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SM Prime: Building disaster resilient communities

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA
19-22 September 2022

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Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference Disaster Risk Reduction 2022. Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Brisbane on September 19, 2022. Picture-Patrick Hamilton

The Philippines, is a disaster-prone country. Hence, as good times can be as frequent as the bad and as global warming and climate change make disasters more destructive and deadlier, resilience, disaster risk reduction and sustainability have become part not just of the official vocabulary but also of SM Prime business speak.

In the recently concluded 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) held in Brisbane, Australia on September 19-22, 2022, SM Prime joined the Philippine Government and other stakeholders across the Asia-Pacific to showcase and share experiences, action and innovation to help build a resilient future for the region.

The APMCDRR is the main regional platform in Asia-Pacific for promoting coordination and cooperation on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The event was convened by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and hosted by the Australian Government.

With the theme "From Crisis to Resilience: Transforming the Asia-Pacific Region's Future through Disaster Risk Reduction" the meeting was the first APMCDRR regional gathering since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. It brought together UN Member States, intergovernmental organizations, international and national organizations and stakeholder groups including the private sector, to accelerate progress on DRR.

Among the dignitaries present were Ms. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of UNDRR; Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Senator Murray Watt, Australian Minister for Emergency Management and head of the Australian delegation.

The Philippine delegation was headed by Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Undersecretary Raymundo B. Ferrer, Administrator, Office of Civil Defense & Executive Director, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Also present were Engr. Liza Silerio, Global Board Member of the UNDRR led Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies (ARISE) and ARISE Philippines Co-chair Vice Admiral Alexander Pama (Ret). They were joined by representatives from



The delegation members of the National Resilience Council



APMCDRR Partner Event speakers and officials



Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference Disaster Risk Reduction 2022. Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Brisbane on September 19, 2022. Picture-Patrick Hamilton



DENR Sec. Loyzaga delivers her statement at the Ministerial Forum

the government, NGOs, civil society, academe, and the private sector including members from ARISE-Philippines and National Resilience Council (NRC).

During the Ministerial Forum, Secretary Loyzaga delivered the Philippine Statement emphasizing "Compound and cascading hazards and fragile systems urgently require fundamental shifts towards all-hazards, whole-of-society, transdisciplinary, and systems approaches to preventive risk governance that is inclusive, responsive, and adaptive."

The Statement from the Private Sector was delivered by Ms. Jessica Bianca T. Sy on behalf of Mr. Hans Sy, Chairman of the Executive Committee of SM Prime and ARISE Philippines Co-chair. She said "SM Prime, as a responsible integrated property developer as well as all other private sectors, recognize our duty in reducing disaster risks to avert loss of lives, assets and livelihoods. We champion transformative and whole-of-society solutions to address challenges in alignment with the public sector while we harness the power of data and technological innovations using

corporate resources and networks."

Ms. Sy highlighted the significant results of Public - Private Partnerships (PPPs) in creating sustainable communities and making countries more resilient. The importance of the whole-of-country efforts at disaster mitigation of the Philippines and other Asia-Pacific countries was underscored by SRSG Mami Mizutori, Head of UNDRR.

Mizutori said, "The global battle to reduce disaster losses by 2030 will be won or lost in Asia and the Pacific." The Philippines' commitment to put DRR to be a top national priority was emphasized in the Official Statement of the Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva as published in the website of the APMCDRR 2022.

Our vision of "safer, adaptive, and disaster resilient Filipino communities towards sustainable development" is aligned with the priorities, targets, and indicators of the Sendai Framework. Our plan and framework also recognize and establish the links between DRRM, climate change adaptation, sustainable development, and human security.

The statement also emphasized that the Philippines will continue to be a champion of disaster risk resilience in various multilateral fora, recognizing that the global community must work together as a coordinated whole in order to ensure that we

are well prepared to deal with the challenge of our times.

For her part, Secretary Loyzaga, as a Panelist at the Plenary Session on Risk-Informed Investments and Scaling Up Financing for Disaster Risk Reduction, underscored that resilience is everyone's business and highlighted the role of the private sector in ensuring that resilience is a core business value. She cited examples of corporations in the Philippines that have embedded resilience investments in their main operations and supply and value chains.

