act. But while the delegates in Montreal are pointing fingers at everything from plastics to pesticides to invasive species, biodiversity loss is not that complicated a mystery.

The basic problem is that we've converted half of Earth's habitable land into agricultural land. We're destroying and degrading the habitats of other species to grow food for our own.

This means the fate of the world's bugs, bunnies and other creatures and critters – and what's left of the forests, wetlands and other habitats they call home – depends more than anything else on what we put in our mouths and how it gets made. Unfortunately, telling people what to eat and farmers how to farm are politically unpalatable tasks, which helps explain why yakfests like COP15 tend to obscure the problem with word salad.

Environmentalists hope to leave Montreal with commitments from governments to preserve 30 percent of the earth by 2030 and to meet 21 other targets. But governments have already failed to achieve less ambitious conservation goals set for 2010 and 2020. There's also buzz around nailing down corporate commitments to greener supply chains, but COP15 is mostly dancing around the crux of the biodiversity crisis.

The crux is that if current eating and farming trends continue, the world will clear land equal to at least one and a quarter Indias by 2050. That would be a disaster for the climate and wildlife, dooming carbon-rich and biodiverse ecosystems like the Amazon and Congo rainforests.

So those eating and farming trends better not continue. Humanity needs to start shrinking our agricultural footprint and expanding our natural footprint, after thousands of years of doing the reverse.

This will be an extraordinary challenge, because we'll also need to produce more than 7.4 quadrillion additional calories every year to feed our growing population, in an era when climate-fueled droughts, heat waves, floods and blights could make it harder to grow food.

You can see why word salad can seem more appetizing.

You can also see why promises to conserve land or promote deforestation-free products can ring hollow. Governments can pledge to ban land clearing, but when their people get hungry, land will get cleared. Some companies might sign agreements to avoid soy or beef from newly deforested land, but it won't do much if other companies keep buying soy or beef from newly deforested land.

If we are serious about cleaning up the mess we're making for less influential species, there are four things individuals as well as nations and corporations can do.

The first is to eat less meat, which would be a lot easier if meat weren't so beloved and delicious. Limiting access to cheeseburgers can turn politicians into ex-politicians, so it's no coincidence that the Montreal draft mentions changing diets only in passing in its 16th target. But the inconvenient truth is that when we eat cows, chickens and other livestock, we might as well be eating macaws, jaguars and other endangered species.

That's because livestock chew up far more land per calorie than crops. Producing beef is 100 times as land-intensive as cultivating potatoes and 55 times as land-intensive as peas or nuts. Livestock now use nearly 80 percent of agricultural land while producing less than 20 percent of calories. Cattle are the leading driver of deforestation in the Amazon, followed by soybeans, another commodity which get fed to pigs and chickens.

Meat consumption is expected to increase dramatically as billions of the global poor escape poverty. If Americans continue to average three burgers a week while the developing world starts to follow our path, it's hard to see how the Amazon survives.

But it's at least possible that we could shrink agricultural footprints by shifting our diets toward meat made without livestock, like the plant-based substitutes offered by companies such as Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat or maybe someday cultured meat grown from animal cells.

The next thing we need to do is waste less food. About a third of the food grown on Earth is lost or tossed before it reaches our mouths, which means a third of the land (as well as the water, fertilizer and other resources) used to grow that food is also wasted. But the Montreal text includes only a single mention of the need to "halve per capita global food waste," with no suggestions of what technological, behavioral and policy changes could help to meet such an ambitious goal.

Every acre of land on Earth matters, because we desperately need to grow more food, provide habitats for more native flora and fauna and store more carbon to limit climate change. And that's why it's particularly crazy to use the Earth's limited land to grow fuel. The third way to ease the global land squeeze would be to stop using productive farmland for biofuels like ethanol and biodiesel – and to stop burning trees for power – but the Montreal plan doesn't even address the topic.

In fact, there's global momentum to expand



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

9
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

26 DEC 2022

Put down that Burger

PAGE 2

DATE

bioenergy's dominion over the land. A new paper in the journal *Nature* estimates that new European Union policies could wipe out half the continent's most biodiverse grasslands and divert a fifth of its cropland to energy crops, which would lead to land clearing overseas to replace the lost food. The EU is also promoting wood-burning power plants, a recipe for massive forest cutting around the world.

