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Pledge of Commitment for Clean Water in Palawan

Saturday, April 9, 2022 Journal Online



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. signs the Pledge of Commitment to continue and sustain efforts in the protection and preservation of the water resources of El Nido during the celebration of World Water Day held at Brgy. Villa Libertad, El Nido, Palawan on April 2. Palawan Governor Jose Chavez Alvarez and El Nido Mayor Edna Gacot Lim (inset, 1st and 2nd from left) were also signatories to the commitment along with other **DENR** officials. The El Nido Sewage and Solid Waste Treatment Plant started operation in October 2021 to address the water pollution caused by sewage discharges from households and commercial establishments in the municipality of El Nido and the province of Palawan.



DENR assures public of steady water supply

April 9, 2022 [Cory Martinez](#)

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has assured the public, especially those in Metro Manila, that there will be a steady water supply as preventive measures are now in place to avert the looming water crisis during the dry season.

DENR acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna made the assurance as the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) Technical Working Group continues to closely monitor the water level in Angat Dam and its operations amid its low-set water level.

“Through the NWRB, we have already laid down preventive measures such as cloud seeding so that the public, especially those in Metro Manila, is assured of a steady water supply with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,” Sampulna said.

As of April 7, 2022, the water elevation in the reservoir slightly rose to 194.15 meters from the lowest elevation of the year, which was 190.63 meters last April 4, 2022.

This increase is mainly due to the shear line or tail-end of a cold front and a low-pressure area in the Mindanao region.

The widespread rain shower, which was experienced in the majority of the Luzon region, is expected to raise further the water level in Angat Dam caused by inflows from runoff water.

According to the latest rainfall forecast and Angat Dam water level simulation, the lowest dam water level will reach 183.98 meters in June. Hence, it may not breach the minimum operating water level of 180 meters.

The NWRB has approved a water allocation of 50 cubic meters per second (CMS) to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System from April 1 to 15 and five CMS to the National Irrigation Administration from April 1 to April 30.

Although the increase in water elevation slightly improved the current and projected level of the dam, the water level in the dam is still not secured.

Sampulna, however, urged the public to continue implementing water conservation measures in their households, workplaces, and businesses.

Aside from saving freshwater from taps, other water efficiency methods such as rainwater collection and water recycling can also be adopted.



MAS MABABA ANG LABEL NG TUBIG NGAYONG TAON KUMPARA SA TAONG 2019



April 9, 2022 @ 12:08 PM 17 hours ago

PATULOY na nakikipag-ugnayan ang National Water Resources Board (NWRB) sa mga ahensya ng gobyerno, mga water concessionaire, lalo sa mga kababayan, upang mapamahalaang mabuti ang limitadong suplay ng tubig sa Angat Dam.

Kasabay nito ang panawagan sa mga kabahayan at industriya sa Metro Manila at mga karatig-probinsya na gamitin nang tama ang tubig at mag-recycle kung kinakailangan.

Akin ding nalaman mula kay Dr. Seville “Bill” David, Executive Director ng NWRB na ang pagpapadala ng tubig sa mga nasalanta ni bagyong Odette noong nakaraang Disyembre 2021, Enero 2022 at Pebrero 2022 ay mula sa water refilling stations sa National Capital Region (NCR) kaya dagdag sa kasalukuyang mataas na water demand sa Angat Dam.

Kahit pa NCR ang pangunahing gumagamit ng tubig mula sa Angat Dam, mahalagang tulungan ang mga kababayang natin kung sila’y naapektuhan nang malalakas na bagyo sa Visayas at Mindanao. Malaki man ang epekto nito sa water demand, mas angkop na tugunan ang kanilang pangangailangan sa malinis na tubig.

Hindi kaila sa NWRB ang pangangailangan ng karagdagang water sources o pagkukunan ng tubig. Kaakibat ang pribadong sector, may planong bumuo ang pamahalaan ng mga water infrastructure project, ngunit maaari itong tumagal nang mula 3 hanggang 5 taon. Masimulan lamang ang mga proyektong ito, malaki ang maitutulong nito sa seguridad ng tubig sa NCR at karatig-probinsya.

Sa panayam ng inyong lingkod, binanggit ni Director David, “ang antas ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 190.75 metro noong ika-4 ng Abril 2022, (6:00am), masasabi medyo mas mababa kung ikukumpara natin sa mga naunang taon, pero bumagal ang pagbaba ng lebel ng Angat Dam.”

Noong taong 2019, nagkaroon tayo ng water interruption at water rationing, sana hindi maulit dahil mas mababa ang lebel ng tubig angat dam kung ikukumpara sa taong 2019.

Kinakailangan magtipid sa paggamit ng tubig habang nagtutulungan ang pamahalaan at ang kunsesyunaryo upang makapagbigay ng tuloy-tuloy na supply ng tubig sa panahon ng tag-init.

Source: <https://www.remate.ph/mas-mababa-ang-lebel-ng-tubig-ngayong-taon-kumpara-sa-taong-2019/>



DENR: No ECC yet to Lumbo water project

[Catherine Talavera](#) - The Philippine Star April 10, 2022 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The proposed Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project in Dolores, Quezon has not been granted an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) amid mounting opposition from various stakeholders, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In a letter to Tiaong, Quezon Mayor Ramon Preza dated March 31, DENR-Environment Management Bureau (EMB) CALABARZON director Noemi Paranada confirmed that Udenna Water Integrated Inc. does not have a valid ECC for the project after the agency denied their application last November 2021.

The DENR-EMB's letter was in response to Preza's call for the DENR to restrain the ongoing implementation of the project due to the lack of an ECC and the lack of public consultations with the affected downstream users.

"We have been made aware that no ECC has been issued prior to any of their construction activities.

We believe that this project poses an imminent environmental threat not only to the communities within the immediate vicinity of the project, but also to our municipality downstream," Preza said.

Preza noted that before any resource extractive activity is undertaken, there must be a public consultation wherein all stakeholders are given the opportunity to discuss their concerns on the project.

"With the proposed extraction of water from Lumbo Spring, our farmers are gravely concerned about how this will negatively impact their livelihood and food production in the region," he said.

Based on an earlier letter of denial to Udenna Water. Paranada said the company's ECC application was denied "due to mounting opposition from various stakeholders in the area".

She emphasized that the issues and concerns raised by the National Irrigation Authority (NIA) and concerned irrigators should be addressed prior to the issuance of an ECC.

The project will tap water from the Lumbo Spring located in Dolores, Quezon to provide potable water to be distributed by the two adjacent water districts, particularly the San Pablo City Water District and the Dolores Water District.

Preza said that farmers depend on water from the mountains of Mt. Banahaw in Quezon for their crops. The town of Dolores lies near the foot of Mt. Banahaw.

Aside from the mountain range, the said water flows into rivers and streams that benefit hundreds of hectares of rice fields and other high value crops in its town before it flows to the neighboring municipalities of San Antonio and San Juan, Batangas to Tayabas Bay.

Preza said the reduction of water supply and gradual stoppage of its flow in the rivers has already been observed to have a significant impact on the cultivation of rice, high value crops and animal husbandry in more than half of the barangays of Tiaong.

"Farmers will be even more concerned about the slowdown or reduction of water flow if water from its main source is reduced and made available to other provinces," he added.

Apart from the LGU of Tiaong, NIA also released a position paper on behalf of its farmer beneficiaries, opposing the completion of the Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project given the already significant decline in water discharge which is expected to worsen due to the Lumbo



water extraction.

“There is a clear threat of irrigation water shortage due to the increasing number of water users both for domestic and agricultural use. The SPCWD-DWD proposed water project and the continuous decrease of water discharge will jeopardize the government’s thrust towards food security and will decrease farmers’ potential income,” the NIA said.

In November 2020, SPCWD and DWD jointly issued a notice of award to the Consortium of Udenna Water Inclam, S.A. and Optimus Engineering and Construction to build the P103 million Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project through a public-private partnership (PPP) scheme.

The Udenna consortium will design, construct, and install raw water intake structures, treated water reservoirs, conveyance systems, pumping stations, metered interconnections facilities to SPCWD in Laguna and DWD in Quezon. The maintenance of the pipelines will remain within the SPCWD and DWD.

Under the 25-year contract, the Udenna consortium is expected to supply treated bulk water of 12,000 cubic meters per day to both San Pablo City and Dolores water districts.



San Carlos City to create Philippine Heritage Trees Site



NEGROS. Some 36 young trees will be planted within the People's Park in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental for the creation of the Philippine Heritage Trees Site. (Contributed Photo)

April 08, 2022

THE City government of San Carlos, through its People's Park Management Office (PPMO), is already preparing 36 young trees to be planted within the People's Park for the creation of the Philippine Heritage Trees Site.

PPMO Head Dr. Archilles Ponferrada said Friday, April 8, that 12 types of tree seedlings, namely, Malabuho, Dao, Bogo, Almaciga, Bangkal, Kalumpit, Molave, Tindalo, Ulayan/Tu-ay, Bakan, Anonang, and Bani, were given by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the project.

He said the Philippine Heritage Trees Site, which is actually an advocacy, is aimed at educating the youth about the importance of trees, encouraging them to plant more, and conserving and producing more trees as part of helping the environment in coping with the threat of global warming.

Ponferrada also said that a ceremonial tree planting will be held soon after they have prepared the area where the young trees will be planted.

In the meantime, the young plants will be transferred into bigger bags to make it more stable and gain more roots before planting them permanently on the ground. **(PR)**



PH, China to act on climate change

By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#) April 10, 2022

THE [Philippines](#) and [China](#) reaffirmed their partnership in climate change action and underscored the need for cooperation in practical and pragmatic projects.

At Chinese Ambassador [Huang Xilian](#)'s courtesy call on Secretary [Robert E.A. Borje](#) of the [Climate Change Commission](#), the two countries emphasized that urgent climate change action is required in the areas of adaptation, mitigation and finance in order to address the many climate challenges faced by the developing world.

"Now, more than ever, partnerships that work are crucial for climate change action to make a real difference. The Philippines and China are well-placed to harness existing cooperation as a launchpad for intensified joint action," Borje said.

Stressing that the perspective of the developing world and archipelagic/island nations must inform and shape global discussion on climate change, Borje said that these nations, including the Philippines, "continue to bear the brunt of climate change impact."

