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**DENR**

# NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



# MANILA BAY SPILL | Philippines may file charges against ship's owner for polluting Manila Bay

April 28, 2021 , 08:25 PM

(April 28, 2021) – The Philippines may file complaints against the ship's owner for the illegal discharge of liquid waste to Manila Bay over the weekend, an official from the environment department said on Wednesday.

Emil Neri, the owner of M/V Sarangani, which was moored near the Manila Yacht Club in Manila Bay, will face pollution charges after water samples taken from a liquid spill showed high level of oil, grease as well as fecal coliform, Undersecretary Jonas Leones said.

"Kapag ganon ang kulay ng discharge, confident kami na may violation but since we will be legally filing cases against the ship owner, we have to have strong evidence. Ito nga 'yung result ng water sample natin so we can now issue a notice of violation," Leones said.

Leones said the incident was not an oil spill but was still considered hazardous due to various forms of toxic waste.

"This includes not only yung oil sa engine but kasama na rin dito yung mga mantika, mga sebo na ginagamit doon sa yate," Leones told reporters.

"Di nila pwedeng i-claim ngayon na malinis 'yung engine nila because sa oil and grease kasama na 'yung waste na ginagamit sa ship."

Based on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) inquiry, the oil and grease effluent was about 19 milligram per liter which is higher than the standard set at 5 milligram per liter.

Fecal coliform was at 1,700 mpn per 100 milliliters. It should only be at 200 mpn. Ambient fecal form was pegged at 2,400 mpn per 100 milliliters, which exceeded the 100 mpn per 100 milliliter standard.

Leones said the findings strongly supported the administrative charges the government plans to file against Neri, who denied the ship's crew dumped waste into the sea.

He blamed the storm, which barely affected the capital, for the liquid spill.

Neri would be summoned within the week to explain his side during a technical conference meeting.

He could face administrative sanctions under the Clean Water Act, Marine Pollution Act, as well as the Fisheries Code for damaging the waterway.

A criminal complaint could also be filed if proven the crew intentionally dumped wastewater in Manila Bay, a clear violation of environmental laws.

Leones said the ship owner may also be asked to pay P10,000 up to P200,000 every day since the spill happened last weekend.

The violators would likewise be asked to clean the affected area of the bay covering around one kilometer.

Leones vowed to finish these processes within the week so they can file the charges before the Department of Justice next week.

*(Beatrice Puente/MM with reports from Shyla Francisco, News5)*

Source: <https://news.tv5.com.ph/top-stories/read/manila-bay-spill-philippines-may-file-charges-against-ships-owner-for-polluting-manila-bay?fbclid=IwAR2fODabl43D1yozi5Xqk0u38yNPJloQsdQjm9Sx7JfWIfcFAa8TI3sjqc>



# DENR, kinumpirmang langis at grasa ang itinapon ng isang barko sa Manila Bay

By [RadyoMaN Manila](#) -Apr. 28, 2021 at 2:52pm



Mag-iisyu na ng Notice of Violation ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa may-ari ng barko na nagtapon ng langis at grasa sa Manila Bay.

Ito'y matapos lumabas sa pagsusuri ng DENR na kontaminado ng langis at grasa ang water sample na kinuha sa lugar kung saan naka-angkla ang naturang barko.

Ayon kay Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones, hihingiin muna nila ang panig ng may-ari ng barko bago sila magsasampa ng kaso laban dito.

Una nang sinabi ng oiler ng barko na si Escolastico Bunyi, ilang buwan nang nakatengga ang barko sa lugar dahil nasiraan at kailangang maiayos.

Pero itinanggi niyang may kasamang langis at pinakawalang wastewater sila sa karagatan ng Manila Bay.

Ayon kay Usec. Leones, may langis man o wala, pwede pa ring managot ang may-ari ng barko sa paglabag sa Clean Water Act, na nagbabawal sa paglabas ng kahit anong puwedeng sanhi ng pagdumi ng tubig.



# Sebo at langis, nakita ng DENR sa water samples na itinapon ng yate sa Manila Bay

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Apr 28 2021 06:55 PM



MAYNILA - Napatunayang malangis, masebo at may mataas na fecal coliform level ang itinapong tubig ng isang yate sa Manila Bay, base sa resulta ng laboratory test sa water samples na lumabas ngayong Miyerkoles, ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Lumalabas na 19 milligrams per liter ang oil and grease ng itinapon na maduming tubig, kontra sa normal level na 5 milligrams per liter, sabi ng DENR.

Umaabot naman sa 1,700 MPN per 100 milligrams ang fecal coliform level nito, na malayo sa normal level na 200 MPN per 100 milligrams.

Sabi ni Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones, hindi lang ito grasa sa makina kundi pati na rin ang mga sebo o langis na ginagamit sa loob ng yate.



Maghahain na ng Notice of Violation ang DENR sa may-ari ng yate na si Emil Neri at iimbithan siya na magpaliwanag sa isang technical conference.

“Next week, after we have completed the process, magko-convene na yung Manila Bay task force. And they will be adjudicating the violations of the ship owner. And hopefully, they will be coming up with the appropriate sanctions, penalties and impositions of the fines against the ship owner,” paliwanag ni Leones.



Ilan rin daw sa mga nakikitang nilabag ni Neri ay ang Clean Water Act, Marine Pollution Decree at Fisheries Code.

Tumanggi munang magbigay ng pahayag si Neri at sinabing hinihintay pa niya ang kopya ng resulta ng laboratory test.

Samantala, babantayan na rin daw ng Philippine Coast Guard ang mga yate at barko na nasa labas ng 2.5 kilometro mula sa seawall ng Manila Bay, ayon sa opisyal.

Kasama na ring binabantayan ang Manila Yacht Club.

“We are monitoring the water quality dito sa yacht club. Itong yacht club, at Philippine Navy at Harbor Square, we are monitoring their outfalls. At may nakita kaming outfalls na nag-exceed ng ating standard, at na-issue-han na ito ng LLDA ng notice of violations,” aniya.

“We have also identified illegal pipes dito sa harbor square. We identified mga illegal outfalls. We are now scheduling the sealing of the illegal pipes.”

Nakiusap si Leones sa mga pribadong yate at barko na makipagtulungan sa DENR habang ginagawa pa ang beach nourishment project sa Manila Bay na inaasahang matatapos sa Hunyo o Hulyo.

**- April Raffles, ABS-CBN News**



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JUST IN | Positibo sa langis at mantika ang samples mula sa yate na naglalabas ng maladilaw na tubig sa Manila Bay, ayon sa DENR. Mataas din ang fecal coliform (bacteria na mula sa intestines ng warm-blooded animals) kumpara sa standard level. Mag-iissue na ng Notice of Violation sa may-ari ang ahensya. | via Shiya Francisco/esme tvko





UNTV News and Rescue

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lisyuhan ng notice of violation ng DENR ang may-ari ng barko na nagtapon ng langis at grasa sa Manila Bay.



YOUTUBE.COM

**Langis at grasa, kumpirmadong itinapon ng MV Sarangani sa Manila Bay**

lisyuhan ng notice of violation ng DENR ang may-ari ng barko na nagtapon ng langis at grasa ...

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### ISYU SA DOLOMITE BEACH

Ito ang sagot ni Manila Mayor Isko Moreno nang tanungin sa #TheChiefs ng ONE News kung kailangan bang i-realign ang budget ng beautification sa Manila Bay, na proyekto ng DENR.

**NEWS 5**

photo: NEDA

“  
Kung pera ko ‘yan, ire-realign ko ‘yan. I did it with FSP (Food Security Program).  
Well, kanya-kanya kami ng priority eh. They have different priorities. That’s their (DENR) project. **We’re just grateful that they’re beautifying it, cleaning it. Thank you very much.**  
”

**MAYOR ISKO MORENO**  
MANILA  
APRIL 26, 2021

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# P160,000 worth of bearded dragons seized in Manila

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:37 AM April 28, 2021

Wildlife law enforcers seized in Manila last week an estimated P160,000 worth of undocumented bearded dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*) while being transported to Cartimar Market in Pasay City. Authorities from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in coordination with Pandacan police, confiscated the juvenile bearded dragons from a minor at a checkpoint along Quirino Avenue on April 22. The minor, who was on a motorcycle, was ferrying the reptiles to Cartimar Market, a known trading hub for animals, including illegal wildlife. While the trade of bearded dragons is regulated, the minor failed to show any permit from the DENR. These animals are usually sold as pets. The reptiles were turned over to the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau for safekeeping.

—Jhesset O. Enano



This photo taken in July last year shows San Lazaro Hospitals employing a color coding system to distinguish different types of waste.

[Philstar.com](https://philstar.com)/Efigenio Christopher Toledo

## Hospitals urged to reduce plastic waste by seeking alternatives for non-essential items

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - April 27, 2021 - 3:03pm

MANILA, Philippines — A non-governmental organization suggested the use of more sustainable alternatives in medical centers after waste audits of five government hospitals in Metro Manila found the bulk of the plastic waste generated was non-essential.