Farm and forest interests have so much political power that government efforts to increase demand for crops and wood are often considered untouchable. But if biodiversity is a real priority, they can't be.

Finally, if we're going to shrink our agricultural footprint enough to stop deforestation and hopefully restore some degraded ecosystems so they can once again serve as wildlife habitats and carbon sinks, farmers will have to supersize their yields enough to make a lot more food with a lot less land. And while the 20th century's Green Revolution raised yields by using fossil-fuel-derived fertilizers, toxic pesticides and other environmentally

damaging innovations, the 21st century will require some greener ones that can ramp up productivity without messing up the planet.

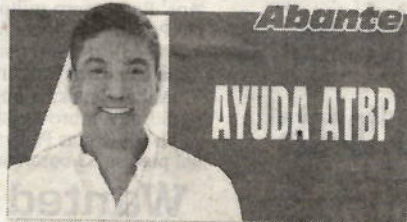
Once again, this doesn't seem like a priority in Montreal. There's been much more focus on regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and other gentler, lower-yield alternatives to intensive industrial farming that can improve biodiversity on farmland. The problem is that they can require more farmland to produce the same amount of food, accelerating the destruction of the natural lands that provide far more biodiversity than farmland ever can – and suck far more heat-trapping carbon from our overloaded atmosphere.

Earth now has more than 12 billion acres of agricultural land, an area twice the size of North America. Adding more is the surest way to wipe out more species – and maybe, someday, our own.

Michael Grunwald, a host of the "Climavores" podcast, is working on a book about how to feed the world without frying it.



Kampeon sa climate change



LRAY VILLAFUERTE

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Kalahating taon pa lang ang administrasyon ni Pangulong Marcos pero ngayon pa lamang ay nakikilala na siya ng buong mundo bilang isang climate change champ.

Dito sa katatapos na biyahe ng ating Pangulo sa Brussels, kanyang binigyan ng pangangailangan na magbigay ng kompensasyon ang mga mayayamang bansa sa Europa at ang lahat ng nabibilang sa First World para sa 'loss and damage' na naidudulot nila sa ating planeta.

Ipinaalalang muli ni Pangulong Marcos sa mga mayayamang bansa na sila ang world's heaviest carbon polluters na nagiging dahilan kaya nangyayari sa mga umuunlad pa lang na bansang tulad ng Pilipinas ang iba't ibang climactic disasters tulad ng malalakas na bagyo, pagbaha at tagtuyot.

Dahil po sa mga malalaking industriya ng mayayamang bansa, tumataas ang temperatura ng mundo at ito nga ang nagdudulot ng malalakas na bagyo, malawakang pagbaha at iba pang panganib sa klima. At ang Pilipinas po ang isa sa mga bansang hinahagupit ng todo-todo ng climate change na dulot ng global warming.

Sa mga nagdaang overseas trip ni Pangulong Marcos mula nang siya'y manumpa noong June 30, naging misyon at adbokasiya na niya ang climate change. Sa 40th and 41st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit na ginanap sa Cambodia at 29th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Meeting (AELM) sa Bangkok, Thailand ay ipinaalala rin ng ating Pangulo ang malaking responsibilidad

ng mayayamang bansa dahil sila ang may malaking pananagutan sa GHG (greenhouse gases) emission o carbon pollution.

Sa 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) na ginanap sa Egypt noong Nobyembre, napagkasunduan ang 'damage and loss' funding mechanism kung saan bibigyang kompensasyon ang mga bansang maya't mayang binibisita ng mga kalamidad na pinapalala ng global warming. Ang pondong ito ay gagamitin para sa reconstruction efforts sa mga developing economies na lalo pang pinapalugmok ng mga natural calamities na hatid ng climate change.

At sa Belgium ay isinulong ng Pangulo ang paglikha ng mga kongkretong guidelines kung paano matutulungan ng mga biggest GHG emitters ang mga vulnerable economies tulad ng Pilipinas.