"It cannot be business as usual for our country, our region and our world. We must work harder together. Vital to this is access to technology as well financing for adaptation and mitigation," said Borje.

For his part, Huang recognized the Philippines' important role in giving a resonant voice to the developing world on the issue of climate change.

Noting that the Philippines faces many climate challenges and has its own contributions to global discussions and action, Ambassador Huang underlined that China will work closely with the Philippines on "projects and programs that can impact positively and quickly on communities."

Both Borje and Huang identified cooperation in renewable energy, including solar energy as convergence that offers practical opportunities for proactive partnership.

The two officials also recognized the need to make climate finance and technology more accessible and should continue to be advanced in all relevant fora until results are visible.

Huang expressed readiness to further strengthen climate change cooperation between the Philippines and China through discussions with Commissioner [Xie Zhenhua](#) for China's Climate Change Affairs.



Climate action for sustainability and resilience

[Felix Vitangcol](#) - Philstar.com April 9, 2022 | 3:56pm



Residents try to salvage belongings among their houses destroyed at the height of Typhoon Vongfong in San Policarpio town, Eastern Samar province on May 15, 2020, a day after the typhoon hit the town.

AFP/Alren Beronio

The national leaders and policymakers whom we will install in next month's elections must be prepared to sustainably steer our country and the economy amid the growing dire consequences of climate change.

This is after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its third leg of the climate change report, hinted that prevailing climate actions are falling behind in their commitments to limiting global temperature below pre-industrial levels.

While the Philippines has a minimal share in the global carbon emissions, a mere 0.39% in 2020, it remains to be among the most vulnerable and heavily affected by climate-induced risks.

This risk amplifier cannot be understated, as it already affects individual Filipinos' daily lives as well as the different aspects of our macro socio-economic activities.

This issue is more than just a matter of how our country could reduce its total carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Rather, it is a matter of accelerating equitable climate actions that would also allow our country to address possible trade-offs attributed to them.

Strengthening infrastructure modernization

No doubt, our next leaders must aim for the country to contribute to the global climate change movement. But they must not lose sight of the immediate and impending challenges at hand.

They must strategically adopt the right policies and pragmatic frameworks that would enhance the country's resilience to calamities and advance sustainability across sectors in the long run. Particularly, upgrade and modernize our public infrastructure and services in the context of sustainable development.

This is because physical risks associated with climate change put public infrastructures and services at the forefront of climate-induced challenges. Our next leaders should establish an enabling environment that would effectively strengthen and develop more climate-resilient and digital-enabled infrastructures.

New infrastructure projects need to be planned and designed, taking into account changes in weather patterns and rising global temperature that will occur over their lifetime. Existing infrastructure, on the other hand, needs to be retrofitted to further strengthen their capabilities to cope with the uncertainties of climate change and possible calamities.



Moreover, both new and existing infrastructure need to take advantage of emerging digital technologies for better, well-informed, and effective decision-making of design and services.

For one, electricity grids should be modernized. This addresses not only the short-term needs of providing power to communities and industries but also people's need for a healthier and safer environment.

Policies that enable innovation while building capacity will significantly bring value to this agenda. Likewise, innovation in competition policy, such as fixed-price bids, carve-out clauses, and uniform force-majeure provisions mandatory in power purchase contracts, could bring about a swift equitable low-carbon energy transition.

Private sector initiatives

Corporations, their leaders and employees have their work cut out for them as well. They must quickly move from upgrade and modernization plans to action.

And there have been some initiatives toward this objective. Other companies have also invested in the training and upgrading of people's skills – human capital – so they could better respond to the changing demands of the times and participate better in the future of work.

Responsible companies, who are ever-cognizant of their commitment to a more resilient Philippines, have been integrating technology-driven processes in their facilities and premises – renewable energy initiatives, low-carbon investments, modern fuel cell and cooling systems, direct current hybrid generators, and storage batteries to name a few.

Globe Telecom continues to upgrade and modernize its business operation across the country. The company will establish a green and low-carbon optical access network which is expected to cut power consumption and heat dissipation by 50%.

Its Intelligent Optical Network Terminal (ONT) would help its customers in terms of identifying energy consumption since it utilizes an Intelligent Application Performance Management (APM) program that detects device energy usage at the same time, manages up to 30% power savings.

On fast-moving consumer goods, Mondelez Philippines and Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines Inc., besides their circular economy initiatives on plastic waste, have also been undergoing modernization. Their company operation is constantly transitioning the electricity consumption of their facilities to 100% renewable such as geothermal and solar power.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) built in Clark, Pampanga the world's first-ever private sector-led national-level emergency operations center that is capable of tracking weather patterns and natural calamities in the country. Their Liveable Cities Challenge Dashboard, together with Globe, also utilizes data visualization of about 142 cities and enables local officials to quickly spot trends and their correlation for effective decision-making and help them diagnose areas for improvement.

Policy adjustments that are conducive to business innovation, such as those I mentioned above, will pave the way for other enterprises to shift to sustainable energy sources for their infrastructure and operations.

On top of this, a greater shift to renewables, and constant upgrade and modernization of the private sector towards climate-resilient infrastructures will significantly contribute to services' reliability and accessibility in the country.



Greater and more strategic public-private partnership

The new administration should take advantage of this challenge to strategically collaborate with the private sector in institutionalizing these initiatives and best practices across the archipelago, and across various industries.

The policies, frameworks, and agenda of the next administration should complement shared advocacy of establishing sustainable, technology-driven, and climate-resilient infrastructure that can boost development, create more jobs, reduce environmental footprints and impacts, and enhance sustainability and resiliency for the long-term.

The effectiveness of our current response now to climate change and its chronic impact will determine how sustainable our future will be. Inadequate and minor reactive responses are mere band aid solutions and will not reduce the risks to our nation's resiliency and sustainability amidst the certain onslaught of calamitous weather events.

It is with urgency that these risks be addressed head-on with strategically aligned policies and programs that fosters more aggressive interventions and impactful action by government in partnership with the private sector and all of society participation.

Engineer Felix Vitangcol is a fellow for Environment at the Stratbase ADR Institute and secretary-general of Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship.

Caged Philippine eagle 'Espoir' dies from snake bite

April 9, 2022



(Photo courtesy of Philippine Eagle Foundation)

By Gabriela Baron

“Espoir,” a four-month old Philippine Eagle died after being attacked by a snake on Tuesday (April 5) inside its enclosure at the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) in Davao City.

In a statement, the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) said Espoir was found lifeless Tuesday morning on the floor of its cage.

“The team of animal keepers immediately reviewed CCTV footage to reveal that the chick was attacked by a python,” PEF said.

“The attack happened at 12:13 a.m. in the morning. CCTV footage shows the snake slithering in the enclosure and attacked the eaglet while it was brooding,” it added.

PEF, however, assured that preventive measures are being taken to capture the python through entrapment and through searches conducted in the facility.

The Foundation said the walls of the enclosure have been “snake-proofed.”

“Reticulated pythons are natural resident species inside the Philippine Eagle Center and the surrounding watershed area. They are classified as hazards under the PEC’s biosecurity measures,” PEF added.

“The avian flu is not the only danger the Philippine eagles are facing in the facility in Malagos. Even the area’s resident snakes are a threat especially to eaglets, other raptors, and mammals.”

Inspired by Pag-asa’s name, the first Philippine eagle bred and hatched in captivity, Espoir means hope in the French language.

Espoir hatched on Dec. 4. The eagle was an offspring of Philippine eagles Ariela and MVP Matatag.-ngs

Source: <https://ptvnews.ph/caged-philippine-eagle-espoir-dies-from-snake-bite/>



Endless misallocation of global capital increases climate risk, UN report warns

BY NATASHA WHITE & ERIC ROSTON APRIL 10, 2022



The world's leading climate finance experts and economists warn of a "persistent misallocation of global capital" as too much money continues to pour into fossil fuels and too little is channeled to clean energy.

In its latest assessment of global efforts to contain climate change, published Monday, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a stark alert that the world is on track to miss its target to limit global warming. Finance is both driving the problem and a "critical enabler" in the energy transition, the panel said.

The IPCC findings add more cause for alarm amid signs that the energy transition is backsliding, as some nations scramble for polluting alternatives to Russia's gas in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. Financing for coal-related projects is running at a rate that's more than double last year's pace. The world already faced "large macroeconomic headwinds" hampering climate finance "even before Covid-19," said the IPCC authors. The war serves to compound these as the window to act narrows further.

The world stands at a tipping point or "pattern break" in the status quo, said Edward Mason, director at Generation Investment Management, a green finance firm co-founded by former US Vice President Al Gore, referring to the war in Ukraine and its impacts on the energy transition. "We mustn't lose sight of the bigger picture."

Bankrolling destruction

For the world to meet its climate target requires a "substantial reduction in overall fossil-fuel use" that "will leave a substantial amount of fossil fuels unburned," the IPCC said. And yet the finance sector continues to fund fossil-fuel development.

Over half of the 150 biggest financial institutions globally have no restrictions on financing oil and gas, and two-thirds of the world's largest banks and asset managers are failing to set concrete climate targets for this decade, according to two separate analyses by NGOs. For their part, a whopping 83 percent of the world's biggest polluting firms are yet to map a meaningful path to net-zero emissions, a leading investor alliance found.

Such shortcomings among financiers and corporations amount to a "systemic underpricing" of climate risk in the financial system, according to the IPCC. They also fly in the face of these finance firms' public pledges, notably the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero. Launched at the COP26 climate summit last November, GFANZ members worth a combined \$130 trillion committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest and delivering their fair share of 50 percent emissions reductions this decade.



“We often see these initiatives are made for marketing and not concrete action,” said Lucie Pinson, executive director of Reclaim Finance, an NGO that authored one of the studies. “Now is the time for financial institutions to show that their climate pledges were not pure greenwashing and that they are serious about taking action this year.”

Bloomberg Green wrote to 18 firms for comment on Reclaim Finance’s findings, including Allianz, AXA, Credit Suisse and UBS. Of those that responded, all reiterated their commitments to net zero and considered their policies to be in line with them. Most referred to their efforts to engage companies, rather than divest, which one asset manager described as “not the most impactful tool for investors” because “it limits the opportunity to impact positively on company behaviors.”