SM Prime and its SM Development Corporation (SMDC), the residential property development component of SM) recognize and fully accept their duties and responsibilities as private sector partners in the Philippines' efforts at disaster risk reduction.

The companies' long-term focus and commitment to disaster risk reduction are primarily manifested in sustainable and disaster-risk resilient features of the properties, in the culture of the people and leaders, and in processes implemented. Some of the companies' responsible and adaptive approach to DRR were in its Public - Private Partnerships including the vaccination of nearly 11 million Filipinos in SM malls nationwide.

SM Prime and SMDC are members of the ARISE, a global network of 400+ member private sector entities that collaborate to implement the disaster risk reduction goals of the Sendai Framework.

SM Prime, as a responsible integrated property developer... recognize our duty in reducing disaster risks to avert loss of lives, assets and livelihoods

Jessica Bianca T. Sy
SM Development Corporation (SMDC)
AVP - Business Development Cluster Head



Philippine delegation members to the APMCDRR. From L-R: UNDRR Global Board Member Engr. Liza Silerio, SMDC AVP Jessica Bianca T. Sy, DENR Sec. Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, NDRRMC Usec. Raymundo Ferrer

SM Prime co-chairs the National Resilience Council (NRC) in the Philippines. NRC, is a science and technology-based public-private partnership among government, academe, private sector and community organizations for the advancement of the Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Climate Agreement, New Urban Agenda and UNDRR's Making Cities Resilient Campaign.

During the Joint Partner Event moderated by NRC Executive Director, Silvestre Barameda, Jr. and organized by ARISE Philippines in partnership with Asian Institute of Management, NRC, UNICEF, International Finance Corporation and SMDC, ARISE Co-Chair Alexander Pama stressed the need to appreciate how technology and innovation can be the lynchpin in more effective DRR and resilience efforts by different sectors. "This is now an existential challenge that we cannot afford to shy away from. This will have to be a collective and shared responsibility and co-ownership of actions by all sectors of society where the private sector plays a significant and pivotal role. This can and should not only be in the context of the private sector's perceived traditional role as donors but more importantly as partners and co-owners in practically most if not all disaster risk reduction and resilience efforts."

In response, Ms. Jessica Sy, outlined how SM Prime and SMDC take on the sense of urgen-

cy for DRR by building smarter and beefing up developments against worsening disasters with the use of data and technological innovations.

SM Prime's planners study data and observations about the natural hazards in sites chosen for development. Aside from the standard technical due diligence in site selection, planners use government agency data, such as HazardHunterPH for seismic, volcanic, and hydrometeorological hazards; Project NOAA (National Operational Assessment of Hazards) for flood, landslide and storm surge risks; and Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology for earthquake and seismic occurrences.

The developments comply with global standards and guidelines on Performance-based Structural Design, Wind Tunnel Analytics and Building Information Modelling. Construction employs practices that reduce environmental impact and minimize material wastage, such as re-using and re-purposing construction materials. It also applies innovative designs and adaptations that minimize carbon footprint and improve solid waste management efficiency, energy and water efficiency and air conservation.

SM Prime pursues the transformative vision of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on providing safe, resilient and sustainable human habitats. It undertakes community initiatives that create a positive impact on the lives of residents and the broader community, supporting and empowering tenants and homeowners, including opening job markets for professionals and skilled workers; holding entrepreneurship classes to encourage home-based economic activities, and health and wellness clinics.

In the master-planning of development projects as sustainable communities, features are designed to maximize people-to-people, transportation and infrastructure connectivity for maximized positive human, social, economic and environmental impact.

For SMDC, "The Good Guys" is not just a smart, catchy slogan. It is rather a challenge to be faced and a standard to live up to.

This is most apparent in its commitment to be the developer of sustainable communities for more Filipinos. SMDC and SM Prime fully understand that sustainability and resiliency means being a reliable partner not just in good times, but during challenges, too.



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Bilateral meeting between UNDRR and Philippine delegation: From L-R: DENR Sec Ma. Antonina Yulo-Loyzaga; Special Representative of UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Mami Mizutori; Chief of ESCAP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Marco Toscano-Rivalta; SM Development Corporation (SMDC) AVP - Business Development Cluster Head Jessica Bianca T. Sy; ARISE-Philippines Co-Chair Ret. VAdm Alexander Pama.