Nakaka-proud nga po na, itong pagtutok para sa loss-and-damage compensation, kung saan ang konseptong ito ay binuo noong nakaraang buwan sa COP27 summit sa Egypt, ay muling binigyang pansin ni Pangulong Marcos. Gustuhin man niya o hindi, lalo na ngayon sa kaniyang rising international stature bilang kampion o unofficial spokesman ng mga high-risk na bansa na naghahanap ng climate justice mula sa mga mayayamang bansa gaya ng mga nasa Europa na mga lalo pang yumaman dahil sa kanilang pagiging heaviest carbon polluters o sanhi ng matinding polusyon sa buong mundo.

At nakikita po natin na nakukuha ng ating Pangulo ang atensyon ng mayayamang ekonomiya. Mismong si European Council (EC) President Charles Michel ang sumasang-ayon sa proposal ng Pangulo na umpisahan na ang green fund on climate change para sa 'loss and damage' policy.

"We couldn't agree with you more," sabi ni Michel sa inilabas na Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) statement matapos ang ASEAN-EU (Association of Southeast Asian Nations-European

Union) working luncheon.

Inayunan nito ang pagkakaroon ng mas concrete financing guidelines sa loss-and-damage compensation mechanism na napagkasunduan sa COP27 summit. Tiniyak din ni Michel sa Pangulo na handa ang European Union (EU) na makipagtulungan sa Pilipinas at ASEAN sa climate change partikular na sa paglilipat ng green technology para sa pagbabawas ng pagbuga ng GHG.

Sa ASEAN-EU working luncheon kasama ng EU officials and businesspersons sa Brussels, nanawagan si Pangulong Marcos sa mga European leader na paigtingin ang kanilang tulong sa mga climate change-vulnerable developing economies gaya ng ating bansa.

Naging matapang din ang Pangulo sa pagsasabing, "the concept of damage and loss has now been accepted by all parties involved ... However, this still brings us to a very difficult and fundamental question, and when you speak of damage and loss, how do we quantify that damage and loss? What are the rules that we apply? When does it begin?"

Iyong ibang taong walang magawa sa buhay at nagsasabing wala raw ginagawa ang ating Pangulo pagdating sa mga nangyayaring kalamidad sa bansa ay hindi natin dapat pakinggan. Dahil mas malalim, mas malaki at mas makabuluhan ang ginagawa ng ating Pangulo upang mabigyan ng saklolo hindi lamang ang Pilipinas kundi pati na rin ang iba pang mahihinang bansa o highly vulnerable countries na sumasalo ng palala nang palalang polusyon na sanhi ng mga mayayamang bansa.

Ang pagiging isang tunay na climate change warrior ay malaking responsibilidad at nakikita nating ginagawa ito ng ating Pangulo.

Hindi para pakitang tao lamang. Pangmatagalan po ang kanyang ginagawang solusyon na mapapakinabangan nating lahat, hindi lamang ng Pilipinas kundi ng iba pang umuunlad na bansa sa buong mundo.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Republic Cement sweeps 68th Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards

REPUBLIC CEMENT bags major honors, taking home a total of seven awards at the prestigious 68th Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards (PMIEA) held last Nov. 18 at the CAP-John Hay Trade and Cultural Center in Baguio City.

Hosted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR - MGB), the awards ceremony recognizes companies that performed admirably in terms of environmental preservation and safety excellence. This year's theme was "Resilience, Reset, Recovery," highlighting the important role that the mining industry plays in economic development and safeguarding the environment through responsible mining.

At this year's awards, Republic Cement dominated the Quarry Operations (Non-Metallic) Category, winning the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards for its Batangas, Iligan, and Teresa Plants. The Platinum Achievement Award for the same category was also awarded to Republic Cement Bulacan Plant.

Further to these achievements, the proudly local cement manufacturer's Batangas Plant was recognized for having the Safest Mine (Non-Metallic). For Best Mining Forest (Non-metallic), Republic's Bulacan Plant won the top prize with its Iligan Plant winning second runner-up for the same category.

"The awards we have received this evening serve not only as recognition for our practices and commitments towards our communities and sustainable development, but also as a challenge to do even more in promoting the responsible management of environmental and natural resources," Republic Cement & Building Materials President Lloyd Vicente shared in his acceptance speech.