The waste audits conducted by Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) showed that of the total waste materials generated, 50% were infectious, while 75% were plastic.

Of the total plastic waste, 57% was non-essential. Non-essential plastics refer to those used in activities not directly related to patient care such as food containers, bottles of water, plastic food wares and plastic utensils.

Meanwhile, a quarter of the plastic waste consisted of medical paraphernalia. Syringes are the most commonly used tool, comprising 65% of the total medical waste produced.

Personal protective equipment accounted for 18% of the total waste produced, with gloves as the most commonly used protective gear in the hospitals.

Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center, Lung Center of the Philippines, National Center for Mental Health, National Children's Hospital and Quirino Memorial Medical Center were included in the study.

The study focused on the waste generated in the hospitals' key areas: dietary department, emergency room, intensive care unit and medical ward.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the country generated more than 52,000 metric tons of medical waste from April 2020 to March 31, 2021. The figure was based on the special or online permits to transport issued by the department.

### Care for patients, environment

Dr. Imelda Mateo, medical chief of Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center, said the hospital's efforts at operational sustainability and proper waste management are "taking big hits from COVID-19."

"Prior to the pandemic, our hospital was already using reusable food containers and utensils in order to reduce plastic pollution but we reverted to disposables during the pandemic lockdown. Use of PPE sharply rose, too, and it meant more plastics and infectious waste being disposed of," she said.



HCWH urged healthcare institutions to prioritize shifting to reusable items, and determine and utilize sustainable alternative for single-use plastic products. Hospitals also need to improve their policies for waste segregation and management, and review guidelines for PPE use.

The group also recommended planning for safe, sustainable and non-burn disposal of COVID-19 vaccination waste.

“Hospitals shouldn’t be put in place where they need to decide one over the other. They should be able to do both: take care of their patients as well as take care of their environment,” said Paeng Lopez, HCWH’s Plastics in Healthcare coordinator.



# Increase In Hospital Waste Noted During The Pandemic



BY **CLAUDETH MOCON-CIRIACO** APRIL 29, 2021



The improper management of hospital waste can harm health-care workers (HCWs), patients, the general public and even the environment.

Hospital waste contains potentially harmful microorganisms which may cause infections. Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Southeast Asia and the Department of Health (DOH) conducted a waste audit during the pandemic lockdowns in five hospitals, namely, Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center (ARMM), Lung Center of the Philippines, National Center for Mental Health, National Children's Hospital, and Quirino Memorial Medical Center to determine the effects of Covid-19 on the quality and quantity of waste produced by health institutions.

According to Dr. Ma. Via Jucille M. Roderos, the Climate Reality Project Leader, said that based in their health-care waste audit, half of the waste produced in four of the five mentioned hospitals are "infectious."

The audit did not indicate total hospital waste but only the waste generated in four areas—Emergency Room, Dietary Department, Medical Ward, and Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Dr. Roderos said 50 percent of the total waste across all hospitals are infectious and that the average weight of waste produced by four surveyed areas is 226 kilograms per day in five hospitals. "Medical paraphernalia comprise of the 25 percent of the total items discarded in surveyed hospitals," Dr. Roderos said.

She said that syringes are the most commonly used medical paraphernalia comprising 65 percent of the total waste discarded and 16 percent of the total waste produced.

"Most of the plastic waste are non-essential single-use plastics comprising 57 percent of the total waste produced in the surveyed areas," she said.

Plastic food containers comprise 23 percent of the total waste collected in the five hospitals.

## Hospital Waste Increase

Dr. Imelda Mateo, medical director of ARMM, observed that their collection of hospital waste increased during the pandemic.

From January to December 2019, Dr. Mateo said that the waste collected in their four areas was 209,298 kgs. From the same period in 2020, it was recorded at 294,734 kgs; and 132,772 kgs from January to present.



“This shows that there is a significant increase in the production of hazardous plastics due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” Dr. Mateo said.

Dr. Roderos also stressed that there is a noted increase in the use of personal protective equipment (PPEs) in each hospital due to the current situation that the country is battling Covid-19.

“We estimate[d] around 10 to 20 percent increase of PPEs waste alone,” she added noting that commonly used medical paraphernalia are syringes “and this has an implication in terms of our vaccine rollout.”

“But it can also harm the environment in a way. Before the rollout of the vaccines most of the medical paraphernalia used in the hospitals alone are syringes,” she said.

### **Cigarette And E-Cigarette Waste**

Just like hospital waste, HealthJustice Philippines, a non-profit organization, also warned that cigarette and e-cigarette waste will end up harming the health of the people and the environment.

HealthJustice stressed that everyone deserves to breathe clean air and called on the public to exercise utmost environmental responsibility and refrain from littering and smoking.

Former Health Secretary Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, HealthJustice Philippines Board Member, said that as Earth Day 2021, an annual event celebrated globally to support environmental protection, was observed on April 22, people should be reminded of the negative impact of littering on the environment and human health.

“Not only do we need to achieve a healthy environment but a smoke-free environment as well and prevent the common practice of littering cigarette butts,” said Dr. Tan.

He lamented that smoking has a pernicious effect. HealthJustice has been pushing for effective tobacco control measures in the Philippines.

Dr. Tan said people tend to throw litter anywhere without minding the environmental consequences.

According to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the most common litter are cigarette butts, plastic bags, plastic bottles, paper and plastic food wrappers, polystyrene containers, food leftovers, and papers.

Of the litter the agency collected, there were 2,957 pieces of cigarette butts in 2020 while 1,765 pieces were recorded from January to April 18 this year.

This made environmentalist Anya Mendoza frown as littering should not be tolerated and not be taken lightly for it may also lead to disease.

“They should understand that littering can be avoided. It is high time that people start contributing contribute by protecting the environment,” Mendoza of the Climate Change Network for Community-based Initiatives Inc. said, stressing that the public should know how their actions in their daily life greatly affect the environment.

### **Dangers To The Environment**

America’s largest nonprofit public health organization Truth Initiative also underscored the need to dispose of e-cigarette and cigarette waste properly.



If e-cigarette and cigarette waste make their way to the environment they end up “polluting water, air, and land with toxic chemicals, heavy metals and residual nicotine.”

The group’s fact sheet also showed that cigarette filters are made from cellulose acetate, a plastic which only degrades under severe biological circumstances, such as when filters collect in sewage.

Under optimal conditions, it can take at least nine months for a cigarette butt to degrade. The sun may break cigarette butts down, but only into smaller pieces of waste which dilute into water/soil. Unlike cigarette butts, e-cigarette waste, on the other hand, “cannot biodegrade even under severe conditions.”

E-cigarette cartridges that are discarded on streets get mixed with leaf litter and get pushed around by the weather, the group stressed. This will eventually break down into microplastics and chemicals that flow into storm drains to pollute waterways and wildlife.

Data from the Truth Initiative further showed that cigarette and e-cigarette waste can pollute soil, beaches and waterways.

Studies have also shown that cigarette and e-cigarette waste is harmful to wildlife.



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### Medical waste sa Pilipinas, dumami sa gitna ng pandemic

#TedFailonandDJChaCha | Hinihikayat ng isang grupo ang mga ospital na bawasan ang plastic waste sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng environment-friendly na materyal para sa non-essential items.

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# ARTA spearheads dialogue with other gov't agencies for Kaliwa Dam project

By ARTA Published on April 28, 2021



MANILA, Apr. 28 -- With its continuous commitment to streamline government processes, the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) facilitated on Monday a virtual meeting to address issues and concerns on and push for the Kaliwa Dam Project.

ARTA Director General Jeremiah Belgica led the talks attended by Presidential Adviser on Flagship Programs and Projects and Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) President and CEO Vivencio Dizon and other officials from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

"This is a presidential commitment. ARTA is not just here to facilitate pero meron kaming investigative and enforcement powers to initiate actions pag merong activities na deliberate [ang red tape]," DG Belgica said.