What’s clear is that there’s no time to kick the can down the road, said Christa Clapp, a co-author of the new IPCC report’s finance chapter. “Despite recent commitments, these high levels of public and private fossil-fuel financing continue to be a major concern,” she said.

A ‘critical enabler’

If too much finance is going to fossil fuels, far too little is being spent on tackling and adapting to climate change, particularly in developing countries. The gap between finance needs and availability is nothing new, said Clapp, but the “order of magnitude” has changed since the last such IPCC report in 2014.

Financing to prevent further climate change is falling short by up to a factor of six globally and eight for developing countries, the IPCC found. Money flows have increased over the past decade, but remain unevenly distributed across regions and sectors, and their growth has slowed.

Interspersed in the IPCC’s analysis are notes of optimism. In particular, “innovative financing approaches,” including green bonds and ESG-labeled products, could help reduce the underpricing of climate risk in markets.

The environmental-social-governance, or ESG, sector already encompasses \$40 trillion in assets globally, and the label can be found on anything from an exchange-traded fund to a credit default swap. Such panoply of products and claims has led to allegations of greenwashing, cited in the new report as a “challenge” to the efficacy of such approaches. While regulators globally are beginning to apply scrutiny, integrity efforts to date have centered on transparency and corporate disclosures, such as those developed by Task Force on Climate-related Disclosures. ESG strategies alone “do not yield meaningful social or environmental outcomes,” noted the IPCC authors, citing the need for stronger government policy and ultimately enhanced regulation.

Despite challenges in the scale, quality and urgency of climate finance needs, the report’s findings and their release in the context of the war present an opportunity. “Political will to expand renewables (and green hydrogen infrastructure at home and abroad) has been strengthened” by the war in Ukraine, said Eric Heymann, economist at Deutsche Bank Research.

“Can we let go of the hand brake [on climate finance]?” asked Christiana Figueres, the former executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and a key negotiator of the Paris Agreement. “Yes, and we have to.” **Bloomberg News**

Image credits: [Bloomberg](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/04/10/endless-misallocation-of-global-capital-increases-climate-risk-un-report-warns/>



Advocates: Nations must move faster to protect biodiversity

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS APRIL 10, 2022



A Dixie Valley toad sits atop grass in Dixie Valley, Nevada, on April 6, 2009. The US Fish and Wildlife Service temporarily listed a rare northern Nevada toad as endangered on an emergency basis partly because of threats a geothermal plant in the works poses to its habitat in the only place its known to live in the world about 100 miles east of Reno.

GENEVA—Environmentalists are criticizing the slow progress at a UN-backed meeting of nearly all the world's countries toward beefing up protections for biodiversity on Earth, ahead of a crucial meeting expected later this year in China where delegates could sign a global agreement.

A total of 195 countries—but not the United States—which are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity wrapped up a two-week meeting recently that aimed to make progress toward a deal to prevent the loss of biodiversity and avoid the extinction of many vulnerable species.

It also addresses the emergence of pathogens like the coronavirus, which damage both lives and livelihoods.

Delegates agreed to hold an interim meeting in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, in June before a high-level conference known as 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) in Kunming, China, at a still-undecided date later this year.

"Biodiversity is securing our own survival on this planet. It is not a joking matter," said Francis Ogwal of Uganda, a meeting co-chair. "Every day that you live as a human being is on biodiversity."

Ogwal cited the "close linkage" between biodiversity and climate change, saying "every time that governments are talking about mobilizing for climate change, they should be doing the same for biodiversity."

Advocacy groups and some governments have ambitions for a deal in Kunming that would aim to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the world's land, inland waters and oceans to help stanch habitat loss, the overuse of nature by people and businesses, and the emergence of pathogens that thrive off of environmental upheaval.

Some faulted the lagging pace of progress.

"With so little time to Kunming, parties have finally kicked the can to the end of the road," said Greenpeace East Asia senior policy advisor Li Shuo.

As president of COP15, "China should work out a contingency plan to deliver a complex package with quality and ambition," Li added.



The US-based Campaign for Nature pointed to an emerging consensus on the 30 percent target and a growing recognition that the lives and livelihoods of local communities and Indigenous peoples should be better protected.

Still it pressed for greater intensity from countries to find solutions to declining biodiversity.

“Unfortunately, the negotiations in Geneva have not reflected the urgency that is needed to successfully confront the crisis facing our natural world,” said Campaign for Nature’s director, Brian O’Donnell.

“Progress with the negotiations has been painfully slow, and the level of ambition with financing remains woefully inadequate,” O’Donnell said.

He said donor countries should commit to “far more ambitious financing targets.”

A key issue has been on repurposing and redirecting harmful subsidies that total \$500 billion per year and can damage biodiversity. A draft proposal for the China meeting aims to commit \$700 billion for sustaining or improving biodiversity. **AP**

Image credits: [Matt Maples/Nevada Department of Wild-life via AP](#)



How to halt deforestation? Trust indigenous groups, funders say

To channel much more funding to protect forests, donors need to shift their own demands on indigenous groups, both sides say.



A Kichwa villager cutting down a tree to clear an area to sow corn to feed his animals, near the Napo River. Orellana, Ecuador. Image: [Tomas Munita/CIFOR](#), [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via [Flickr](#).

April 8, 2022

At last November's COP26 UN climate talks, governments and foundations pledged to invest \$1.7 billion to help indigenous and local communities protect fast-vanishing tropical forests seen as crucial to protecting a stable climate and biodiversity.

That sum, for the period 2021-2025, represents a more than seven-fold increase from the roughly \$46 million a year those communities receive now, according to the donors.

But getting big sums of much-needed cash to threatened frontline indigenous communities is proving a major headache, indigenous leaders and funders warned at a [Skoll World Forum](#) event this week that explored how to dismantle the roadblocks.

Problems range from overly complex application and audit processes to very short-term funding, tight restrictions on how the cash can be used, and frequent mismatches between what donors and communities want to achieve, they said.

Rukka Sombolinggi, secretary general of the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in Indonesia, said she found complaints that indigenous people "lack capacity" to work in Western ways particularly frustrating.

"We do have the capacity. We've proved our capacity for millennia," she said during the online discussion. "But it's different capacity... than what is dictated by outsiders."

Receipts from the rainforest

Solomé Lemma, the Ethiopia-born executive director of [Thousand Currents](#), which funds social movements, said donors concerned about indigenous groups being unable to manage complicated grants may be looking in the wrong place.

Funders might do better to build up their own ability to work with communities, rather than always asking them to adapt. "There's an opportunity for us to really rethink," she said.

Sombolinggi said donor demands for what she calls "hyper-accountability" - such as requiring receipts for expenses incurred in the rainforest - often waste funds and time.

If we start everything with lack of trust, we are not going to go anywhere.

Rukka Sombolinggi, secretary general, Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago

Her organisation works with an extremely remote indigenous group in Indonesia's highlands, reachable by a two-week hike into the area, for example.

When outside donors demanded the original receipt for a \$500 coffee grinder the community bought, members had to spend another \$300 renting a motorbike to deliver the receipt on time.

Such rigid demands mean "we are not saving our brothers. We end up writing reports," said Sombolinggi, herself a member of the Torajan people from the highlands of Sulawesi.

"If we start everything with lack of trust, we are not going to go anywhere," she noted, saying her own organisation was content with receipts photographed and sent via smartphone.

Jennifer Corpuz, an indigenous lawyer from the Philippines and policy lead for [Nia Tero](#), a US non-profit working with indigenous people and movements, said a growing number of donors are trying to ease their demands.

Some require less written documentation and are making funding more flexible, so that threatened indigenous leaders can, for instance, shift spending to a fund for legal defence or sanctuary, if needed.

Transparency v. risk

Being more flexible can be harder for donor governments facing tight rules of their own.

But Gillian Caldwell, chief climate officer for the US Agency for International Development, said many are starting to stick to a few key principles.

Those include asking for and incorporating feedback from funding recipients, cutting down on paperwork, being responsive to requests for help, and making sure most funding is provided as multi-year, unrestricted grants.

"That is the kind of support NGOs need," especially those working to change broader systems, Caldwell said.

Funders should also be aware that channelling outside money to threatened indigenous and frontline communities can put some at greater risk, particularly if the names and addresses of recipients are published, she added.

There is a need to balance the safety and well-being of communities with demands for transparency, she noted.

As donors seek to scale up financial support dramatically to indigenous and other forest peoples - seen as the most effective guardians of nature - they should avoid forcing them to "reinvent themselves to fit our model", Caldwell warned.

For instance, the usual indicators of progress - GDP or daily income per person - rarely work in indigenous settings, Corpuz said. Groups she works with fix their own, such as how much of their territory they can safely access each day.

As forest and biodiversity losses accelerate in many parts of the world and efforts to reverse them lag, funders need to take more risks to figure out how to deliver the billions needed to reshape community and forest protection, the experts said.

"The right approach and strategy right now is to move the money and learn as we move the money," Lemma said.



Funding nature protection “at sizes and scales you never thought you would fund (is) what the moment requires”, she added.

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Phivolcs lowers Taal Volcano alert level

(Philstar.com) - April 9, 2022 - 10:18am



File photo of Taal Volcano
STAR/File

MANILA, Philippines — The state volcanology and seismology bureau has lowered the alert level over Taal Volcano amid a “marked decline” in unrest during the two weeks since it erupted.

Phivolcs lowered Taal to Alert Level 2 from Alert Level 3, indicating there is “decreased unrest” over the volcano located south of Metro Manila.

“Alert Level 2 means that there is decreased unrest but should not be interpreted that unrest has ceased or that the threat of an eruption has disappeared,” Phivolcs said, adding that it may hoist Alert Level 3 again should activity in Taal increase.

Since the last eruption on March 26, Phivolcs said only 86 weak and imperceptible volcanic earthquakes were recorded by the Taal Volcano Network. Sulfur dioxide gas emissions declined beginning April 3 and the ground on Taal Volcano Island has generally deflated.

Despite these indicators pointing to decreased unrest in the volcano, Phivolcs said residents returning to their homes after they were evacuated when Alert Level 3 was raised should be prepared for a quick and organized evacuation.

“Local government units are advised to continually strengthen preparedness, contingency and communication measures especially for previously evacuated high-risk barangays in case of renewed unrest,” Phivolcs said.