Founded in 1955, Republic Cement celebrates 67 years of being a partner for Philippine transformation as a building materials company and key contributor to nation building. Republic Cement proudly supplies quality cement, with brands including REPUBLIC, FORTUNE, RapidSET, Kapit-Balay, MINDANAO, and wallMASTER, manufactured at seven strategically located sites across the Philippines.

"Throughout our 67 years of service towards building the nation, Republic Cement has always been deeply and wholly committed to responsible mining," said Republic Cement CEO Roman Menz. "It is through responsible mining and our daily commitment to safety and sustainability that we are able to support robust communities and a thriving environment, towards a greener and Stronger Republic."



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

B-14
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

26 DEC 2022

TIME: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Boracay fireworks display approved

ILOILO CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Western Visayas approved the proposed conduct of community fireworks display and sandcastle building in Boracay Island to welcome the New Year.

However, the agency stressed in a statement issued by DENR Region 6 director Livino Duran that proper protocols have to be observed.

To recall, local government unit of Malay requested for the conduct of these events to create quality and memorable experience for tourists and local residents.

According to the letter request addressed to the DENR on 5 December 2022, the Boracay Foundation Incorporated, supported by the Malay local government, will have a 20-minute firework display on New Year eve.

Duran said the LGU has to make sure that the community fireworks display is conducted 100 meters off-shore using allowed pyrotechnics, and clean the area after the event.

“The cleanup would also mean tourists and residents should not leave waste around the designated areas,” Duran said.

PNA



TITLE:

PAGE

1

DATE

Shared prosperity and our Dream Philippines (Part II)

(Second of two parts)

In the first part of this article which was published on Dec. 19, 2022 (<https://business.inquirer.net/378465/shared-prosperity-and-our-dream-philippines>), we wrote about the twin evils of inequality and exclusion that led to poverty, hunger and many other dehumanizing ills of society all over the world. The disturbing facts about these two evils had led global institutions—like the World Bank, the United Nations (17 SDGs), Corporate America, Philippines Inc. and even the Pope—to propose possible solutions. In the United States and the Philippines, major corporations, and business and professional associations and their leaders had banded together to issue statements and commitments that shifted the purpose of businesses from the interest of just the stockholders to include all other stakeholders, in other words, from traditional capitalism to stakeholder capitalism. The key: shared prosperity.

Why shared prosperity?

There is a bigger stake than just the success of corporate Philippines and shared prosperity. This is about country and nationhood. This is about our Dream Philippines. Business can play a major role in building the Philippines of our dreams but the rest of society need to help in nation-building as well.

The ravages of COVID has forced our economy to backpedal. Politically, there is a disconnect between the governors and the people governed. Political dynasties continue to be in control. The quality of public governance is erratic. We have weak-



MAPPING THE FUTURE

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ened and divided institutions (in the executive, legislative and judicial branches), many of which are tainted with corruption.

And we continue to be a divided, confused people. We have a widening gap between the rich and the poor. We struggle in addressing the problems in education. We are raising malnourished and stunted kids. We have difficulty in dealing with crime, drugs, illegal gambling, peace and order, not to mention a culture of violence. And we ignore the needs of the poor and God's other creations.

We need to rebuild our nation but that journey requires not only hope, love, perseverance and stamina. It needs, among others, a clear vision, a servant leadership mindset, a strong sense of country, a culture of good governance and responsible citizenship.

The Dream Philippines project

In February of this year, former Secretary of Finance Jesus Estanislao gathered almost 100 convenors, sectoral representatives and volunteers from many

sectors of society to a convocation to craft a country road map for the future. It was called the Dream Philippines 2046 project. The core purpose is the transformation of the Philippines and the comprehensive development of the Filipino, by the Filipino and for the Filipino. The hope is that the road map will help the country achieve higher productivity and competitiveness, higher and sustainable growth, and greater equity and inclusiveness. The strategic metrics are: to be top 20 percent in the World Competitiveness Index, attain 8 to 10 percent annual gross domestic product growth and maintain a GINI coefficient (a measure of inequality) of 30 percent or lower.

After five months of monthly meetings, the convenors produced the Country Governance Charter (statements of national values, mission and vision), the eight strategic facets of nation-building, 28 strategic objectives in a strategy map, and the beginnings of a country performance scorecard of more than 140 initiatives and measures.