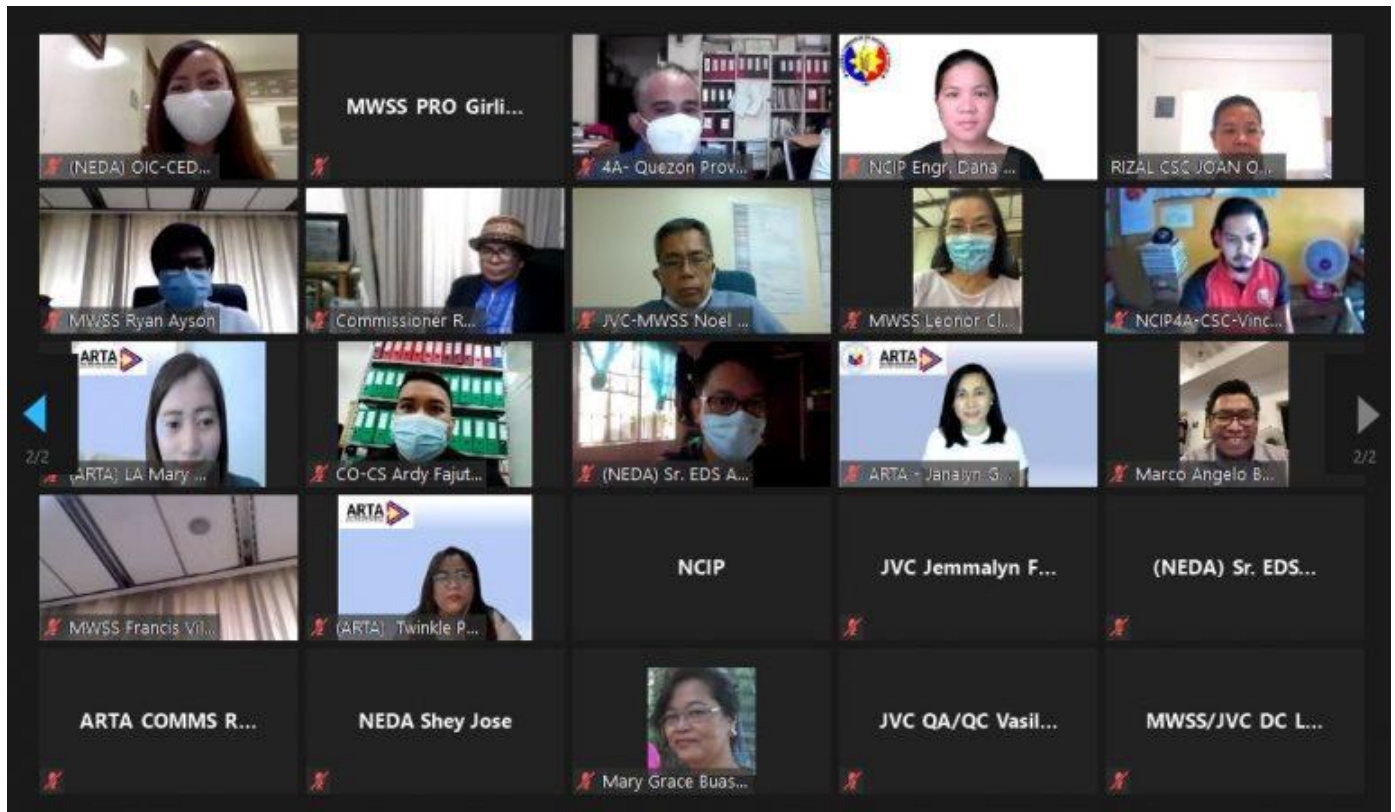
Postponements due to opposition from residents of the affected areas and delays on the issuance of the necessary permits halted the construction of the dam, which was initially scheduled to begin last November 2019 and end in June 2025.

ARTA is calling on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and NCIP to fast track the processing of necessary permits to get the project started, citing provisions under the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) and Bayanihan 2 laws.

In Republic Act No. 11519 or the "Bayanihan to Recover as One" Act, all permits, licenses, clearances and registration requirements are waived for one (1) year except for environmental, health and occupational safety permits, which should be issued within seven (7) working days.

"If you will harmonize that with the current EODB Law, then it is automatically approved by operation of law because they are only given seven (7) days," DG Belgica stressed.





Secretary Dizon, meanwhile, expressed how valuable the Kaliwa Dam Project would be.

“I cannot overemphasize the importance of this project under [the] Build, Build, Build [program] ni Presidente. Talagang gusto niyang masimulan ito for the water security sa Metro Manila,” the Presidential Adviser on Flagship Programs and Projects said.

According to MWSS chief Reynaldo Velasco, the last dam built to supply water in the country was way back in 1968.

Through the Kaliwa Dam Project or the New Centennial Water Supply Project, the increasing water demand of residents in Metro Manila and nearby provinces in the east side is seen to be served by constructing a 60-meter high dam in General Nakar and Infanta in Quezon Province and a tunnel in Tanay, Rizal enabling a water supply of at least 600 million liters per day.

As a conclusion, all parties committed and agreed to accomplish the necessary permits, including those coming from NCIP, in May two months before the President’s last State of the Nation Address.

ARTA also suggested for a weekly meeting to keep track of the progress related to the implementation of Kaliwa Dam Project. (ARTA)



# 'Go for gold': Mining revival to spur economic recovery

Published April 29, 2021, 12:12 AM

by [Manila Bulletin](#)



After shepherding the enactment of new laws that would spur economic recovery, the Duterte administration lifted a nine-year moratorium on new mining projects with the recent issuance of Executive Order Number 130.

EO No. 130 repealed Section 4 of EO No. 79 issued by then President Benigno Aquino III that prohibits the grant of mineral agreements “until a new legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect.”

The repealed regulation now reads as follows: “The government may enter into new mineral agreements, subject to compliance with (the) Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and other applicable laws, rules, and regulation.”

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines noted that new mining projects that will come on stream will “provide additional government revenues in the form of taxes and fees, royalty fees, and increase in export value, as well as employment opportunities for thousands of Filipinos, especially those in rural areas.”

In a 2019 study, think tank Stratbase ADR Institute said that “a 2016 list of just 11 pending mining projects [in the Philippines] was estimated to total over \$23 billion in capital investments.” In contrast, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported that total foreign direct investment from January to November 2018 totaled only \$9.06 billion.

Latest official data indicate that the mining industry contributes only 0.85 percent, or P134.5 billion, to the country’s total gross domestic product (GDP). This is despite the fact the country’s mineral resources have an estimated value of around \$1.4 trillion.

Administration critics point out that since 2016, the Duterte administration has fully evolved from a strong pro-environment stance that was led by its first Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Gina Lopez. During her 10-month stewardship of the DENR, she “shut down or suspended 26 mines that failed to pass environmental audits, cancelled approval of 75 proposed mines, and banned new open-pit metal mines.” She left office after Congress did not confirm her appointment.

Meantime, the government has doubled the excise tax on minerals, mineral products, and quarry resources from two percent to four percent thereby addressing the concern in EO No. 79 regarding the need for a review of revenue-sharing schemes.



Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), a coalition of anti-mining groups warns: “Lifting the moratorium exposes this administration’s support for mining projects that will impact our water, food supply, forest, biodiversity, indigenous communities and fragile island ecosystems.”

With only 14 months left before the end of its tenure next year, will the Duterte administration prove its detractors wrong? Clearly, it has prioritized economic recovery as it struggles to contain a raging pandemic.



# Illegally cut lumber seized in Lanao Sur

By Edwin Fernandez April 28, 2021, 12:37 pm



**SEIZED WOOD CARGO.** The illegally cut forest products confiscated on Tuesday (April 27, 2021) in Lumba Bayabao, Lanao del Sur in the custody of the town's police office. The seized wood products have an estimated cost of PHP50,000. *(Photos courtesy of MENRE-BARMM)*

**COTABATO CITY** – Police and forest rangers seized illegally cut hardwood forest products in Lanao del Sur, the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MENRE-BARMM) here said Wednesday.

MENRE-BARMM Minister Abdulraof Macacua said a report he received from the MENRE provincial office in Lanao del Sur showed the recovery of 2,000 board feet or 4.72 cubic meters of Lauan lumber in Barangay Macaguiling, Lumba Bayabao municipality on Tuesday afternoon.

The forest products were valued at PHP50,000.

The forest products were loaded on a truck, which was flagged down by police and forest guards along the national highway in Macaguiling village.

Maj. Josue Delos Reyes, Lumba Bayabao police chief, identified the owner of the poached Lauan lumber load as Hadji Abdullah Mohaimen Hadji Salic of the same municipality.

In his report, environment officer Asnawi Dataman said Salic could not provide permits from the environment provincial office to cut and transport wood products, making the cargo illegal.

"We issued apprehension receipt upon assessment and filed a legal complaint against the identified owner at the Lanao Sur Provincial Prosecutors Office," Dataman added.

Two days earlier, environment field personnel also seized Lauan and other lumber in Barangay Gadongan, Ditsaan-Ramain municipality.

A total log ban is still in effect in the entire BARMM that covers the cities of Cotabato, Marawi, and Lamitan; the provinces of Maguindanao, Sulu, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi; and the 63 villages in six towns of North Cotabato. *(PNA)*



## Fire razes trees in Don Salvador Benedicto



DON SALVADOR BENEDICTO. Fire razes about half a hectare of pioneering trees and grasses in Don Salvador Benedicto. (Cenro photo)

[TERESA D. ELLERA](#)

April 28, 2021

ABOUT half a hectare of trees including some pioneering ones and grasses were burned in a forest fire along the highway in Spur 21, Barangay Kumaliskis, Don Salvador Benedicto about noon Wednesday, April 28, 2021.

Engineer Joan Nathaniel Gerangaya, community environment and natural resources officer and park superintendent of North Negros Natural Park, told Sunstar-Bacolod that damage was about half a hectare that included acacia mangium and other pioneering species but most burnt were grasses at the roadside.