NRC delegation and UNDRR officials



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PBBM vows efficient use of ADB assistance

Sustainable, climate-resilient economy eyed

By BETHEENA V. UNITE

President Marcos has committed to ensure the "efficient and effective" use of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) assistance to the Philippines under his watch.

Speaking at the 55th Annual Meeting of the Board

of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday, Sept. 29, Marcos thanked the regional development bank for its continued support to the country as he vowed to put its assistance to good use.

"As President, it is certainly my duty to ensure that the government remains committed in the efficient and effective utilization of this institution's assistance for the full benefit of all Filipinos," he said.

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PBBM vows efficient use of ADB assistance ◀

He also pledged to see to it the government's relationship with the ADB under his administration will grow stronger.

"As President, I will assure that the government's relationship with the ADB can only grow stronger in the years to come, harnessing mutual cooperation to nurture development here in our country together with our partners around the world and in the region," he said.

Marcos recognized the ADB for allowing the Philippines to access its quick disbursing budget support facility to aid countries in mitigating the severe economic shocks caused by the pandemic.

"It is through the bank's assistance that we were able to push forward with projects in areas such as infrastructure, social reform, and community development in government and institutions development, all of which are consistent with this administration's eight-point socio agenda," he said.

The President also encouraged international counterparts and partners to work together for a better post-pandemic world.

"It is time for us to work together to bring about an even better normal. I believe that at the heart of this goal is in the way that we must develop an economy that is green, that is sustainable, truly climate resilient and responsive to people's immediate needs," he said.

Marcos' participation in this year's annual meeting marks the commitment of the Philippines in ensuring the efficient and effective utilization of ADB's assistance for the full benefit of all Filipinos, especially in coping with the challenges of the post-pandemic world.

It was attended by Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa, ADB governors and alternate governors.

"I am truly excited to see the outcome of this meeting as we set sail toward a better tomorrow that is more resilient, more inclusive, more sensitive to our people's needs and more aware of climate change and the crisis that it brings with it," Marcos said.

Various issues on economic and social developments within Asia and the Pacific Region are being discussed in the forum which also serves as an avenue to "provide guidance on ADB administrative, financial and operational directions."

On the fourth day of the five-day 55th ADB Annual Meeting, discussion centered on managing Asia's energy transition and pathways to sustainable green growth in the time of Covid-19 recovery.



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PBBM vows efficient use of ADB aid

**By Vito Barcelo
and Vince Lopez**

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday vowed to effectively use assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to benefit all Filipinos.

At the 55th ADB Meeting of the Board of Governors, the President said the ADB, which is based in Manila, has been a dependable institution in providing loans, technical assistance, and equity investments to its members to promote social and economic development.

"As President, it is certainly my duty to ensure that the government remains committed to the efficient and effective

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PBBM...

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utilization of this institution's assistance for the full benefit of all Filipinos," he said.

He also pledged that the government's relationship with the ADB under his administration will grow stronger.

Through the ADB, Mr. Marcos said the government was able to move forward with projects in areas such as infrastructure, social reform and community development, and governance and institution development.

"As such, our shared goals will only bring us closer together to nurture our bonds and foster hope in the communities that we serve," he said.

Mr. Marcos said he recognized the ADB for allowing the Philippines to

access its quick disbursing budget support facility to aid countries in mitigating the severe economic shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The President also encouraged international counterparts and partners to work together for a better post-pandemic world.

"It is time for us to work together to bring about an even better normal. I believe that at the heart of this goal is the way that we must develop an economy that is green, that is sustainable, truly climate resilient and responsive to people's immediate needs," he added.

Before the ADB meeting, the President met Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Palace. Wickremesinghe arrived in Manila on Wednesday evening to chair the 55th meeting of the ADB board of governors.

BBM at ADB: Work together for even

better normal

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Marcos said he is aiming for a "better normal" for the country as his administration continues its effort to achieve an economy that is sustainable and responsive to people's needs.