The governance charter for the Philippines

The proposed values for Dream Philippines are already in the law of the land (RA 8491) and are as follows: *makadiyos* (pro-God), *makabansa* (pro-country), *makatao* (pro-human dignity and love for the family) and *makakalikasan* (pro-environment).

For the mission statement, the convenors decided to adopt the preamble of the current Constitution which states: "We, the Filipino people, imploring the aid of Almighty God, seek to build a just and humane society, establish a government



TITLE: Shared prosperity and our Dream
Philippines (part II)

PAGE 2

DATE

that shall promote the common good, conserve and develop our patrimony, secure the blessings of independence and democracy under the rule of law, and secure a regime of truth and justice, love and freedom, equality and peace.”

For the country vision, the convenors developed vision statements for the years 2028, 2034, 2040 and 2046.

Vision 2028 focuses on socio-economic recovery from the ravages of COVID-19 and the building of a solid platform for good governance and responsible citizenship.

Vision 2034 emphasizes climate or environmental justice.

Vision 2040 is adopted from the government’s AmBisyon Natin 2040’s aspiration of the Filipino for his country.

Vision 2046 expresses the Filipino’s aspiration for himself as defined in the AmBisyon 2040 vision statement.

The country strategy map

There were eight facets identified, namely: moral-spiritual, socio-cultural, political, human resources, natural resources, physical, technological-digital and economic-financial facets.

A total of 28 strategic objectives were developed and adopted in the plenary: (1) a virtues-based society, (2) deep spiritual, ethical and moral foundation, (3) human rights, religious freedom and spirit of enterprise, (4) deep sense of patriotism, (5) strong family institution enjoying good quality of life, (6) preservation of rich cultural heritage, (7) strengthened, integrated and harmonized, political institutions, (8) mature electoral process and civic consciousness,

(9) stable national peace and security, (10) universal health care, (11) continuing education for all, (12) peaceful, safe and secure communities, (13) promotion of STEM (science, technology engineering and mathematics) and dual vocational training with strong values components, (14) protection, conservation and judicious development of marine resources, (15) responsible development of mountain and mineral resources, (16) greater attention to food security and sustainability, (17) quality and efficient transport infrastructure, (18) water adequacy and security, (19) energy sufficiency and security, (20) environmentally sensitive waste management, (21) access to technology for all, (22) knowledge-driven, competitive digital ecosystem, (23) global-standard ICT infrastructure, (24) competitiveness and ease of doing business, (25) a production and maintenance mindset, (26) strong economic fundamentals, (27) development finance, especially for micro, small and medium enterprises, and (28) focused fiscal and monetary policies.

PH performance scorecard

The Dream Philippines project has a five-person steering committee chaired by Dr. Estanislao. There is also an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) composed of eight members, each of whom will be assigned one strategic facet to work on. Each of the EPG members will organize task forces to work on each of the 28 strategic objectives and fully develop the initiatives, measures, baselines and targets for 2028, 2034, 2040 and 2046. Their outputs will be consolidated, integrated and organized to produce the Coun-

try Performance Scorecard. Target completion date is June 2023.

Conclusion

We dream of a beautiful and prosperous Philippines—a country where there is enough for everyone, where no Filipino is left behind in poverty, where every Filipino family is healthy and enjoys a life of comfort, where every child has a future.

We dream of a country that can bring out the best in the Filipino people—one that can make the Filipino truly great and respected in the eyes of the world.

But for us to attain this dream, we need an effective and efficient government that delivers, ethical and servant leaders who serve, sustainable businesses that share their prosperity, civil society that manifest and promote the interests and will of the citizenry, and responsible citizens who get involved.

This is our Dream Philippines and today I sound the call to action—yes, we are warriors and advocates of good governance but more than this and more importantly, we are committed to build our Dream Philippines. And we pledge to keep these commitments while urging others to join us—however long it may take. Here in the Philippines. One Filipino at a time. INQ



The author is co-chair for Social/ Shared Prosperity of the MAP Committee on ESG. He is also vice chair of Center for Excellence in Governance. Feedback at map@map.org.ph and rex@drilon.com.