It added that sudden steam-driven explosions, volcanic earthquakes, ashfall and lethal accumulations or bursts of volcanic gas can threaten areas within the Taal Volcano Island and along its coast.

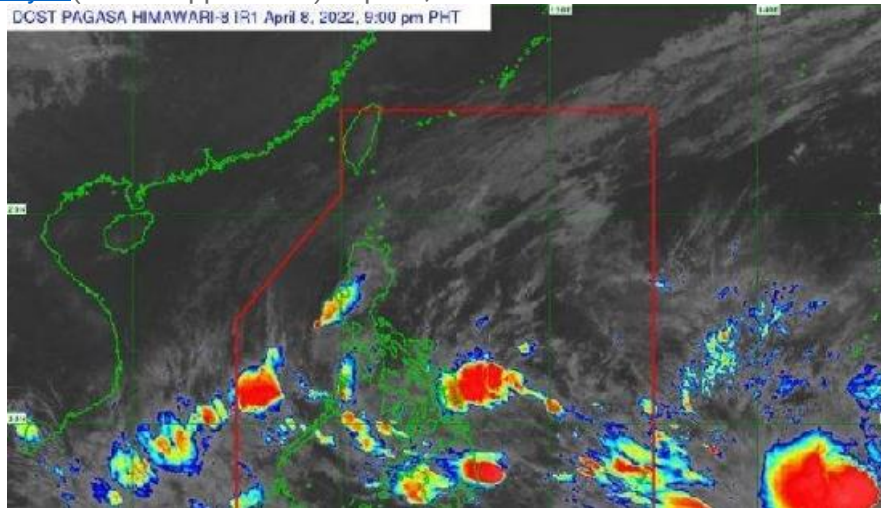
Even with a lowered alert level, entry into Taal Volcano Island and Taal’s permanent danger zone must be strictly prohibited, Phivolcs said. — **Xave Gregorio**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/09/2173411/phivolcs-lowers-taal-volcano-alert-level/amp/>



1st typhoon expected in Holy Week

By [Michael Punongbayan](#) (The Philippine Star) - April 9, 2022 - 12:00am



The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the weather disturbance was last spotted at 2,270 kilometers east of Mindanao.

PAGASA

MANILA, Philippines — The first typhoon of 2022 is expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility on Monday as Filipinos observe Holy Week. It will be named Agaton.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the weather disturbance was last spotted at 2,270 kilometers east of Mindanao.

PAGASA said the weather disturbance is not expected to have a direct effect on any part of the country.

Nevertheless, it will still be continuously monitored to determine if it will bring rainfall during the Holy Week.

PAGASA administrator Vicente Malano explained that a tropical depression is the weakest typhoon classification after a low-pressure area develops into a storm.

PAGASA said Metro Manila is forecast to have fair weather in the next three days with possible isolated rainshowers in the afternoon and evening.

Visayas and Mindanao will, however, experience a rainy weekend because of a low-pressure area that is passing through the country coupled with an intertropical convergence zone.

For the next three days, Northern Luzon which includes Cagayan Valley, Apayao, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province and Aurora can expect cloudy skies with light to moderate rains because of the northeasterly wind affecting the provinces.

PAGASA's three-day weather outlook shows that rainfall in Metro Manila and other parts of the country has helped lessen the hot and humid summer temperature.

From Saturday to Monday, temperature in Metro Manila is forecast to range from 23 to 32 degrees Celsius while Baguio City, which will also have fair weather, experiences cooler temperatures ranging from 14 to 25 degrees Celsius.

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/09/2173295/1st-typhoon-expected-holy-week/amp/>

10 APRIL 2022, SUNDAY



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DENR assures public of steady water supply

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has assured the public, especially those in Metro Manila, that there will be a steady water supply as preventive measures are now in place to avert the looming water crisis during the dry season.

DENR acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna made the assurance as the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) Technical Working Group continues to closely monitor the water level in Angat Dam and its operations amid its low-set water level.

"Through the NWRB, we have already laid down pre-

ventive measures such as cloud seeding so that the public, especially those in Metro Manila, is assured of a steady water supply with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," Sampulna said.

As of April 7, 2022, the water elevation in the reservoir slightly rose to 194.15 meters from the lowest elevation of the year, which was 190.63 meters last April 4, 2022.

This increase is mainly due to the shear line or tail-end of a cold front and a low-pressure area in the Mindanao region.

The widespread rain shower, which was experienced in the majority of the Luzon region, is expected to raise further the water level in Angat Dam caused by inflows from runoff water.

According to the latest rainfall forecast and Angat

Dam water level simulation, the lowest dam water level will reach 183.98 meters in June. Hence, it may not breach the minimum operating water level of 180 meters.

The NWRB has approved a water allocation of 50 cubic meters per second (CMS) to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System from April 1 to 15 and five CMS to the National Irrigation Administration from April 1 to April 30.

Although the increase in water elevation slightly improved the current and projected level of the dam, the water level in the dam is still not secured.

Sampulna, however, urged the public to continue implementing water conservation measures in their households, workplaces, and businesses.



DENR: No ECC yet to Lumbo water project

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The proposed Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project in Dolores, Quezon has not been granted an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) amid mounting opposition from various stakeholders, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In a letter to Tiaong, Quezon Mayor Ramon Preza dated March 31, DENR-Environment Management Bureau (EMB) CALABARZON director Norimi Paranada confirmed that Udenna Water Integrated Inc. does not have a valid ECC for the project after the agency denied their application last November 2021.

The DENR-EMB's letter was in response to Preza's call for the DENR to restrain the ongoing implementation of the project due to the lack of an ECC and the lack of public consultations with the affected downstream users.

"We have been made aware that no ECC has been issued prior to any of their construction activities.

We believe that this project poses an imminent environmental threat not only to the communities within the immediate vicinity of the project, but also to our municipality downstream," Preza said.

Preza noted that before any resource extractive activity is undertaken, there must be a public consultation wherein all stakeholders are given the opportunity to discuss their concerns on the project.

"With the proposed extraction of water from Lumbo Spring, our farmers are gravely concerned about how this will negatively impact their livelihood and food production in the region," he said.

Based on an earlier letter of denial to Udenna Water, Paranada said the company's ECC application was denied "due to mounting opposition from various stakeholders in the area".

She emphasized that the issues and concerns raised by the National Irrigation Authority (NIA) and concerned irrigators should be addressed prior to the issuance of an ECC.

The project will tap water from the Lumbo Spring lo-

cated in Dolores, Quezon to provide potable water to be distributed by the two adjacent water districts, particularly the San Pablo City Water District and the Dolores Water District.

Preza said that farmers depend on water from the mountains of Mt. Banahaw in Quezon for their crops. The town of Dolores lies near the foot of Mt. Banahaw.

Aside from the mountain range, the said water flows into rivers and streams that benefit hundreds of hectares of rice fields and other high value crops in its town before it flows to the neighboring municipalities of San Antonio and San Juan, Batangas to Tayabas Bay.

Preza said the reduction of water supply and gradual stoppage of its flow in the rivers has already been observed to have a significant impact on the cultivation of rice, high value crops and animal husbandry in more than half of the barangays of Tiaong.

"Farmers will be even more concerned about the slow-down or reduction of water flow if water from its main source is reduced and made

available to other provinces," he added.

Apart from the LGU of Tiaong, NIA also released a position paper on behalf of its farmer beneficiaries, opposing the completion of the Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project given the already significant decline in water discharge which is expected to worsen due to the Lumbo water extraction.

"There is a clear threat of irrigation water shortage due to the increasing number of water users both for domestic and agricultural use. The SPCWD-DWD proposed water project and the continuous decrease of water discharge will jeopardize the government's thrust towards food security and will decrease farmers' potential income," the NIA said.

In November 2020, SPCWD and DWD jointly issued a notice of award to the Consortium of Udenna Water Inclam, S.A. and Optimus Engineering and Construction to build the P103 million Lumbo Spring Bulk Water Supply Project through a public-private partnership (PPP) scheme.



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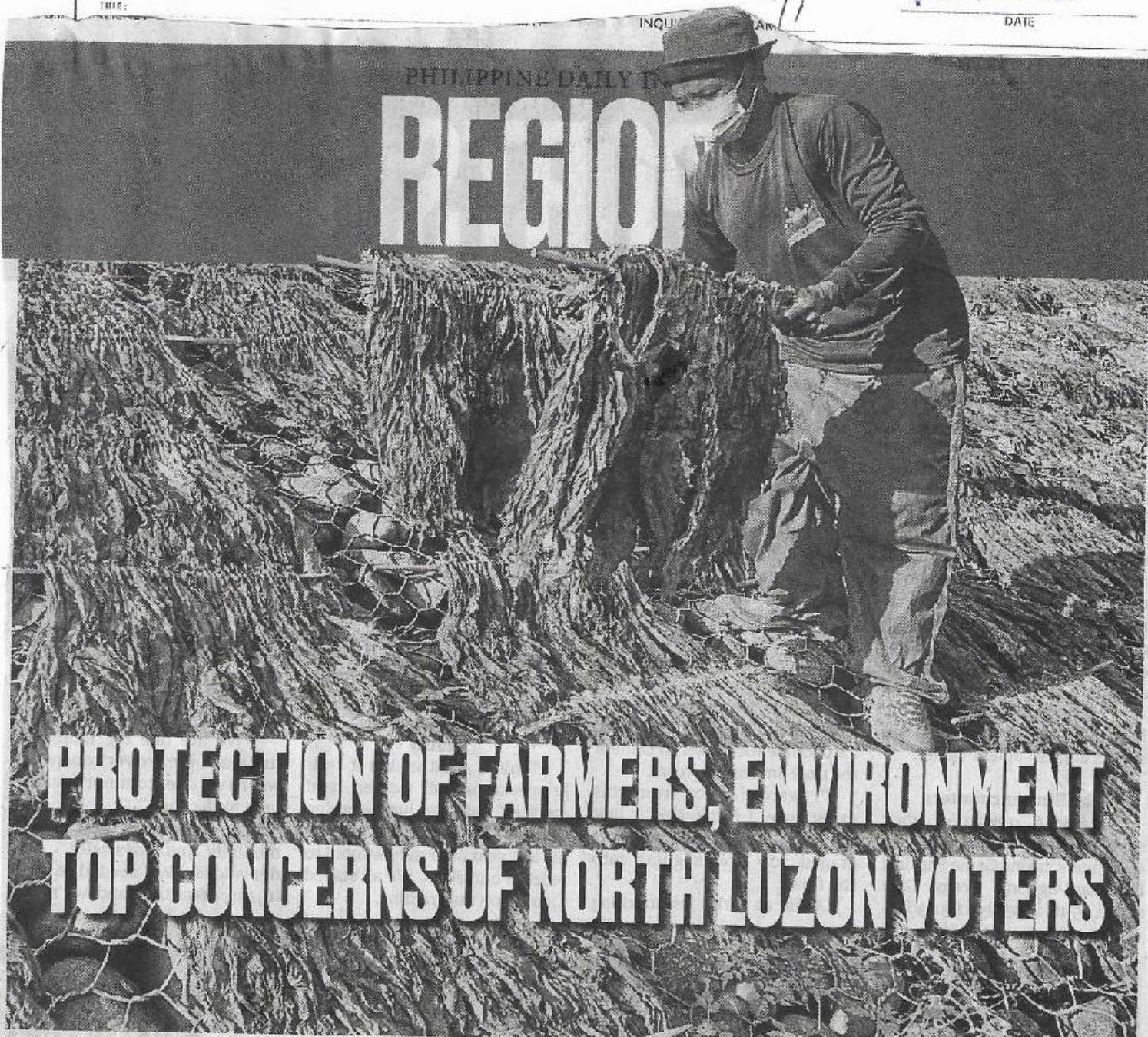
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**PROTECTION OF FARMERS, ENVIRONMENT
TOP CONCERNS OF NORTH LUZON VOTERS**