"While many things remain uncertain, one thing is for sure: we can no longer return to the way things were. It is time for us to work together to bring about an even better normal," Marcos said at the 55th annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank

(ADB)'s board of governors yesterday in Mandaluyong.

"I believe that at the heart of this goal is in the way that we must develop an economy that is green, that is sustainable, truly climate-resilient and responsive to people's immediate needs. It is

an economy that takes into account the ecosystem from which we harness our resources," Marcos added.

He reiterated the importance of forging partnerships as the world strives to recover from the pandemic.

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"The partnerships once again that we will forge in these talks that we will be having after two and a half years of virtual meetings, I think, will really be lighting the way of what we are going to have to face in the near future as we navigate our way towards the new post-pandemic global economy," the Chief Executive said.

Marcos thanked the ADB for its efforts to address the impact of the pandemic, noting that the Manila-based lender was one of the first institutions to provide assistance through a grant of \$3 million for the purchase of medical supplies for frontline health workers.

He also lauded the ADB for allowing the Philippines to access the CARES program, a quick-disbursing budget-support facility designed to help countries deal with the severe economic shocks caused by the pandemic.

The ADB, Marcos added, also enabled the country to push forward with infrastructure, social reform and community development and governance and institutions-development projects in line with his administration's eight-point socioeconomic agenda.

"We must always acknowledge the ADB for being the steadfast partner in achieving the Philippines' development goals," the President said.

to the US last week yielded pledges of close to \$4 billion in investments that may create more than 112,000 jobs.

In a statement, the Palace said the investments would come from different sectors like information technology and business process management, data centers and manufacturing.

"Business agreements and commitments secured during the President's visit have an estimated investment value of \$3.9 billion, with a potential employment generation of 112,285 jobs," the Palace statement read.

The bulk of the investment pledges came from the data center sector, which has committed to undertake projects with a total cost of \$3-billion, data posted by state-run People's Television on its Twitter account showed.

The amount of investment pledges from the manufacturing sector totaled \$847 million while that of the information technology and business process management sector reached \$55 million.

The potential investments from the data centers are seen to generate 9,000 jobs while those of the manufacturing sector may employ 850 workers. Investment commitments from the IT and business process management sectors are expected to create 102,435 jobs.



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Marcos assured the ADB that the government remains committed to the efficient and effective use of its assistance for the full benefit of all Filipinos.

"As President, I will assure that the government's relationship with the ADB can only grow stronger in the years to come, harnessing mutual cooperation to nurture development here in our country, together with our partners around the world and in the region," he said.

According to the ADB website, more than half of the Manila-based lender's \$2.2-billion total loan commitments to the Philippines in 2021 was focused on boosting the country's health care service delivery. The funding helped the Philippine government buy life-saving COVID-19 vaccines for its national vaccination program.

ADB said it has committed 612 public sector loans, grants and technical assistance totaling \$27.4 billion to the country.

\$4-B pledges

Also yesterday, Malacañang said President Marcos' visit

Malacañang said the estimates do not reflect the full potential of future investments from several companies that met with Marcos and the trade department in New York.

Some companies have expressed interest in investing or expanding existing investments in the Philippines but their plans have yet to be firmed up, it added.

Marcos visited the US from Sept. 18 to 24 to attend the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and to meet with several American business groups and companies.

In a speech delivered during the UNGA high-level general debate, Marcos said the Philippines remains on track to reach upper middle-income status—defined by the World Bank as economies with a gross national income of \$4,096 to \$12,695—by next year.

"With steady investment in food (security), public health, education, and other social services, we expect to become a moderately prosperous country by 2040. I am confident that we will achieve this vision," the President said.



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MARCOS TO ASIAN COUNTRIES: AIM FOR GREEN ECONOMY

PRESIDENT Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. on Thursday enjoined neighboring Asian nations to craft measures ensuring climate-resilient economies as he reiterated anew his call for united efforts to combat the effects of climate change.

Speaking at the 55th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Chief Executive said that part of ramping up and sustaining a country's good economic standing is including climate change mitigation plans.

"I believe that at the heart of this

goal is in the way that we must develop an economy that is green, that is sustainable, truly climate-resilient and responsive to people's immediate needs," he said. "It is an economy that takes into account the ecosystem from which we harness our resources."