Gerangaya said they are assessing the extent of fire damage, including the cause of the fire.

Police Captain Eugene Tolentino, chief of police of Don Salvador Benedicto Police Station, said they were informed of the fire around 12 and that the Bureau of Fire Protection immediately responded to the fire call.



## NGO approaches tree planting with economic incentives

[IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#) April 28, 2021

TREE planting has always been a practical way to combat climate change as, through the natural process of photosynthesis, trees absorb carbon dioxide in the air, as well as other pollutant particulates and in the process produce oxygen.

Different sectors and non-government organizations (NGOs) alike have been doing tree planting activities, most of which with misguided objectives and sometimes devote far less attention towards monitoring the growth and the development of the young trees planted through these tree planting activities.

Some groups plant trees and abandon these to the elements. There are fewer tree-planting activities that actually involve a long term care and monitoring plan of newly planted tree stocks.

With all these in mind, the Kapampangan Development Foundation (KDF), a non-government organization based in Central Luzon, has come up with a better and sustainable, as well as financially rewarding approach towards tree planting.

Now, farmers and even ordinary backyard owners can engage in tree planting and earn money in the long run while helping reduce the effects of climate change. But the difference is that KDF demands commitment with its partners to really take care of their trees.

### **1 Million Fruit Tree project**

KDF with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are now responding to the need for alternative livelihood and a more beneficial way of combating climate change through its "1 Million Fruit Tree Project" for Central Luzon.

KDF had initially started distribution of seedlings and had started the formation of nursery stations that have since produced 100,000 certified fruit seedlings. Certified seedlings are preferred in terms of their yield quality.

Their selling point is that farmers can fully maximize the use of their farms by intercropping fruit trees with other high-value crops. This means that while farmers are helping in the initiative to reduce carbon emissions, they are also helping themselves and their farmlands to become more productive. It is tree planting, commercial farming and environmental protection all rolled into one.

KDF President Benigno Ricafort said the planting of a million fruit trees is a 10-year project and seen as a sustainable agricultural initiative for Central Luzon communities and an effective climate change initiative.

It is said that a tree absorbs as much as 48 pounds of carbon dioxide every year. This meant that one ton of carbon dioxide would have been sequestered by a tree by the time it is 40-years-old. If KDF and its partners succeeded in the planting of one million fruit trees in ten years, these trees would have absorbed 48,000,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year thereafter. Even if only half of the target would have been planted, it would still mean some 24,000,000 pounds of carbon dioxide will be removed from the atmosphere.

Ricafort said the fruit tree project classifies fruit tree distribution according to area. The group is targeting 300,000 for carabao mangoes, 100,000 for rambutan and 100,000 for longkong (a Thailand variety of lansones) in various areas of Central Luzon.

KDF sees the program also as a long-term sustainable development for the agriculture sector here and to develop lands for better agriculture production. The program also aims to establish market support systems for the selling and marketing of the products as well as the public-private-partnership (PPP) models to be utilized.



## Climate change resilience

Under the One Million Fruit Tree Project, farmers are urged to use intercropping methods to maximize production. The trees serve a good purpose for the farms, too, aside from filtering air pollution; their root systems are rooted in the soil which helps reduce stormwater runoff.

While farmers are growing their crops and these also absorb carbon dioxide, the newly planted trees take more carbon out of the atmosphere in a longer period. The tree-based intercropping method has also been recommended by the DA as it has been proven effective in mitigating negative environmental impacts from intensive agriculture such as nutrient leaching and greenhouse gas emissions.

KDF Trustee Sylvia Ordonez said tree planting on such a massive scale would greatly impact Central Luzon.

"It is our farmers who suffer when typhoons visit us. During good weather, the average income per hectare is 50,000 per year or 25,000 per cropping," Ordonez said.

Ordonez added that farmers in Central Luzon should be given other options for the use of their lands where they can earn more, such as planting high value crops.

"Alternatively, if we want to encourage them to carry the role of feeding us, government should help them with better climate change resilient technologies and social protection when hit by bad weather," Ordonez said.

KDF, in partnership with the Philippine Coconut Authority and DA-Central Luzon, has also started to plant one million coconuts and inter-crop them with high-value crops like cacao, lanzones, rambutan, durian, achete, tamarind, etc.

Cacao alone gives a farmer additional P150,000 income to what can be earned from one hectare of coconut.

KDF and the PCA have free coconut seedlings for Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Bataan, Zambales farmers as alternative crops for idle lands and backyards.

Another approach to the program is that it encourages backyard owners to plant high-value trees in their vicinity. This ensures that trees planted are tended since backyard owners could see the immediate benefit of growing fruit trees.

Under such an approach, more trees will be introduced in urban areas where they can better sequester carbon emissions. Families in turn would have access to high-value backyard fruits that have long been out of the daily diet of most Filipino families in the urban areas.

However, all these would require time and no small amount of effort for all those who join the program. But for KDF and its other partners in the program, it would not be long now before farmers and backyard owners realize that money indeed grows on trees and that their effort in planting fruit trees has contributed to the global effort against climate change.

Source: <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1893075/Pampanga/Local-News/NGO-approaches-tree-planting-with-economic-incentives>



## Earth Day clean-up drive, tree-planting

By Leander C. Domingo, TMT

April 29, 2021

CLEAN-UP drive and tree-planting were among the activities of SN Aboitiz Power (SNAP) surrounding the hydroelectric power plants in Isabela and Benguet in celebrating Earth Day 2021 with the theme “Restore Our Earth.” On April 22, a total of only 49 volunteers mostly on lockdown duty, contractors and local workers/residents of Magat, Ambuklao and Binga hydroelectric power plant facilities participated also by the members of the Philippine National Police. SNAP said around 250 kilograms of mixed wastes were collected at the Magat crest in Isabela, along the Agno River Estero below the Binga powerhouse in Benguet, and other areas surrounding SNAP facilities. Volunteers capped the day with tree-planting and gardening activities as a commemoration of Earth Day 2021.





# Earth Day essentials and wishes

Published April 28, 2021, 10:12 PM

by [John Tria](#)

A belated Happy Earth Day to all of you. As I sip my cup of locally grown coffee I will start with this greeting to inspire all of us to continue to strive for a better earth, which is essentially, a stronger future.

In a previous column i noted just how our climate has been changing and the call to ensure our adaptation to these changes especially in our agriculture and agribusiness

Strong economies will in part be built on stable and healthy ecosystems as pushed by both the DENR and the Climate Change Commission. Pollution is an aberration that weakens the ecosystems ability to support life, such as local food supply particularly for the vulnerable sectors, many of whom depend on nearby local resources for food and livelihood.

This is why technology will need to be engaged and behaviors will need to change, particularly in the way we manage our household waste, and pollution laws such as the Clean Air Act of 1999, the Clean Water Act of 2001, the Solid Waste Management Act and the Toxic Substances and Nuclear waste control act or RA 6969.

These 4 laws, in my opinion, are comprehensive in their approach to ensuring the health of our ecosystems, not merely putting forward a list of prohibited acts. Learn more about these laws and their respective Implementing Rules and Regulations at [www.emb.gov.ph](http://www.emb.gov.ph).

We all need to obtain an attitude of stewardship over the resources we utilize, to ensure that we will continue using them in the next generation.

## ***Build Build Build !***

Fellow columnist Ana Mae Lamentillos column is a very informative listing of the various build build projects in northern Mindanao. (<https://mb.com.ph/2021/04/23/10-build-build-build-projects-in-northern-mindanao/>)

These infrastructure projects, which include vital bypass roads will definitely boost economic activity in this important corridor between the Caraga and northern Mindanao regions where many large manufacturing facilities are located to serve the visayas and Mindanao markets. This also improves access of the BARMM economy.

With infrastructure comes stronger connectivity between the Visayas and Mindanao's economic hubs, strengthening and expanding opportunities especially for many investors and Mindanaoans who want to come home to the island. This will be vital in the post pandemic scenario.

## ***Kudos to the chip developers from Iligan***

Recent news of the development of a locally made power saving microchip in the Mindanao State University Iligan Institute of Technology is inspiring news. This is supported by the Department of Science and Technology's PCIEERD. I believe our manufacturers should take notice of such developments as we pursue innovations under the Innovation Act.

## ***How are your bastoneros?***

One of the things government is pushing is to appoint COVID 19 "bastoneros" that will help ensure compliance with COVID 19 protocols in the workplace. I suggest these be maintained even in the post pandemic scenario to encourage employees to adopt healthy lifestyles and strengthen immunity from disease not only for themselves and their families.



### *Congrats Sec Chua*

I would like to congratulate new NEDA Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua. His knowledge of the Mindanao economy has been honed through the years due to comprehensive research endeavors he led in the past particularly the Mindanao jobs report.

As I wrote previously, I agree that the National ID system being pushed by the NEDA is a key reform that will allow more families not only to access government services but also improve our bank savings rate.