CASH CROP A farmer dries tobacco leaves on the slope of a dike road at Barangay Gualsic in Alcala, Pangasinan, in this photo taken in March. Tobacco farming is one of the major cash crops in the Ilocos region. —WILLIE LOMIBAO



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CONCERNS OF NORTH CANTON VOTERS



Editor
Robert Jaworski L. Abaño

AT RISK Fishermen in Binmaley, Pangasinan province, sort out fish caught from Lingayen Gulf in this photo taken on Jan. 30. Villagers fear that a proposed black sand mining in the gulf will affect their livelihood.

—WILLIE LOMIBAO

VOTE PH 2022

#OurVoteOurFuture

By Inquirer Northern Luzon
@InqNational

(First of a series)

Northern Luzon, with its 15 provinces spread out in the three regions of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and Cordillera, accounts for more than 6.9 million votes in the May elections.

Fertile lands in these provinces supply major markets of vegetables, rice, corn and tobacco, while its rich fishing grounds pump life to coastal communities. Northern Luzon's forests—from the Cordilleras to the Caraballo Mountains to the Sierra Madre—are among the remaining green patches in Luzon and host the headwaters of the island's great rivers where clean energy is derived.

Indigenous people communities in the north are the keepers of a unique heritage, making these regions attractive ecotourism and cultural destinations for people wanting to learn more about the country's history.

Northern Luzon has also endured natural disasters, especially the provinces in Cagayan Valley that are perennially battered by strong typhoons and widespread flooding in recent years.

Given this landscape, what are voters expecting from candidates seeking elective posts on May 9?

In the Cordillera, a primarily farming region, voters are hoping that candidates can present a viable and long-term solution to the unabated smuggling of agricultural products.

Benguet vegetable traders are seeking the revival of a task force to address vegetable smuggling amid a "lukewarm" response from concerned government agencies.

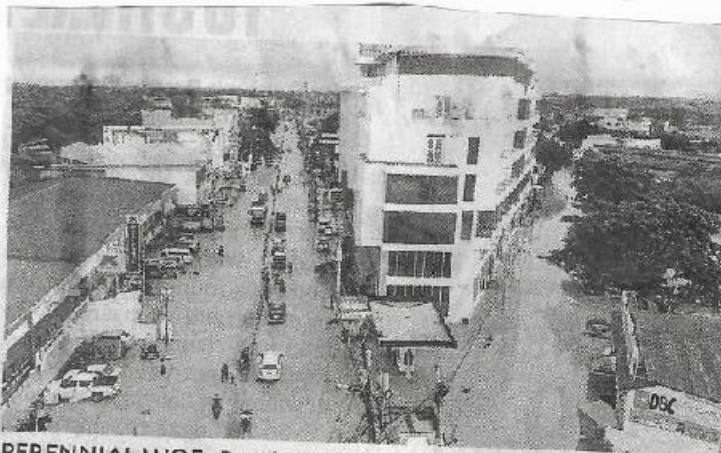
Agot Balanoy, spokesperson for the League of Associations at the La Trinidad Veg-



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THE PROTECTION OF FARMERS' COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION
OF ROBERTA LUZON VOTES 2/3



PERENNIAL WOE Roads, streets and homes in Tuguegarao City are submerged at the height of the severe flooding that hit Cagayan province on Nov. 14, 2020. —DAVID TE/CONTRIBUTOR

etable Trading Post, said this multisectoral task force was their only "glimmer of hope" to save the ailing industry and the struggling farmers.

In 2016, Republic Act No. 10845 (Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act) was signed into law to promote Filipino farmers' productivity and protect them against smugglers and importers.

But six years after it was enacted, Balanoy said smuggling of vegetables had worsened. Smuggled vegetables, she said, used to be clandestinely sold at night, "but today it happens in broad daylight."

"Smuggling remains an important election issue and the next elected leaders must have political will to stop smuggling and alleviate the plight of the local farmers," Balanoy said in a text message on April 7.

Overdevelopment

In Baguio City, issues about overdevelopment, aggravated by breaches in the carrying capacity of resources like water and waste management, are among the campaign platforms of city candidates.

But a COVID-19 survivor,

who is also a Baguio doctor, is asking them to focus on environmental measures that would reduce or eliminate future diseases brought about by human intrusion into plant and wildlife habitats, particularly in Baguio, Benguet and Cordillera forests.

Dr. Elizabeth Macliing Solang, one of the first health-care workers to be stricken with COVID-19 in the city, cited scientific research that ties recent pandemics to "urbanization, economic development and a societal shift toward environmental apathy."

"Habitat destruction not only increases our contact with wildlife but disrupts the natural balance in ways that can fuel pandemics," she said, quoting from a speech she delivered during the International Women's Month in March.

Baguio had also been declared a safe haven for activism, which a religious leader said should be an election issue.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines said: "In a democracy, the interplay of those who govern and those who oppose and dissent are necessary ingredients. We

should choose candidates who respect dissent and freedom of expression and who are not threatened by activism."

Agri, black sand mining

In Pangasinan, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) said candidates must focus on agriculture, which is also the major industry of the province.

Rosendo So, Sinag president, said the skyrocketing prices of fertilizer and fuel are forcing farmers to spend P74,000 on planting and harvesting a 1-hectare plantation of rice or corn. Farmers use diesel for water pumps and other farm equipment.

"We have been asking the government to suspend the 12-percent VAT (value-added tax) and excise on fuel for at least three months," So said.

Apart from agriculture, another major issue that faces residents of Pangasinan is black sand mining in Lingayen Gulf, an already environmentally critical body of water.

The project will extract 25 million metric tons of black sand from the gulf and displace close to 50,000 people who are dependent on the gulf for their livelihood, according to the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI).

Since November last year, the UP MSI has been opposing the project, saying Pangasinan is at risk of suffering "irreversible" damage if the seabed is disturbed. UP MSI maintains a marine science laboratory in Bolinao town in Pangasinan.

According to the UP MSI, the project would only serve the "short-term interests of those who will profit from a misguided development that threatens the lifeblood of Pangasinan and La Union."

"What office and who



THE PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT TO CONSIDERS 4/4
OF NORTH ILOCOS VOTE

among the candidates are against [black sand] mining and what are their plans of action to save Lingayen Gulf?" asked Irene de Vera, a professor at the Pangasinan State University Binalale campus.

Tobacco industry

In the Ilocos provinces, tobacco farmers want candidates to improve the quality of their lives.

According to Bernard Vicente, chair of National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Association and Cooperatives, farmers in Ilocos Sur have been planting tobacco only to make ends meet.

"I think it is time that they finally heed our call to help us improve our lives as until now, we do not feel that there is development for our sector," said Vicente in Ilocano.

The government earns about P125 million tax from a hectare of land planted with Virginia tobacco, said Vicente.

Despite this, he lamented how the plight of tobacco farmers is continuously neglected even though they contribute to the region's economy.

Vicente's group is asking local officials for alternative sources of income which would allow them to earn, instead of being idled, when they wait for their tobacco yield that usually covers a six-month period.

These alternative sources would also allow tobacco farmers in the province to stand on their own feet when the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to which the Philippines is a signatory, would be fully realized, said Vicente.

The framework aims to reduce harmful tobacco consumption in signatory countries which could affect their



TRADERS' HUB Workers at the vegetable trading post in La Trinidad, Benguet, unload vegetables coming from other areas in the Cordillera in this April 3 photo. Local farmers continue to fight the unabated vegetable smuggling in the country. —ALLAN MACATUNG

demand and production of tobacco, he added.

For Alyansa ti Mannalon ti Ilocos Norte leader Genaro de la Cruz, local government programs on alternative sources of income should empower farmers. "We have to organize, educate and introduce to them other viable economic activities aside from what they have been depending on," he said.

Disaster response

In Cagayan Valley region, torrential rains and typhoons during the rainy season have triggered severe flooding, especially in the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela, in recent years, like the one that occurred in November 2020 at the height of Typhoon "Ulysses" (international name: Vamco).

The massive flooding was described by local government officials as the worst they had experienced in 40 years. It affected at least 151,600 families in Cagayan and Isabela, and killed 24 people.

Residents in these areas were hoping that candidates could provide solutions to the perennial disaster as local officials admitted that environmental destruction had aggravated the situation.

In the northernmost province of Batanes, which regularly experiences damaging typhoons, residents said they were hoping that aspiring local and national officials would prioritize their community over their personal interests.

"Our island's geographic location situates us in a spot where our exposure to natural disasters is so high [that] we cannot do anything about that," said Chairmaine Gato, a government employee in Ithayat town.