The Philippines, Marcos assured, will ensure the "efficient and effective" use of foreign assistance, such as those from the ADB, meant to further boost the country's economic transformation initiative "for the full benefit of all Filipinos," including protecting the environment as this is intertwined with his administration's other

plans and programs.

"I am truly excited to see the outcome of this meeting, as we set sail towards a better tomorrow that is more resilient, more inclusive, more sensitive to our people's needs, and more aware of climate change and the crisis that it brings with it," the President said.

"We will become living witnesses to the better world that we have worked hard not only for ourselves and our communities, but also for the generations to come," he said.

KRISTINA MARALIT



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Group seeks DENR stand vs Manila Bay reclamation

Fisherfolk group Pam-bansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) yesterday urged Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga to make a stand against the reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"After getting the nod of the Commission on Appointments (CA), Loyzaga should perform

her mandate in protecting the environment," Pamalakaya said in a statement.

Loyzaga was among the Cabinet secretaries of President Marcos whose appointments were confirmed by the CA on Tuesday.

"The group has sought the stand of the DENR regarding reclamation projects in Manila Bay, which threaten marine

biodiversity and socioeconomic rights of small fisherfolk. But the DENR has yet to take a categorical stand on the issue so far," Pamalakaya lamented.

The group said Loyzaga should use her expertise in climate disaster resilience by issuing "meaningful policy reforms" against environmental degradation.

Pamalakaya chairman Fer-

nando Hicap said Loyzaga should order the DENR to conduct an onsite investigation on the dismantling of fishing structures for a reclamation project in Navotas.

The group said the dismantling of fishing structures would affect more than 1,000 fisherfolk and owners of *baklad* (fish traps) and mussel farms.

- Elizabeth Marcelo



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Sierra Madre, mother mountain

The Spaniards called her Mother mountain, this vast range stretching down the northeastern flank of the island of Luzon like the heaving backs of massive whales. Through the years, the trees and slopes of the Sierra Madre, acting like giant windbreaks, broke the backs of tropical cyclones swirling in from the West Pacific. She was also a weather maker. Her peaks and lonely upland valleys, blanketed with great sweeps of rainforest, were magnets for moisture, constantly building towering stacks of cumulus clouds, and rain. Bringing precious water to the rivers and rice fields of the thirsty lowlands...

That is from the ode-like introduction of the book "The Last Great Forest: Luzon's Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park" (Bookmark, 2000) by Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan. (The author headed World Wildlife Fund-Philippines for many years.) It is a book like no other because of the way the author presented it—with illustrations, photos, and highlighted texts that make the book look like a field guide that makes readers want to head for that "last great forest" and experience for themselves what a living mother it is. My signed copy has Lory's handwritten words: "Forests=Water=Rice=Development. The Formula!"

Why the Sierra Madre? Because after Supertyphoon "Karding" hit Luzon last Sunday, the Inquirer had a page one story with the headline "Netizens hail Sierra Madre for 'taming' typhoon" (9/27/2022) by Frances Mangosing and Jeannette I. Andrade. A mountain as story maker, not just a where in the what-where-when-why-how-how much, but a how. How did she do it? Also a what. What did many people think she did?

The lead paragraph: "Sierra Madre ... became a trending topic on Twitter during the onslaught of Supertyphoon 'Karding' (inter-



HUMAN FACE

MA. CERES P. DOYO

national name: Noru) as netizens called attention to how it protected Metro Manila and several provinces from calamities."

Netizens, the story said, reminded their followers of its important role as an effective barrier against storms coming from the Pacific Ocean. As of Monday morning, the topic had 78,000 tweets. What a welcome change from all the toxic, hateful posts on social media directed at persons who do good, while those who promote and defend evil are extolled.

An online petition, "Save Sierra Madre," emphasizes that the mountain range is truly the longest mountain range in the Philippines. "It covers 10 provinces and stands proudly at 6,069 feet. It contains the largest remaining tract of old-growth tropical rainforest ... which is about 1.4 million hectares of forest, representing 40 percent of the country's forest cover..."