As I continue to sip my coffee, the need to ensure our immunity and health as we recover is clear. Stay safe everyone!

[Facebook.com/johntriapage](https://www.facebook.com/johntriapage)



# Saving The Seas From Plastic Pollution

 **BYDENNIS GORECHO** APRIL 28, 2021



**Dennis Gorecho**

## **Pinoy Marino Rights**

The video of a marine biologist removing a plastic straw stuck in a sea turtle's nose in August 2015 catalyzed a larger movement to eliminate single-use plastics, like plastic straws, from our day-to-day lives.

Marine litter, specifically plastic pollution, was discussed as part of Earth Day celebration during the recent episodes of Amigos Marino weekly online show by Von Hernandez of Break Free From Plastic movement and Chief Mate Aries Damian of Mariners Polytechnic Colleges of Bicol.

Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded directly or indirectly into the sea, rivers or on beaches.

Marine litter poses threats to human health, food security, economy and environment, including degradation of marine and coastal habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity.

A major source of pollution are single-use disposable plastics that come in various forms such as straws, sachet packs, bags, cutleries, cups, and plastic bottles that are meant to be used only once, before being thrown away.

If there are no drastic interventions, by 2050 there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean. Plastic bags take 10-20 years to decompose, while plastic bottles take 450 years.

These items tend to shrink into smaller pieces (called microplastics), which never achieve full decomposition and return to the food cycle through ingestion by fish and other animals as "false food," causing digestive failure, suffocation, starvation, drowning and eventually death. Some animals become fatalities due to entanglement.

The Philippines, which disposes 2.7 million tons of plastics per year, is considered the third-largest global contributor to the 8 million tons of plastics that are estimated to flood our oceans each year.

More than 163 million plastic sachet packets, as well as 48 million shopping bags and 45 million thin-film bags are used and disposed of daily in the country.

The more visible manifestations of the problem due to single-use plastics include the clogging up of waterways, drainage systems, and therefore contributing to floods.

Hernandez echoed the call of environmental groups for the passage of a comprehensive Single-Use Plastic Ban as an essential policy tool to stop plastic pollution by shifting corporate dependence on throwaway packaging models to more sustainable reuse and refill systems.

They seek to apply pressure throughout each step along the plastic supply chain, from production to disposal.



Single-use plastic is not a clean-up problem but a pollution problem, Hernandez stressed, adding that the only way to prevent it is to stop its production and avoid using them in the first place.

This means looking at plastic at the different stages of the life-cycle, and not just treating it as a waste management or consumer responsibility issue, which is what the plastic industry wants.

Looking at it that way, Hernandez added, takes the industry off the hook and allows it to continue producing even more plastics.

On the other hand, CM Damian noted that the Annex V regulations of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), as first drafted in 1973 and amended in 1978, address marine pollution including handling of garbage from ships.

MARPOL seeks to ensure that the marine environment is preserved by the elimination of pollution by all harmful substance that can be discharged from the ship.

Annex V, which came into force on December 31, 1988, expressly prohibits all ships from discharging garbage, which includes all kinds of food, domestic and operational waste, all plastics, cargo residues, incinerator ashes, cooking oil, fishing gear, and animal carcasses generated during the normal operation of the ship and liable to be disposed of continuously or periodically.

The most important feature of the Annex is the complete ban imposed on the disposal into the sea of all forms of plastics, including but not limited to synthetic ropes, synthetic fishing nets, plastic garbage bags and incinerator ashes from plastic products, which may contain toxic or heavy metal residues.

It specifies the distances from land in which materials may be disposed of and subdivides different types of garbage and marine debris.

The requirements are much stricter in a number of "special areas."

There must be a garbage management plan which is a complete guideline that comprises of a written procedure for collecting, storing, processing, and disposing of garbage generated onboard ship.

Vessels are obliged to deposit plastic waste at reception facilities ashore as port state signatories are required to provide adequate and appropriate reception facilities.

*Atty. Gorecho heads the seafarers' division of the Sapalo Velez Bundang Bulilan law offices. For comments, e-mail [info@sapalovelez.com](mailto:info@sapalovelez.com), or call 0917-5025808 or 0908-8665786.*



GMA News

8h · 🌐

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LOOK: At home na at home na sa kalikasan si Tagyaman Fernando, ang rescued Philippine Eagle na pinakawalan kamakailan. ❤️

Ayon sa Philippine Eagle Foundation, nakitang naninirahan na si Tagyaman sa Mt. Malimomo sa Manobo Tigwahanon ancestral forests. (📷: PEF)

Bisitahin ang [www.gmanews.tv](http://www.gmanews.tv) para sa pinakabagong mga balita.



👍❤️ Noe Lyn and 7.3K others

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Mga kuha sa Philippine eagle na si Tagyaman Fernando na namumuhay na sa paligid ng Mt. Malimomo. Kailan lang ay pinakawalan siya ng volunteers mula sa Philippine Eagle Foundation kasabay ng #Earthday2021.

Masugid ding binabantayan ang agila ng apat na Malimomo Bantay Gubat volunteers, kasama ang PEF biologist na si Tristan Senarillos ang technician na si Algen Agua.

RELATED POST: <https://bit.ly/3dZPdTL>

📌: Philippine Eagle Foundation



👍❤️ 1.1K

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# Duterte extends MECQ in 'NCR Plus' to May 14

(Philstar.com) - April 28, 2021 - 9:35pm

MANILA, Philippines – Metro Manila and its four nearby provinces will remain under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine until mid-May, President Rodrigo Duterte announced.

'NCR Plus' shifted to MECQ in mid-April after spending two weeks in ECQ, or the strictest quarantine classification. It came as government wrestled with a surge in COVID-19 cases that has continued at present.

In his weekly public address, Duterte said MECQ will be retained in the quarantine bubble until May 14.

"We have breached the million mark and it does not really surprise me," he said, referring to those not following health protocols. "There will always be a rise at an exponential rise of COVID-19 cases if you don't follow the law."

Experts in recent weeks noted a decrease in daily new COVID-19 cases in Metro Manila. They warned, however, that prematurely easing curbs could set the country off worse as hospitals remain full.

Santiago City in Isabela province, as well as the provinces of Quirino and Abra will also be under MECQ for the entire month.

The following areas, meanwhile, will be under GCQ: Apayao, Baguio City, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Batangas, Quezon, Tacloban City in Leyte, Iligan City in Northern Mindanao and Davao City.

Duterte said the rest of the Philippines will be under modified GCQ. Luzon and the Western Visayas and Zamboanga Peninsula regions were also classified as "high-risk areas."

Metro Manila mayors earlier today agreed to shorten curfew hours to 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. beginning May 1.

They also proposed a "flexible" MECQ, where more businesses will be allowed to resume work while keeping border control and strict health protocols. There was no mention of this so far in Duterte's address.

Philippine coronavirus cases reached a million on April 26, more than a year since the pandemic hit the country. On Wednesday, the number of Filipinos dead from the disease also climbed beyond 17,000.

Health officials have reported relatively fewer additional cases this week, but have sought to clarify that this was due to fewer laboratories submitting data, or a lesser number samples being tested.







The resolution was approved on April 27.

Meanwhile, MMDA chairman Benhur Abalos said the Metro Manila Council would defer to the decision of the President when it comes to the new quarantine status for next month.

"The MMC just recommends to the IATF," he said. "Hence, it is within the purview of President Rodrigo Duterte to decide on the next NCR status."

On Tuesday, mayors [recommended](#) a "flexible modified enhanced community quarantine" over their cities, a middle ground where border control will remain, health protocols are strict, and some businesses will be allowed to operate, like those in construction and personal hygiene services.

In the statement, Abalos revealed this option was proposed by Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire.

"Hybrid MECQ is intended to allay the fear of health workers for a possible surge again," Abalos said. "That's why we want to do it gradually. By opening some businesses, we are also addressing the dilemma and hunger of those who lost their jobs."

Abalos also said mayors did not want to waste the gains of the previous ECQ and MECQ and hope to sustain these by "continued unified efforts."

The mayors' suggestions were forwarded to the Inter-Agency Task Force for pandemic response, which will make an official recommendation to President Rodrigo Duterte.

The President is expected to announce a decision on the next quarantine status during his public address on Wednesday.



## Lawmakers, DND nix China WPS importunity

Published 5 hours ago on April 29, 2021 12:20 AM By [Sundy Locus](#) @tribunephlsndy



Lawmakers on Wednesday denounced China's demand to stop Philippine maritime activities in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) while its militia boats continue to hound Filipino fishermen within the country's own exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Members of the Senate defended the country's sovereignty by blaming China's "destructive activities" in the WPS features, including the construction of military facilities, as causes of "destabilization" in the region.

"It is China building military outposts in the WPS (that's) destabilizing the region. (They're) expanding their presence using militia boats," Senator Ralph Recto said.