But it is during disasters, she said, that they get the chance to see the quality of leaders they elect. —REPORTS FROM KIMBERLIE QUITASOL, VINCENT CABREZA, YOLANDA SOTELO, JOHN MICHAEL MUGAS, VILLAMOR VISAYA JR. AND NATHAN ALCANTARA, INQ



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GCash to plant half a million mangrove trees in Cebu

GCash, the leading digital mobile wallet in the country, together with the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation Inc., (RAFI), is planting 550,000 mangrove trees in Tañon Strait in Cebu to help the environment and mitigate the effects of natural disasters in the province. Cebu was one of the provinces to endure the brunt of Typhoon Odette.

Mangroves help build more disaster-resilient communities as they protect coastlines by decreasing the risk of flooding and erosion. Compared to planting upland trees, mangroves are capable of high carbon sequestration, also known as "blue carbon" which helps reduce the amount of carbon dioxide to minimize the effects of climate change. Moreover, mangroves promote the conservation of fishing breeding areas and support the livelihood of farmer and mangrove-planting communities.

and CEO of GCash.

The planting period of these mangroves will start in the second and third quarters of 2022. Maintenance activities will last until 2024 to ensure a high survival rate of the planted mangrove seedlings.

This initiative is a part of GCash's sustainability efforts under GForest, its environmental sustainability feature on the app.

"We've seen the impact of natural calamities in the vulnerable communities in the country. At GCash, we continue to uphold our commitment to environmental conservation and sustainability together with our partners. We are grateful to have found a partner in the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation Inc.. Together we will work toward making our coastlines less vulnerable to extreme weather events and help build more sustainable and disaster-resilient communities in the future," said Martha Sazon, President

GCash users can help plant mangrove trees anytime, anywhere. With GForest, they can do so virtually by collecting green energy points by reducing their footprint whenever they use the various cashless services of GCash, such as Send Money, Pay Bills, or Bank Transfer on the app. Users can also earn points and further decrease their carbon footprint every time they walk if they enable GCash to access their health app or fitness tracker.

Since GForest's launch in 2019, more than 10 million users have joined the cause. As of December 19, 2021, a total



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GCASH TO PLANT HALF A MILLION MANGROVE TREES IN CEBU

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a greener lifestyle and help build a sustainable future – one mangrove at a time. “GCash has been a valued partner of RAFI One To Tree. Over the last year, we have worked with GCash in establishing native tree nurseries and helping recover tree cover lost in the Philippines. The GCash RAFI Mangrove Project is our latest project together and we are excited to work with them in growing mangrove forests together in Cebu Province,” said Anthony Dignadice, Executive Director of RAFI One To Tree.

GCash is committed to build environmentally-conscious and civic-minded communities genuinely concerned for the environment. Through its cutting-edge technology and establishing impactful partnerships, GCash takes an active role in minimizing the effects of climate change.

The GCash RAFI Mangroves Project will run for a duration of 33 months. “This important initiative in cooperation with RAFI is a concrete testament of our environment, social and governance (ESG) aspiration in GCash. As announced recently, we planted one million trees nationwide as of end February and we are positive that through this initiative, we will be able to plant more together with our GForest champions all over the country,” adds Chito Maniago, VP for Corporate Communications and Public Affairs of GCash.

of 1,060,000 trees have been planted virtually by GForest users, 1 million of which have been converted to actual trees planted in various locations.

Prior to the planting of mangroves in 2022, GCash and RAFI have partnered to conduct other tree-planting projects in Cebu, as well as tree-growing orientations and planting trainings for 150 farmers. That initiative

aims to plant 1.3 million trees this year.

Aside from Cebu in Visayas, GCash has also facilitated several tree-planting projects with other partners in Luzon and Mindanao.

With its various digital products and services, particularly GForest, GCash continues to help encourage its users to adopt

For more information, visit www.gcash.com.



Asean cities, local governments crucial to biodiversity conservation

AT least 70 percent of biodiversity policies are being implemented at the local and subnational levels, yet they are not always profiled.

There is, however, growing recognition of the vital contribution of cities and subnational governments in meeting the global biodiversity goals and targets, and Asean cities are urged to support this exciting development.

The Edinburgh Declaration was drafted from a series of consultations with subnational governments and regional, city and local authorities led by the Scottish government together with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in view of the anticipated post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

To date, over 200 governments have signed to commit to act for nature conservation and climate change in the coming decade.

This cooperation aims to facilitate the alignment of global biodiversity strategies, actions, monitoring, and reporting efforts across all government levels, contributing to meaningful long-term biodiversity impacts and goals from the local leading up to global levels.

The commitment is set to enable its signatories to have access to more resource mobilization opportunities for biodiversity at subnational or local levels; mainstream biodiversity concerns across sectors; and have access to opportunities for biodiversity knowledge exchange across all sectors.

Paul Dale from the government of São Paulo, Brazil, shared that as part of the Edinburgh Process, Asean cities may receive more support to increase concrete actions and outcomes for biodiversity in the coming decade.

"The consultations during the Edinburgh Process indicate that the subnational and local government should not just be considered as a stakeholder and that their



CITIES and subnational governments play a crucial role in protecting biodiversity. PHOTO BY DAN LOY VICTORIANO

competency and implementation should be recognized in the framework," Dale said.

In the past years, Asean cities have been rapidly moving toward urbanization, prompting populations from regional provinces to flock to urban areas for better economic opportunities.

This growing density of people in cities has resulted in the further conversion of key ecosystems and the decline of biological diversity.

Mobilizing subnational and local city governments in mainstreaming and integrating biodiversity into urban planning is crucial in the conservation of existing natural areas and biodiversity in cities.

During the webinar, the Asean member state (AMS) expressed its readiness to sign up as a city-state to the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity and encouraged other Asean cities to be part of the network as well.

"Cities can play a significant positive role in addressing the challenges of biodiversity conservation and climate change," said Dr. Lena Chan, senior director for the International Biodiversity Conservation Division of NParks Singapore.

"We seek the full support from the [AMS] to adopt the plan of action at CBD COP 15 [15th Conference of Parties]."

Chan also encouraged cities to apply the Singapore Index as a tool to evaluate and monitor biodiversity conservation efforts.

With Singapore leading urban biodiversity conservation in the Asean region, Chan encourages the adoption of the revised Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity, or The Singapore Index, ACB said.

The Singapore Index serves as a self-evaluation tool for cities to measure and monitor biodiversity and efforts to conserve it using 28 indicators based on the core components of native biodiversity, biodiversity-provided ecosystems services, and biodiversity management and governance.

Guided by the principle "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it," this tool can assist cities in gathering valuable information and baseline data to better inform their programs and policies on managing the manifold impact of cities on biodiversity and vice-versa.

Ingrid Coetzee, director of Biodiversity Nature, and Health ICLEI-Cities' Biodiversity Centre South Africa, emphasised that while biodiversity policies are negotiated and adopted at the national and global levels, the success of implementation lies on the support of the subnational and local levels where



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BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

majority of the implementation happens.

Coetzee added that there is a need to support the Declaration as well as the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities, and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2021-2031).

"The Plan of Action is ...there to support state parties in their efforts to reach national and global targets for biodiversity, and develop National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans that are right for their circumstance," Coetzee said.

Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, ACB executive director, expressed the ACB's commitment to supporting the Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity and to rolling out the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity in the Asean.

Lim also lauded Singapore for its strong leadership and commitment to cities and urban biodiversity conservation in the region.

"For us in the region, our shared understanding of biodiversity as the centrepiece of regional economic recovery and resilience-building is recognized by several regional frameworks, such as, among others, the Asean Comprehensive Recovery Framework," she said.

Lim explained that a draft regional statement will be created from the outcomes and insights shared during the workshop. She emphasised that the regional statement demonstrates the AMS's unity and cooperation in advancing regional sustainable development, ACB said.

There are more concerns to address in the aspect of biodiversity and cities' sustainable development, Lim said.

"I am confident, however, that we can figure out our way forward to respond to all these, as one regional community, inspired by this year's Asean theme, 'Asean ACT: Addressing Challenges Together,'" Lim noted.



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Advocates: Nations must move faster to protect biodiversity

GENEVA—Environmentalists are criticizing the slow progress at a UN-backed meeting of nearly all the world's countries toward beefing up protections for biodiversity on Earth, ahead of a crucial meeting expected later this year in China where delegates could sign a global agreement.

A total of 195 countries—but not the United States—which are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity wrapped up a two-week meeting recently that aimed to make progress toward a deal to prevent the loss of biodiversity and avoid the extinction of many vulnerable species.

It also addresses the emergence of pathogens like the coronavirus, which damage both lives and livelihoods.

Delegates agreed to hold an interim meeting in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, in June before a high-level conference known as 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) in Kunming, China, at a still-undecided date later this year.

"Biodiversity is securing our own survival on this planet. It is not a joking matter," said Francis Ogwal of Uganda, a meeting co-chair. "Every day that you live as

a human being is on biodiversity."

Ogwal cited the "close linkage" between biodiversity and climate change, saying "every time that governments are talking about mobilizing for climate change, they should be doing the same for biodiversity."

Advocacy groups and some governments have ambitions for a deal in Kunming that would aim to protect and conserve at least 30 percent of the world's land, inland waters and oceans to help stanch habitat loss, the overuse of nature by people and businesses, and the emergence of pathogens that thrive off of environmental upheaval.

Some faulted the lagging pace of progress.

"With so little time to Kunming, parties have finally kicked the can to the end of the road," said Greenpeace East Asia senior



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THE ADVOCATES: NATION'S MUST HAVE PAPER TO
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY

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A DIXIE Valley toad sits atop grass in Dixie Valley, Nevada, on April 6, 2009. The US Fish and Wildlife Service temporarily listed a rare northern Nevada toad as endangered on an emergency basis partly because of threats a geothermal plant in the works poses to its habitat in the only place its known to live in the world about 100 miles east of Reno.

MATT MAPLES/NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE VIA AP

policy advisor Li Shuo.

As president of COP15, "China should work out a contingency plan to deliver a complex package with quality and ambition," Li added.

The US-based Campaign for Nature pointed to an emerging consensus on the 30 percent target and a growing recognition that the lives and livelihoods of local communities and Indigenous peoples should be better protected.

Still it pressed for greater intensity from countries to find solutions to declining biodiversity.

"Unfortunately, the negotiations in Geneva have not reflected the urgency that is needed to successfully confront the crisis

facing our natural world," said Campaign for Nature's director, Brian O'Donnell.