"(It is) home to hundreds of wildlife species, many of which are unique to the Philippines, including the Philippine eagle and the golden crowned flying fox."

Facebook friends Monette and Darwin Flores posted that they have checked with their Dumagat friends, who live in the higher

areas of the Sierra Madre, and learned that the indigenous community there has lost all their rice that was supposed to be harvested in two weeks. "Each family consumes 15 to 18 sacks per year for their high-energy requirement. They walk up and down high mountains and work fields in steep inclines. We will have conversations with the Dumagats on how they wish to be assisted and what they, too, wish to share..." You may contact Monette or Darwin at 0920-923-2327.

Typhoon Karding versus the Sierra Madre became like an allegorical tale about might versus might. I found a folktale about the Sierra Madre in Tatler magazine ("Magical Paradise," March 14, 2016) where other tales about Philippine must-visit places were featured. Let me tell it briefly in my own words.

Long ago, in the coastline of what is now Luzon, there lived a dedicated mother named Sierra and her two sons, Iloco and Tagalo. Bugsong Hangin, the king of the mighty easterly winds, often visited and brought destruction to the place. The king had always been jealous of Sierra's husband, Lusong, a warrior who lost his life during one of the king's destructive visits.

To put an end to Bugsong Hangin's wrath, Sierra lied down on the coastline, her arms shielding her two sons, while howling winds and torrents of rain buffeted them. Sierra lost her life, but her sons survived. The story of Sierra's sacrifice lives on, her spirit felt by those who honor her and live in her protective embrace.

Prayers and praise for the five Bulacan rescuers who lost their lives during the typhoon. May your families draw strength from your courage.

Send feedback to cerespd@gmail.com



Save Sierra Madre

“Climate change” is not just a hashtag we can throw around to sound smart and in tune with the times.

The reality is here to wash away our indifference and neglect, in ruined farmlands worth about P141 million, and floods that rise way above the arrogant belief that we are in control of nature.

Typhoon “Karding” would have been even more destructive had it not been for natural barriers like the Sierra Madre mountains in Aurora province. The country’s longest mountain range was a “natural shield” that weakened the cyclone’s impact as it moved inland on Sunday evening.

As people in Luzon braced for the arrival of the super typhoon, many prayed that its path would hit the age-old Sierra Madre so that it would protect them from the full blast of “Karding.”

Along with these prayers were calls for its protection, with the hashtag #SaveSierraMadre reportedly among the trending topics on Twitter the next day, 26 September – indeed in time for “Save Sierra Madre Day,” as declared in Presidential Proclamation 413 issued in 2012.

PP 413 invokes the people’s “awareness and participation in the rehabilitation, reforestation, protection, and conservation of the Sierra Madre.”

There is much hope among environment advocates that the Marcos administration will be more receptive to such calls against the pressures of a flailing economy caused by calamitous factors affecting the world.

After all, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is recognized for his strong environmental stance.

In November 2021, a report in an online news source says the tandem of BBM and Sara Duterte said our environment must be protected to safeguard “the most vulnerable members of Philippine society from the onslaught of natural calamities.”

“
As people in Luzon braced for the arrival of the super typhoon, many prayed that its path would hit the age-old Sierra Madre so that it would protect them from the full blast of ‘Karding.’



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Daily Tribune

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MASUNGI GEORESERVE GETS AWARD FOR FIGHTING DEFORESTATION

By Cristina Lee-Pisco

THE Philippines' Masungi Georeserve Project was conferred the Inspire Award during the 2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) Action Awards held in Bonn, Germany for its efforts to fight deforestation through geotourism.

The UN SDG Action Awards ceremony is a signature program of the UN SDG Action Campaign.

Since 2018, the Awards have been identifying and celebrating changemakers across the world who have been re-thinking ways to drive progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

This year, the Awards received 3,000 applications from 150 countries, from which the panel of judges selected some of the most impactful SDG initiatives of 2022.

The Action Awards recognized Masungi's efforts in transforming watersheds to fight deforestation through geotourism. It also commended Masungi for its public engagement and creative storytelling, as well as the dedication of its activists, rangers and environmental defenders.