"The government should work with our allies and contain China's growing military presence in the WPS (that is) encroaching on our exclusive economic zone. Furthermore, the government should do more in protecting our fishermen in the area," he added.

Senator Risa Hontiveros, meanwhile, reiterated that it's China that's disrespecting Philippine sovereignty.

"If China truly wants respect, she should stop twisting and contesting the basic principles of international law. Just accept the hard truth: The West Philippine Sea belongs to us, not to you (China)," she said in a statement.

"If China sincerely wants to avoid escalation, it should pull back her navy and maritime militia. China can't even respect freedom of navigation on the high seas, and now she wants respect for her unfounded nine-dash line," she added.

On Sunday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged the Philippines to "respect" his country's jurisdiction over the area and to "stop actions complicating the situation and escalating disputes" — a move Senate Minority Leader Frank Drilon described as a "total disregard of the arbitral award that invalidated China's claims".

The Philippines has repeatedly raised its 2016 victory at The Hague in defending its claim in the contested territory. China considered it "null and void".

"China enjoys sovereignty over Nansha Islands including Zhongye Island and Zhongsha Islands, including Huangyan Island and their adjacent waters, and exercises jurisdiction in relevant waters. We urge the relevant side (Philippines) to respect China's sovereignty and rights and interests, and stop actions complicating the situation and escalating disputes," Wang said.

Senator Richard Gordon reacted to Wang's statement by calling for an increase in Coast Guard patrols and naval monitoring of the WPS and along the country's EEZ.

"The Chinese statement is patently erroneous as it is based on its discredited nine-dash line claim. That claim has been rejected by the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration!" Gordon exclaimed. "China calls for respect but its aggressive actions do not match, do not deserve its call for respect."



Likewise, House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez urged China to withdraw all its military and civilian vessels from the WPS.

“That statement is ridiculous. That area is part of our 200-mile EEZ under the United Nations Law of the Sea and the ruling of the UN arbitral court. We have every right to patrol it, conduct drills there, and explore it for its fishery and other natural resources. They’re taking tons and tons of fish and destroying the environment there,” he said.

Rodriguez said China should not be in the WPS “because that is not part of its EEZ”.

“They (Chinese) should leave the WPS. They’re the interloper,” he stressed as he explained that WPS is about 600 miles away from China.

“In contrast, up north Scarborough Shoal or Bajo de Masinloc to Filipino fishermen is just 120 miles off the coast of Zambales and Pangasinan. They (Chinese) are in control of it despite the fact that it is within our EEZ,” he said.

The House leader explained that down south, Julian Felipe Reef, which is 175 miles from Bataraza, Palawan, where they still maintain presence despite our repeated protests is also part of the EEZ.

The Department of National Defense also slammed China for the spokesperson’s remark.

“(It has) no authority nor legal basis to prevent us from conducting these exercises within the WPS. That is ours,” Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

The National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) also reiterated that patrols in the country’s western EEZ will be continued and enhanced.

The European Union (EU) recently called out China for “endangering” the peace and stability in the region by the recent presence of its fleets in the WPS.

It expressed strong opposition to any “unilateral actions that could undermine regional stability and the international rules-based order” while urging the parties to solve the dispute through international laws.

The Chinese Mission to the EU shot back at the foreign body’s claim, insisting that the ships in the reef were merely fishing vessels taking shelter from the weather. It added that China’s sovereignty, rights, and interests in the South China Sea were formed in the “long course of history and is consistent with international law”.

China rejected the 2016 tribunal ruling as “null and void”.

“In recent years, countries in the region and beyond have seen clearly that the destabilizing factors and security risks in the South China Sea mainly come from outside the region,” it said in a statement.

“The South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) should not become a tool for certain countries to contain and suppress China, still less a wrestling ground for major-power rivalry. China urges the EU side to respect the efforts of countries in the region in properly addressing differences and maintaining stability in the South China Sea, and stop sowing discord,” it added. **(With Michelle Guillang)**

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/04/29/lawmakers-dnd-nix-china-wps-importunity/>



# GLOBAL WARMING | Urgent methane cuts needed to rein in climate change, says UN

April 28, 2021 , 09:05 AM

GENEVA/BRUSSELS (Reuters) – Deep cuts in methane emissions, including from the fossil fuel industry, are urgently needed to slow the rate of global warming and keep it beneath a threshold agreed by world leaders, according to a U.N. report due to be released next week.

Governments are increasingly looking at methane emissions as they seek solutions to cap warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the target nearly 200 countries agreed to under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

Methane has a much higher heat-trapping potential compared with carbon dioxide and it breaks down in the atmosphere much more quickly than CO<sub>2</sub>, meaning cutting methane emissions can have a climate impact sooner.

“Urgent steps must be taken to reduce methane emissions this decade,” according to a summary of the Global Methane Assessment, seen by Reuters ahead of its publication by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Climate & Clean Air Coalition next week.

The report summary, whose findings were first published by The New York Times, includes contributions from more than 20 scientists and experts.

It said currently available measures could reduce human-caused methane emissions by up to 45%, or 180 million tonnes a year by 2030. That would avoid nearly 0.3 degree Celsius of global warming by the 2040s, it said.

“There’s no chance whatsoever to meet our climate targets if we don’t deal with the methane emissions that this report highlights,” said Jonathan Banks, international director for methane at the non-profit Clean Air Task Force, which is part of the organisation that released the report but did not author it.

“Methane provides an opportunity for a win on climate change in the very near term,” he said.

The report said the fossil fuel sector has the biggest potential to slash methane emissions this decade. Fossil fuels account for 35% of human-caused methane emissions, while agriculture contributes 40% and waste such as landfills accounts for 20%, it said.

The study comes as the European Union and United States are both drafting their own regulations to tackle methane emissions, due to be unveiled later this year as they strive to meet new domestic targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The U.S. Senate will this week vote on legislation to reverse Trump-era rollbacks of methane rules.

Methane concentrations in the atmosphere surged last year in spite of the pandemic, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said earlier this month.

*Additional reporting by Valerie Volcovici in Washington; Editing by Dan Grebler*

Source: [https://news.tv5.com.ph/breaking/read/global-warming-urgent-methane-cuts-needed-to-rein-in-climate-change-says-un?fbclid=IwAR2J-loUj8GdtsI7TEV0uAyRLaf\\_CHiWodghXPs5HsXL\\_TgRYPlgwsSTnpI](https://news.tv5.com.ph/breaking/read/global-warming-urgent-methane-cuts-needed-to-rein-in-climate-change-says-un?fbclid=IwAR2J-loUj8GdtsI7TEV0uAyRLaf_CHiWodghXPs5HsXL_TgRYPlgwsSTnpI)



# Scientists find way to remove polluting microplastics with bacteria

**Sticky property of bacteria used to create microbe nets that can capture microplastics in water to form a recyclable blob**



Microplastics and organic matter float in water inside a container at Manly Cove Beach in Sydney, Australia. Photograph: James Redmayne/Reuters

*Sofia Quaglia*

Wed 28 Apr 2021 08.00 BST

Microbiologists have devised a sustainable way to remove polluting microplastics from the environment – and they want to use bacteria to do the job.

Bacteria naturally tend to group together and stick to surfaces, and this creates an adhesive substance called “biofilm” – we see it every morning when brushing our teeth and getting rid of dental plaque, for example. Researchers at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) want to use this sticky bacteria property and create tape-like microbe nets that can capture microplastics in polluted water to form an easily disposable and recyclable blob.

Although these findings, [presented on Wednesday at the Microbiology Society’s annual conference](#), are still preliminary, this invention could pave the way for sustainably lowering plastic pollution levels in the long run by simply using something found in nature.

“It is imperative to develop effective solutions that trap, collect, and even recycle these microplastics to stop the ‘plastification’ of our natural environments,” said [Sylvia Lang Liu](#), microbiology researcher at PolyU and lead researcher on this project.

Microplastics are the plastic fragments, usually smaller than 5mm, which are accidentally released into the environment during production and breakdown of, for example, grocery bags or water bottles – or during everyday activities such as washing synthetic clothes such as nylon or using personal care products with scrubbing microbeads in them.

Although they are tiny, the risk they post to the environment is huge. Microplastics are not easily biodegradable, so they stick around for long periods of time and they also absorb and accumulate toxic chemicals. They disperse into wastewater and into the oceans, endangering marine animals who end up eating them and eventually trickling into the food chain and harming human health too. Microplastics had been found in more than 114 aquatic species in 2018, according to the [International Maritime Organization](#), and they have been found in salt, lettuce, apples, and more.

Yet, there are not any sustainable, one-size-fit-all ways to eliminate microplastics.

With this research, Liu’s team has engineered a bacterial biofilm, from a bacteria called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, able to immobilise and incorporate rogue microplastics floating around in the water. These microbe nets trap and group the microplastics and make them sink to the bottom of the water. Then, thanks to a “capture-release mechanism” using a biofilm-dispersal gene, the researchers can unlatch the microplastics from the bacteria traps and find themselves with bulks of collected microplastics ready to recycle.