"Progress with the negotiations has been painfully slow, and the level of ambition with financing remains woefully inadequate," O'Donnell said.

He said donor countries should commit to "far more ambitious financing targets."

A key issue has been on repurposing and redirecting harmful subsidies that total \$500 billion per year and can damage biodiversity. A draft proposal for the China meeting aims to commit \$700 billion for sustaining or improving biodiversity. AP



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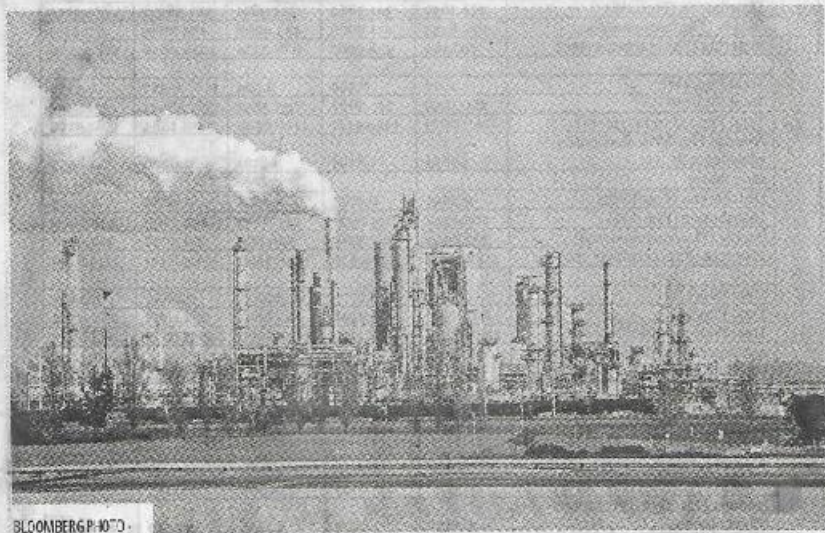
Endless misallocation of global capital increases climate risk, UN report warns

BY NAJASHA WHITE & ERIC ROSTON

THE world's leading climate finance experts and economists warn of a "persistent misallocation of global capital" as too much mon-

ey continues to pour into fossil fuels and too little is channeled to clean energy.

In its latest assessment of global efforts to contain climate change, published Monday, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on



BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



THE ENDLESS MISALLOCATION OF GLOBAL CAPITAL
INCREASE CLIMATE RISK, UN REPORT WARNS.

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Climate Change issued a stark alert that the world is on track to miss its target to limit global warming. Finance is both driving the problem and a "critical enabler" in the energy transition, the panel said.

The IPCC findings add more cause for alarm amid signs that the energy transition is backsliding, as some nations scramble for polluting alternatives to Russia's gas in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. Financing for coal-related projects is running at a rate that's more than double last year's pace. The world already faced "large macroeconomic headwinds" hampering climate finance "even before Covid-19," said the IPCC authors. The war serves to compound these as the window to act narrows further.

The world stands at a tipping point or "pattern break" in the status quo, said Edward Mason, director at Generation Investment Management, a green finance firm co-founded by former US Vice President Al Gore, referring to the war in Ukraine and its impacts on the energy transition. "We mustn't lose sight of the bigger picture."

A 'critical enabler'

IF too much finance is going to fossil fuels, far too little is being spent on tackling and adapting to climate change, particularly in developing countries. The gap between finance needs and availability is nothing new, said Clapp, but the "order of magnitude" has changed since the last such IPCC report in 2014.

Financing to prevent further climate change is falling short by up to a factor of six globally and eight for developing countries, the IPCC found. Money flows have increased over the past decade, but remain unevenly distributed across regions and sectors, and their growth has slowed.

Interspersed in the IPCC's analysis are notes of optimism. In particular, "innovative financing approaches," including green bonds and ESG labeled products, could help reduce the underpricing of climate risk in markets.

Bankrolling destruction

FOR the world to meet its climate target requires a "substantial reduction in overall fossil-fuel use" that "will leave a substantial amount of fossil fuels unburned," the IPCC said. And yet the finance sector continues to fund fossil-fuel development.

Over half of the 150 biggest financial institutions globally have no restrictions on financing oil and gas, and two-thirds of the world's largest banks and asset managers are failing to set concrete climate targets for this decade, according to two separate analyses by NGOs. For their part, a whopping 83 percent of the world's biggest polluting firms are yet to map a meaningful path to net-zero emissions, a leading investor alliance found.

Such shortcomings among financiers and corporations amount to a "systemic underpricing" of climate risk in the financial system, according to the IPCC. They also fly in the face of these finance firms' public pledges, notably the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero. Launched at the COP26 climate summit last November, GFANZ members worth a combined \$130 trillion committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest and delivering their fair share of 50 percent emissions reductions this decade.

"We often see these initiatives

The environmental-social-governance, or ESG, sector already encompasses \$40 trillion in assets globally, and the label can be found on anything from an exchange traded fund to a credit default swap. Such panoply of products and claims has led to allegations of greenwashing, cited in the new report as a "challenge" to the efficacy of such approaches. While regulators globally are beginning to apply scrutiny, integrity efforts to date have centered on transparency and corporate disclosures, such as those developed by Task Force on Climate-related Disclosures. ESG strategies alone "do not yield meaningful social or environmental outcomes," noted the IPCC authors, citing the need for stronger government policy and ultimately enhanced regulation. *Bloomberg News*

are made for marketing and not concrete action," said Lucie Pinson, executive director of Reclaim Finance, an NGO that authored one of the studies. "Now is the time for financial institutions to show that their climate pledges were not pure greenwashing and that they are serious about taking action this year."

Bloomberg Green wrote to 18 firms for comment on Reclaim Finance's findings, including Allianz, AXA, Credit Suisse and UBS. Of those that responded, all reiterated their commitments to net zero and considered their policies to be in line with them. Most referred to their efforts to engage companies, rather than divest, which one asset manager described as "not the most impactful tool for investors" because "it limits the opportunity to impact positively on company behaviors."

What's clear is that there's no time to kick the can down the road, said Christa Clapp, a co-author of the new IPCC report's finance chapter. "Despite recent commitments, these high levels of public and private fossil-fuel financing continue to be a major concern," she said.



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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WHO

THIS health worker conducts mosquito sampling and surveillance in a community in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Take climate action, take care of each other

An urgent call to protect health and mitigate the climate crisis was issued by the United Nations (UN) health agency on Wednesday to mark World Health Day on Thursday, 7 April.

In its call-to-action, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a shocking report on Monday, noting that 99 percent of people breathe unhealthy air – mainly resulting from the burning of fossil fuels.

“The climate crisis is a health crisis: The same unsustainable choices that are killing our planet are killing people,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Health and social crises

The UN health agency warned that the steadily heating world is seeing mosquito-borne diseases spreading farther and faster than ever before.

And extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, land degradation and water scarcity are displacing people and affecting health, while pollution and plastics found at the bottom of the world’s deepest oceans and highest mountains are

increasingly making their way into food chains and blood streams.

Moreover, systems that produce highly processed, unhealthy foods and beverages are driving a wave of obesity, increasing cancer and heart disease, while generating up to a third of global greenhouse gas emissions.

These health and social crises are compromising people’s ability to take control over their health and lives, WHO said.

Covid factor

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted fault lines of inequity across the world, underlining the urgency of creating sustainable and healthy societies which do not breach ecological limits.

“We need to ensure that all people have access to life-saving and life-enhancing tools, systems, policies and environments,” the agency said.

WHO’s Manifesto for a healthy and green recovery from the pandemic prescribes protecting and preserving nature as the primary source of human health.



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Almost everyone now breathing polluted air

The agency's data indicates that 4.2 million people die from exposure to outdoor air pollution, in addition to the 3.8 million whose deaths are linked to household smoke produced by dirty stoves and fuels

An astonishing 99 percent of the world's population breathes polluted air that exceeds internationally approved limits, with negative health impacts kicking in at much lower levels than previously thought, United Nations (UN) medical scientists last week.

Noting that fossil fuels are responsible for most of the harmful emissions that are linked to acute and chronic sickness, the World Health Organization (WHO) called for tangible steps to curb their use.

The UN agency also urged more governments to take note that it has made significant revisions to its air quality indicators, including for particulate matter — known as PM2.5 — that can enter the bloodstream, along with nitrogen dioxide, another common urban pollutant and precursor of particulate matter and ozone.

Lower level

"It has been recognized that air pollution has an impact at a much lower level than previously thought," Dr. Sophie Gury, Technical Officer at WHO's Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, said.

"So, with all the new evidence that has come up over the last 15 years since the last WHO air quality guideline update, most of the values of the guideline levels have



SMOG fills the skyline of the city of Toronto, Canada.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF UN

been reduced. So (for) particulate matter, it has been reduced by two, and for nitrogen dioxide, it has been reduced by four."

According to the WHO, low- and middle-income countries still experience greater exposure to unhealthy levels of particulate matter compared to the global average, but nitrogen dioxide patterns "are different, showing less difference between high- and low- and middle-income countries."

Invisible danger

The agency's data indicates that 4.2 million people die from exposure to outdoor air pollution, in addition to the 3.8 million whose deaths are linked to household smoke produced by dirty stoves and fuels.

And based on WHO's mathematical modelling of available air pollution data from 80 percent of the world's urban areas, it indicates that almost every one of us faces an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, lung disease, cancer and pneumonia.

As depressing and as dangerous as this situation is, the UN health agency insists

that momentum has been growing for better air quality everywhere in the last decade.

Proof of this is the fact that more than 6,000 cities in 117 countries now monitor air quality, compared to 1,100 cities in 91 countries a decade ago.

Achieving cleaner air is also one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and an increasing number of UN agencies have passed resolutions urging member states to address the health impacts of smog-filled air.

Welcoming the increasing number of cities that have begun to measure air quality for the first time, Dr. Maria Neira, director, WHO Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, said that it was particularly significant that data is also being gathered on nitrogen dioxide.

Nitrogen dioxide "is a proxy indicator for traffic and it's telling us what is happening at the urban level and how this gas that we know that is so damaging and causing so many of respiratory diseases — one of them being asthma — is increasing in many cities around the world."



PH, China to act on climate change

THE Philippines and China reaffirmed their partnership in climate change action and underscored the need for cooperation in practical and pragmatic projects.

At Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian's courtesy call on Secretary Robert E.A. Borje of the Climate Change Commission, the two countries emphasized that urgent climate change action is required in the areas of adaptation, mitigation and finance in order to address the many climate challenges faced by the developing world.

"Now, more than ever, partnerships that work are crucial for climate change action to make a real difference. The Philippines and China are well-placed to harness existing cooperation as a launchpad for intensified joint action," Borje said.

Stressing that the perspective of the developing world and archipelagic/island nations must inform and shape global discussion on climate change, Borje said that these nations, including the Philippines, "continue to bear the brunt of climate change impact."

"It cannot be business as usual for our country, our region and our world. We must work harder together. Vital to this is access to technology as well financing for adaptation and mitigation," said Borje.

For his part, Huang recognized the Philippines' important role in giving a resonant voice to the developing world on the issue of climate change.

Noting that the Philippines faces many climate challenges and has its own contributions to global discussions and action, Ambassador Huang underlined that China will work closely with the Philippines on "projects and programs that can impact positively and quickly on communities."

Both Borje and Huang identified cooperation in renewable energy, including solar energy as convergence that offers practical opportunities for proactive partnership.

The two officials also recognized the need to make climate finance and technology more accessible and should continue to be advanced in all relevant fora until results are visible.

Huang expressed readiness to further strengthen climate change cooperation between the Philippines and China through discussions with Commissioner Xie Zhenhua for China's Climate Change Affairs.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ



1.5 degrees Celsius: The elusive goal

The good news before the bad.

The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) convened by the United Nations says that our overheated planet has made slight progress towards managing climate change because of the falling costs of clean energy.



But the bad news is the dire warning that unless countries "drastically accelerate efforts over the next few years to slash their emissions from coal, oil and natural gas, the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit, will likely be out of reach by the end of this decade."

1.5 degrees Celsius or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit is the threshold beyond which the dangers of global warming will be open to us - worsening floods, droughts, wildfires and ecosystem collapse. Humans are recorded to have already heated the planet by an average of 1.1 degrees Celsius since the 19th century, largely by burning fossil fuels for energy.

But as *The New York Times* reports, the goal is nothing short of daunting. To attain just 1.5 degrees Celsius would mean requiring nations to reduce their planet-warming emissions by 43 percent by 2030 and to stop adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by early 2050s. However, current policies of governments are only expected to reduce fossil fuel emissions by a few percentage points, the increase traced to the pandemic. And today, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, causing skyrocketing oil and gas prices and distracting us from the urgent concern of climate change. Just how realistic or feasible is the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal?

United Nations Secretary General António Guterres minces no words as he addresses the world, "This is a climate emergency," adding that wealthy economies and corporations "are not just turning a blind eye; they are adding fuel to the flames. They are choking our planet, based on their vested interests and historic investments in fossil fuels, when cheaper, renewable solutions provide green jobs, energy security and greater price stability."

Scientists say that even half a degree matters. Even if we do not come close to the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal, we cannot just give up because every effort counts towards taming global warming. Half a degree is said to be the difference between a world with coral reefs and Arctic summer sea ice and a world without them. An additional half-degree of warming could mean habitat losses for polar bears, whales, seals and sea birds.

What can be done? The report lists the strategies proposed by scientists and energy experts to help nations make the transition to clean energy.

- All power plants worldwide that generate electricity for homes and factories would have to be cleaned up, relying more on wind, solar, nuclear, geothermal or hydropower.

- Transportation, industry and other segments of the economy need to run on clean electricity rather than fossil fuels. Cars powered by gasoline could be replaced with electric vehicles charged by low-carbon grids. The shift is not easy for batteries for airplanes are still so heavy.

- Take steps to reduce total energy demand by recycling more raw materials and making factories more energy efficient.

- Emissions from deforestation and agriculture, which account for around a fifth of global greenhouse gases, must be dealt with, like global meat production, which emits methane and carbon dioxide. Forests and wetlands need to be spared from destruction as they store carbon dioxide, which is effective in mitigating global warming.

These measures need to be initiated by governments and institutions. It is apparent that there are enormous challenges ahead. For instance, governments in the developing world still need to extend access to electricity and modern cooking fuels for hundreds of millions of the poorest people, which might only be possible in the short term by burning more fossil fuels.

Fatima Denton, director of the United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa and another author of the report says that greater financial support from wealthy nations to less developed nations is critical, "partly as a matter of fairness and historical responsibility: Western countries that got rich by burning fossil fuels are now effectively telling poor nations that they cannot do the same." They have seen this as the route to more wealth, more prosperity, more capitalism, Denton adds.

Doing away with the harmful emissions requires overhauling present systems of governments, businesses and even societies as a whole. "That's not an overnight thing, and it comes with some cost, whether we like it or not," Denton concedes.

The strategies put forward in the IPCC report may disappoint individuals who are personally committed to mitigate climate change. Individual efforts are not to be rendered insignificant, for every initiative should matter. We are guided by how large a carbon footprint our lifestyles leave.

Some practical suggestions and reminders to reduce our carbon footprints:

- Practice the 5 Rs: refuse, reduce, reuse, rot, recycle.
- Bike more and drive less.
- Conserve water and protect our waterways.
- Eat seasonally, locally and more plants.
- Switch to sustainable, clean energy.

It's never too late to begin.

Young Writers' Hangouts on April 23 with Roel Cruz, 2-3 pm. Write Things' six-day summer workshop "Writefest" (now on its 8th year) on May 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27 is now open for registration. Open to 8-17 year olds, it will run 3-4:30 pm every session.

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ALMOST EVERYONE NOW BREATHING POLLUTED AIR PAGE 2/2



EMISSIONS from coal-fired power plants contribute to air pollution in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ADB

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DOH: No Covid recombinant variants detected in PHL

BY CLAUDETH MOCON-CIRIACO APRIL 8, 2022



Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergere

Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergere on Friday said that no XE, XD and XF recombinants of Covid-19 have been detected yet in the country.

“The latest sequencing result was last March kung saan makapagsabi tayo na sa ngayon ang atin pong [wherein we can say that our] Omicron variant is almost 80 percent of the samples na na-detect sa pinakahuli nating [detected in the latest genome sequencing] run,” Vergere said in an online media forum.

Vergere added that two Delta variant cases were detected in Regions 2 and 6.

“Maliban po diyan wala na po tayong nakitang na iba pang variant o sublineages nitong Omicron variant [aside from that, we have not seen any variant or sublineages of this Omicron variant],” Vergere said.

Vergere also said that the University of the Philippines (UP), through its Philippine Genome Center (PGC) in UP Visayas and in UP Mindanao, has been doing its own run of genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 from community samples in both island groups.

The fully-equipped satellite facilities, made possible through the joint efforts of UP, Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), have begun genome sequencing services of nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swab samples from DOH-licensed Covid-19 testing laboratories in cooperation with the DOH – Epidemiology Bureau (DOH-EB), to detect SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

Early this year, UP-PGC Visayas started working with the Western Visayas Medical Center for the collection and viral RNA extraction of samples prior to sequencing.

To date, UP-PGC Visayas has successfully sequenced more than 300 samples and has submitted the results to the DOH-EB for analysis and endorsement to the Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Units (RESUs).



The RESUs report the sequencing results to their respective local government units (LGUs) to put into place a well-planned strategy to mitigate the transmission of circulating variants in the concerned areas.

Similarly, the UP-PGC Mindanao team is working with the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) for the sequencing of samples from Mindanao.

Last February, 98 extracted SARS-CoV-2 RNA samples from the SPMC were transported by RESU Davao to PGC Mindanao for processing for whole genome sequencing.

The samples were analyzed using the bioinformatics pipeline technology and results were forwarded to the DOH-EB.

The national effort for genomic biosurveillance of SARS-CoV-2 is a collaboration among different agencies.

Laboratories and other institutions, through a coordinated chain of roles and responsibilities, aims to provide local and national authorities with data and scientific evidence on the circulating SARS-CoV-2 variants in the archipelago.



PH has 'good' pandemic management: OCTA

By Lade Jean Kabagani [April 9, 2022, 4:22 pm](#)



OCTA Research fellow Dr. Guido David (PNA file photo)

MANILA – The massive vaccination program of the government has significantly contributed to the downtrend of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) cases in the Philippines, OCTA Research fellow, Dr. Guido David, said Saturday.

For the past two years of battling the pandemic, David said one of the noticeable trends is having surge waves three to four months apart.

“Medyo sinu-support nga nito yung hypothesis na humina yung immunity natin after a period of time -- usually mga three to four months pero sa ngayon maganda naman ang kalagayan natin (It is quite supporting the hypothesis that our immunity is going down after a period of time -- usually its three to four months, but we are now in a good situation),” David said at the public virtual briefing.

He noted that it is also possible that the Covid-19 surge in the country will not happen.

“Kasi umpisa nang magkaroon tayo ng mass vaccination talagang na-control na natin, especially yung hospitalization. In fact ngayon, over the past two years isa tayo sa may pinakamagandang kalagayan sa Southeast Asia (Since we started the mass vaccination we really controlled it, especially the hospitalization. In fact, over the past two years, we are now one of the countries in Southeast Asia that is in the best situation),” David said.

“We’re proud of that. Ibig sabihin kahit papano -- may mga lapses tayo siguro sa umpisa pero ngayon maganda na yung pandemic management natin. Sana magtuluy-tuloy ito in the next years (That means -- even if we have some lapses at first but now we have a good pandemic management. I hope it will continue in the next [coming] years),” he added.

David said the country remains at a very low-risk classification, with the nationwide’s positivity rate staying at .06 percent.

The country’s average daily attack rate (ADAR) is still below 1 percent while the reproduction rate has slightly increased, but the Covid-19 cases are still low.

David cited that health crisis management and policies should be data-based driven in all aspects.

“Pag yung mga policies natin based on science at based on data, usually maganda talaga yung calibration ng ating response (If our policies will be based on science and based on data, usually will result to a good calibration of our response),” he said.



David is also optimistic that the next administration will continue the data-based driven approach of the government in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges posed by the global health crisis.

Meanwhile, David said the World Health Organization's warning of a possible surge might come true if the public will ignore the health protocols and refused to get vaccinated with Covid-19 primary doses and booster shots. **(PNA)**

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