In accepting the award, Masungi trustee Billie Dumaliang thanked the United Nations (UN) and the UN SDG Action Campaign for the honor and recognition of the work of Masungi rangers and team, as well as their allies, partners, and the entire community who have helped the project endure.

Aside from Masungi, the Philippines also had another finalist in the UN Action Awards' 2022 edition.

Former Mayor Bernard Faustino Dy of Cauayan, Isabela was among the three finalists in the Changemaker category for his work in transforming his town

to a smart city, which was one of the pioneers in using UN ESCAP's National Expert SDG Tool for Energy Planning (NEXSTEP) methodology to develop a Sustainable Energy Transition Roadmap.

Among the judges for this year is Mitzi Jonelle Tan, Convenor of the Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines.

Other winners were Ecuador's SUPvivors SAY NO MORE for the Mobilize Category, Cyrus' Cyprusinno for the Connect Category and India's Srishti Bakshi for the Changemaker Category.



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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



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Where is the fishing resource rent (profit) from Laguna Lake going?



Dr. Rosalina Palanca-Tan
EAGLE WATCH

FISHING is considered to be the most important among the many uses of Laguna Lake, the largest lake in the Philippines. Vulnerable households in rural and semi-urban barangays of Laguna and Rizal, and even in the urbanized cities of Metro Manila, surround and depend on the lake for their primary source of livelihood, either as fisherfolk in open fishing areas or as operators of small-scale (1 hectare or smaller) fish cages. The large-scale fish pens, however, are owned by corporations and individuals who are not residents of the lake-adjacent barangays.

The Laguna Lake Development Authority 2016 report shows the importance of the small fisherfolk fishing activities. Open fishing surpasses fish cages and pens in output, revenues, employment, and labor income generation. LLDA estimated open fishing harvest in 2014 to be 107 million kg—33 percent more than production from fish cages. The estimated gross revenue of P3.8 million from open fishing was double that of fish cages and almost six times that of fish pens. Open fishing provided employment and livelihood to the households of 13,139 fisherfolk and generated labor income of P1.1 million, more than thrice that of fish cages and more than eight times that of fish pens.

Nevertheless, minimal net income or resource rents from Laguna Lake accrue to each fisherfolk and fish cage owner, compared to the exorbitant resource rents enjoyed by the few non-lakeshore resident, fish pen-owning corporations and individuals.

The LLDA has estimates of output, revenues, and costs of open fishing, fish cages, and pens. Cost to revenue ratios reveal that open fishing has much lower intermediate input, fixed capital input, and user cost of capital to revenue ratios—and, hence, a much higher resource rent (net gain) to revenue ratio—compared to fish cages. Open fishing generates more revenues from every peso of fish caught than what fish farming in cages generates for every



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peso of fish harvested. Cost ratios for the fish pens are much lower, likely due to economies of scale, which results in a very high resource rent to revenue ratio.

In 2018, the LLDA published a list of registered fish pen owners. Most fish pen owners—99 out of 137, or 72 percent—were corporations. While 77 of the corporate owners had only one fish pen each; 22 own an average of four fish pens each, occupying a total area of 3,039 hectares, which is almost half (45 percent) of the total registered fish pens' area of 6,831 hectares. As for the 38 individual fish pen owners, 30 had one fish pen each (with average size of 7.2 hectares) and 8 had an average of 4 pens each (average size of 18.8 hectares).

Deducting the minimal resource fee of P6,000 per hectare of fish pen collected by the LLDA from the resource rent of P49,000 per hectare, about P293.96 million worth of resource rent per year was retained by 137 non-resident corporate and individual fish pen owners. Each fish pen owner retained P2.15 million, on average, of resource rent per year for itself. The largest amount of resource rent was enjoyed by the multi-pen corporate owner (P5.94 million) followed by the multi-pen individual owner (P3.24 million).

Most fish cages are owned by fisherfolk residing in the lakeshore barangays. Of the 340 fish cage owners in LLDA's 2018 registration, 213 were residents of Rizal, 79 were residents of Metro Manila, and 48

were residents of Laguna. Fish cage owners are the relatively better-off fisherfolk in the lakeshore communities who had the financial resources to construct one hectare of fish cage and pay the annual fee of P4,500. As fish cage ownership is limited to individuals and the fish cage area for every owner is limited to one hectare, the average annual resource rent enjoyed by each fish cage owner is just about P90,500.