“This is a really innovative and exciting application of biofilm engineering to address the plastic pollution crisis,” said [Dr Joanna Sadler](#), researcher at University of Edinburgh, who was not involved in this study. “One of the biggest challenges in dealing with microplastics is capturing such small particles so they can be degraded and removed from the environment. Liu and co-workers have demonstrated an elegant solution to this problem, which holds great potential to be further developed into a real-world wastewater treatment technology.”

However, the experiment is still preliminary: it has been carried out as a proof-of-concept test in a controlled lab environment and not in the ocean or the sewers; and it was done using the “aeruginosa” bacteria strain, which is a disease-carrying bacteria for humans and probably could not be used in large-scale projects. But the researchers are confident that the method can be replicated to find natural biofilm-forming bacteria directly in sewage or other watery environments and go from there.

“In terms of the capture of microplastics, it’s an interesting development,” said [Dr Nicholas Tucker](#), senior lecturer in molecular microbiology at the University of Strathclyde, who was not involved in the study. “Whether it’s scalable is going to be interesting to see.” According to Tucker, there will need to be more research on what types of surfaces to grow the biofilm on.

However, research like this provides a good example of the many uses for microbial biotechnology and what big feats tiny bacteria can accomplish. “In general, this shows that microbes can and will play a role in every stage of the life cycle of plastics,” Tucker said.



# How mangrove forests helped stall environmental crime

(Image credit: Alamy)



By David Njagi 28th April 2021

The majestic mangrove forests of Kenya's east coast have helped to bring levels of poaching and logging down, while taking large quantities of carbon out of the air.

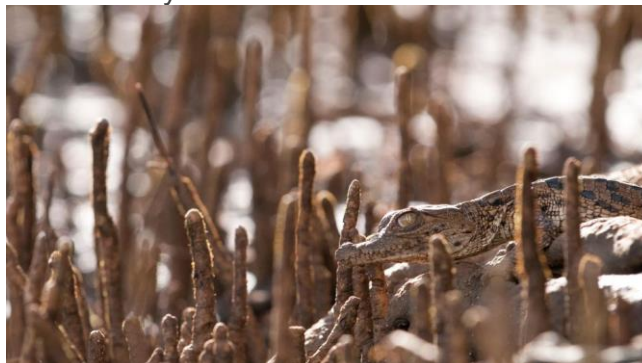
To a visitor travelling south from Mombasa to savour the rich culture of the Swahili, the village of Gazi passes for a sleepy settlement in an almost forgotten stretch of the rapidly developing Kenyan coast. Inside the closely built mud-walled houses of the village, the day begins with a prayer call from the village mosque before dawn. Soon, early risers return from the shoreline with fish stocks that will supply Gazi's traders for the day. Later on in the day, women bake flatbreads on roadside hearths to sell to visiting fishermen from as far as Tanzania, while male elders play draft, a local social pastime, on shaded patios.

Life was not always so peaceful in Gazi – eight years or so ago, things looked very different. The harvesting of mangroves for firewood and construction poles had depleted the local forests. Fish stocks had declined, threatening the livelihoods of the 80% of the village who depend on the sea, says local fisherman Abdallah Mohamed. Without fish, locals turned to charcoal burning and harvesting the region's indigenous trees for firewood, which they would sell in nearby towns. In the wider region, illegal poaching of elephant, rhino and game was rife.

But today, the village has a new health centre, school and boreholes for fresh water. In the wider region illegal poaching of iconic wildlife like rhino and elephant has fallen by 90% in six years, according to the Kenya Wildlife Service.

*Gazi's rich coastal forests are home to all nine varieties of mangrove that grow in Kenya, as well as diverse bird life and 180 species of fish*

Gazi is one of many villages along the Kenyan coast where poaching and illegal logging have fallen dramatically in recent years. In Gazi, central to the change are the village's mangrove forests, which have gone from being a declining source of firewood and construction poles to a significant player in the local economy.



*The mangrove forests around Gazi village are home to a rich array of biodiversity, and when the trees were cut down for wood, the ecosystem struggled (Credit: Alamy)*



Mangrove forests are some of the most efficient "sponges" for carbon on the planet. A hectare of mangrove forest can sink as much carbon as four hectares of rainforest, most of it sequestered in the depths of rich, frequently waterlogged soil below the mangrove roots. Cutting down mangrove forests prevents these areas from absorbing carbon, and it also releases stored carbon from the soils. By one estimate, **mangrove deforestation generates as much as around 10% of emissions from deforestation globally, despite accounting for just 0.7% of tropical forest area.**

Gazi's rich coastal forests are home to all nine varieties of mangrove that grow in Kenya, **as well as diverse bird life and 180 species of fish.** In 2013, the Mikoko Pamoja carbon project began to conserve and protect 117 hectares (289 acres) of mangrove forest around Gazi, in a partnership between coastal Kenyan communities, the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Institute, and the Plan Vivo Foundation, a Scottish charity. It was the first project of its kind to successfully turn blue carbon, like that stored in mangroves, into an economically viable initiative that could support a community.

*Joblessness is the reason the youth usually engage in poaching and illegal logging in Kenya. If carbon projects can create jobs for people in the villages, then society will start seeing forests and wildlife as their banks –*  
**Samuel Mutisya**

The premise is simple: in exchange for ensuring the health of Kenya's coastal mangroves, the project sells carbon credits, which can be bought as a form of "offset". While **offsetting is a far from perfect solution, it can be a useful measure for currently hard-to-decarbonise industries.**

The first steps were to reduce forest loss and degradation. The project established woodlots of Casuarina trees as an alternative source of wood for construction poles and firewood for local people, who were also encouraged to use material falling from coconut trees for fuel too. Then the village participants received training on the economic benefits of conserving mangroves for carbon credits. Finally, the community led a mangrove-planting initiative, preparing saplings for six to seven months in nurseries before planting the trees at appropriate sites.

It's a strategy that has paid off – each year the project trades the equivalent of 3,000 tonnes (3,300 tons) of carbon dioxide a year from its 117 hectares of mangrove, roughly the equivalent emissions of around 650 cars on the road each year.



*The Mikoko Pamoja project funded installation of a clean water project for the village (Credit: David Njagi)*

It is a small start, but the success of Gazi's blue carbon scheme has inspired a similar **460-hectare (1.8 sq miles) blue carbon project in Vanga**, a village located about 60km (37 miles) to the south of Gazi. Another project in Lamu to the north is also in its early stages, says Rahma Rashid, project coordinator of Mikoko Pamoja. Overall, about 660,000 hectares (2,548 sq miles) of land are under carbon trading schemes in Kenya, of which blue carbon is still a small, if powerful fraction.

"The success of these carbon projects is changing how people perceive climate change by assuring them there are growth opportunities," says Alfred Gichu, Kenya's national coordinator of REDD+, the UN-backed forest conservation scheme.





The knock-on effects of the projects have included a reduction in environmental crimes such as illegal logging and poaching. "Joblessness is the reason the youth usually engage in poaching and illegal logging in Kenya," says Samuel Mutisya, a reformed poacher from Kibwezi, a settlement just to the north of Tsavo National Park. "If carbon projects can create jobs for people in the villages, then society will start seeing forests and wildlife as their banks."



*More mangrove protection projects are set to follow the lead of Mikoko Pamoja, with two being established nearby along the Kenyan coast (Credit: David Njagi)*

In the 1980s, there were only three rhinos in Tsavo National Park, which fans through south-eastern Kenya and connects the coast region to the country's hinterland. Now there are 120 rhinos.

"Kenya is one of the few countries in Africa that needs to be celebrated because its wildlife numbers are increasing and its conservation efforts are impressive," according to Kaddu Sebunya, chief executive of the Africa Wildlife Foundation, during the launch of the Benjamin Mkapa African Wildlife Photography Awards in Nairobi in early March.

At the same time, the Kenya Forestry Services says the country's forest cover has grown from below 5% to 7%, progress that the service has attributed to conservation efforts such as those taking place in Gazi. Alongside carbon credit schemes, increased law enforcement and engaging with local communities has helped bring environmental crimes down.

George Wara, the service's ecosystem conservator responsible for managing 34,000 hectares (131 sq miles) of forest including 8,000 hectares (31 sq miles) of mangroves in Kwale county, agrees that carbon projects have helped reduce illegal logging and poaching in the coastal region. "If the community is benefitting from a forest, then they will have enthusiasm to protect it," says Wara.



*The mangroves not only mitigate climate change but protect from its worst effects, including buffering storm surges (Credit: David Njagi)*

Changare John, a local from Gazi village, knows the comforts of such successes. In a region that hardly receives enough rainfall for crops, John struggled to provide for her family by selling flatbreads and cooked beans at the roadside. During the low season, when there are few visitors in the village, she could hardly break even. Since she joined the Mikoko Pamoja project as a member, her fortunes have changed for the better.

"My three children are in school thanks to the bursary they get from the project," she says. "When they get sick, I do not have to worry about medical fees because our health centre is also supported by the project."



The local fisherman Abdallah Mohamed, who is not involved in the project, has also noticed benefits. "The fish returned after the community stopped taking firewood from the mangroves. Our indigenous trees are also thriving because there are fewer disturbances," he says. "This project is really a game changer."

With more blue carbon schemes set to roll out in Kenya, Gazi and other villages could soon see additional benefits from their conserved mangrove forests. As well as absorbing carbon, these forests are a natural buffer to some of the worst effects of climate change, including [storm surges](#) and, [to an extent, rising sea levels](#).

As the world's mangroves [are steadily being lost through urban development, and the expansion of agriculture and aquaculture](#), projects like Gazi's show that it is both possible and profitable to save the forests that can protect against climate change.

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# Protecting nature can lower risk of armed conflict, says conservation body

Jack Graham, Thomson Reuters Foundation

Posted at Apr 29 2021 03:53 AM



A woman carries a container filled of water in a poor neighborhood, as rebels in northern Chad are ready to observe a ceasefire and to discuss a "political settlement" after the battlefield death of President Idriss Deby last week in N'djamena, Chad April 25, 2021. *Zohra Bensemra, Reuters*

TORONTO—Protecting and restoring nature can reduce the risk of armed conflict around the world, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said on Wednesday.

Over the last 30 years, countries have been more prone to conflict when natural resources, such as agricultural land and water, become scarce or degraded, such as in areas where droughts are frequent, said a report released by the organization, which brings together governments, green groups and scientists.

It comes as a coalition of countries pushes to conserve global biodiversity by protecting at least 30% of land and oceans by 2030, ahead of a key United Nations conference in Kunming, China, set to take place in October.

"This report provides added evidence on the multiple benefits that societies gain from conserving nature," said Juha Siikamäki, IUCN's chief economist.

"Not only would we be improving the condition of nature and natural resources, we would also improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of people dependent on those resources," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The report found that conflicts are less frequent within the boundaries of protected natural areas, which account for an estimated 15% of land but overlap with only 3% of the more than 85,000 conflicts analysed from the past three decades.

Protecting and managing those areas, such as natural parks and wildernesses, is seen as a key tool for countries to safeguard ecosystems and reduce climate-heating emissions.

Siikamäki explained that when natural resources become more scarce, it puts people who depend on those resources into competition and can fuel conflicts.

For example, the report said violence around fast-shrinking Lake Chad in central Africa - shared by Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad - had been made worse by growing demand for limited resources among herding, farming and fishing communities.

The conflicts studied in the research were concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as West and South Asia.

The report cited a separate finding from an earlier U.N. study that about 40% of civil wars between 1950 and 2010 were associated with natural resources.

"Conservation, sustainable and equitable management of nature plays an important role in preventing conflict and in rebuilding peace," said Kristen Walker, chair of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.



"For example, it supports livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous and local communities in times of peace and helps reduce the risk of conflicts breaking out," she said in a statement.

The report recommended conservation should continue even in war-torn regions to help mitigate and prevent conflict, making use of explicit protections for those working on nature, such as the Escazú treaty to protect environmental defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean. (Reporting by Jack Graham; editing by Megan Rowling. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers the lives of people around the world who struggle to live freely or fairly. Visit <https://news.trust.org>)



## Can Joe Biden Save The World From Climate Catastrophe?



BYRENE E. OFRENEO APRIL 29, 2021



A fresh wind of change is sweeping Planet Earth that is facing a climate emergency. The United States, a climate crisis denier under the Trump administration, has now reconnected to the global campaign to limit the rise in global temperature to a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius (pre-industrial era), as agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement. President Joe Biden and his climate team have re-asserted US leadership in the global fight against global warming by convening last week a “Leaders Climate Summit” attended by 40 heads of state, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

As the biggest GHG emitter, US also has the biggest responsibility to reduce GHG emissions and to provide financial assistance to developing nations trying to fortify their countries against climate change risks. As the Asian People Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) puts it, this is all a question of climate justice.

For who, in the first place, is responsible for rising global temperature? Yes, all countries have been contributing to global warming by burning fossil fuels to run transport and provide electricity for their populations. But who are the biggest contributors? Are they not the big advanced capitalist countries? They have been accumulating a high “carbon debt” since the start of the industrial era (circa 16th/17th centuries). With less than 20 percent of the world’s population, they account for half of the global GHG emission total. It was only in the last three to four decades that China and India have joined the club of big GHG emitters.

And the rest of the developing world? They contribute little GHG emissions, and yet they are the most vulnerable to climate change risks. In Asia, six countries are included in the most vulnerable: Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. And yet, the contribution of each of these countries to global GHG emissions is less than 1 percent.

Now back to Biden’s Climate Summit. Almost all the developed countries declared ambitious GHG reduction targets, for examples, US—reduction of GHG emissions by 50-52 percent below 2005 level by the year 2030; Japan—46 percent reduction of 2013 level by 2030; EU—55 percent from the 1990 level by 2030; and UK, 63 percent below 2005 level.

The problem, APMDD said, is if these developed countries can be resolute in developing and implementing programs to fulfill their commitments. Secondly, the “climate justice” obligations of the developed countries, that is, providing the developing countries the financial support for various adaptation-mitigation measures have not been clearly fleshed out, with President Biden announcing a doubling of their contribution to global finance.

Thirdly, the socio-economic roots of the climate crisis are critically important. And yet, they were hardly discussed in the Summit.



Why is this topic important? The reality is that climate change is not a mere question of how to reduce GHG emissions. It is also a question of having a new growth paradigm. In particular, there is the need to adjust or overhaul a socio-economic system that is GDP-obsessed while profusely emitting GHG gases allowing the way. This model has been refined by the neo-liberal economists into a globalization model, with the multinationals on top of a global system promoting fossil-based global production and consumption with limited rules under a liberalized global trading regime.

The UNDP, in a special report (HDR, 2007/08) on global warming, called attention to the fact that the poor are the ones “bearing the brunt of climate change.” The UNDP labeled the inability of countries of the world to stop global warming as an “outrage to the conscience of mankind.” Further, the UNDP wrote that:

“Carbon-intensive economic growth is symptomatic of a deeper problem. One of the harshest lessons taught by climate change is that the economic model which drives growth and the profligate consumption in rich nations that goes with it, is ecologically unsustainable.”

This brings us to the challenge of re-thinking the dominant neo-liberal export-oriented economic model, which is now questioned by many as unsustainable. Imagine if all Asian, African and Latin American countries will become dynamic export dynamos like China. Can the world afford three or five or more “Chinas” emitting GHG gases at the same level as China today because of the requirements of export production? Where will they source the materials, minerals and fuels to make their export offensive succeed like what China did? And where are the markets where they will dump their products?

During the 2008-2010 global financial crisis, many economists agreed on one major conclusion: under runaway globalization, there is a tendency for the world to over-produce in a global market that is unable to absorb or consume everything. The over-production/under-consumption contradiction is at the roots of the GFC. Another related conclusion, propounded by trade unionists and labor economists, is that the over-production phenomenon is due to the global Race to the Bottom involving the multinationals (MNCs) and host countries. The Global Race to the Bottom means MNCs and host countries tend to relax the rules protecting not only labor rights but also environmental, health and social standards. This system is obviously unsustainable.

This is why as early as early as 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development, in the seminal book *Our Common Future*, called the attention of the world on the urgent need for a rebalancing of the economy—at the national as well as global levels. The Commission came up with a famous definition of what is sustainable development, as follows:

“...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- *The concept of “needs,” in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and*
- *The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.”*
- In line with the above development framework, the Commission listed the following “strategic imperatives” that different countries must address in charting sustainable development path, namely:
  - strategizing growth for redistribution and poverty reduction,
  - changing the quality of growth to make it less material-and-energy intensive,



- meeting the essential needs of the population for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation,
- ensuring a sustainable level of population,
- conserving and enhancing the resource base,
- reorienting technology and managing risk to respond to the challenges of sustainable development, and
- merging environment and economics in decision making.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), through the various reports on climate change and sustainable development they have been issuing, have been reiterating the importance of the above environmental-economic guideposts propounded by the Commission report, also called the Brundtland Report (after the chair Bro Brundtland). It is obvious that the one-size-fits-all formula advanced by some neo-liberal economists through institutions such as the World Trade Organization collides with the above imperatives outlined by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The same holds true for the export-or-perish development framework often articulated by the neo-liberal globalizers.

What the Commission, IPCC and UNEP are asking is for countries, big and small, rich and poor, to do a rebalancing of their respective economies based on the above framework of sustainable development.

Now, will Joe Biden have the courage to lead this rebalancing program—at home and in the world?

*Dr. Rene E. Ofreneo is a Professor Emeritus of University of the Philippines. For comments, please write to reneofreneo@gmail.com.*

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