Likewise, in sharp contrast with the huge resource rent enjoyed by fish pen owners, total resource rent from open fishing of P1,878 million is shared among 13,139 fisherfolk, which results in an annual resource rent of only P142,933 per fisher.

Data reveal that huge fishing resource rents generated from Laguna Lake benefit only a few fish pen operators from outside the lakeshore communities. This finding challenges resource administrators to come up with a system where resource rents from aquaculture can accrue to poor fishing households in the lakeshore communities. One way is to collect higher permit fees from large-scale fish pen owners and use the proceeds to provide fishing assistance to open fisherfolk and small-scale fish cage and pond operators in the lakeshore communities. Another way is to promote and facilitate the creation of cooperatives of poor fisherfolk for the operation of large-scale fish pens.

Dr. Rosalina Palanca-Tanis Professor of Economics at Ateneo de Manila University.



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Disaster resilience

“We can say we are naturally and mentally ready for typhoons, as we see Filipinos dancing under the rain and swimming in flooded areas.

Climate change made its presence felt yet again with the onslaught of super typhoon “Karding” early this week. Our cellphones collectively made successive alerts in the wee hours of Monday with the entry of what was surprisingly a typhoon that had Signal No. 5 being raised in some areas. Thankfully, “Karding” weakened as it approached Metro Manila, sparing the business district of destruction and possibly evacuation of residents from flood-prone areas. However, not all areas were spared, with the provinces of Quezon, Bulacan and Nueva Ecija getting hit the hardest.

As someone from the insurance industry, I cannot help but be wary of typhoons and other natural calamities since these bring about damage and injury to peoples’ lives and our properties. The Philippines is no stranger to typhoons, akin to the relationship between Japan and its earthquakes. Our people have adapted to this lifestyle of weathering strong rains and wind. We can say we are naturally and mentally ready for typhoons, as we see Filipinos dancing under the rain and swimming in flooded areas. However, it is a question of whether our government has adapted to climate change.

“Karding” brought about the revival of the talks in Congress for the creation of the Department of Disaster Resilience,



QUO VADIS
DARREN M. DE JESUS

one of the legislative bills unsettled from the previous administration. To recall, the Duterte administration called for the creation of several new government offices, but of them all, the following stood out: Department of Overseas Foreign Workers, Department of Disaster Resilience and Department of Water. Of the three, only the first one was successfully created, but renamed Department of Migrant Workers, now headed by Secretary Susan “Toots” Ople.

Senator Bong Go refiled his bill for the creation of the DDR, citing the need to unify and streamline responsibilities related to disaster response and preparedness which are functions scattered in countless offices, both national and local. This was seconded by Rep. Joey Salceda, citing the need for a “reserve of exogenous resources” for response to natural calamities. He further explained that these lower-class municipalities cannot be expected to fend off super typhoons on a normal basis, and aid must come from the national government, particularly from a single agency.

Perhaps, the prime incident on

the need for the DDR was when we saw President Bongbong Marcos Jr. surveying the typhoon-struck areas from the Presidential helicopter. Notably, the President decided not to land in any of the areas from his chopper. Upon being asked, he said that he did not want to interfere or meddle in the operations of the LGUs. If he landed, then the LGUs would have to drop everything and remove attention from those who need it the most.

This instance highlights that even the President, rightly so, should excuse himself from those who are on top of the main issues of concern. The proper person to go on the ground and coordinate everything must be the Secretary of DDR and his officers, not the President. Additionally, the DDR should have funds to release to ensure proper response.

As for preparedness and security, DDR may also be the central agency to supervise and monitor entry of typhoons and other calamities, as well as the provision of insurance for the security and protection of Filipinos and their properties. With climate change among the key priorities of President Marcos, Jr., the creation of DDR should fit well into the legislative agenda.

For comments, email him at darren.dejesus@gmail.com.

“With climate change among the key priorities of President Marcos, Jr., the creation of DDR should fit well into the legislative agenda.



DISASTER RESILIENCE

We saw exactly how such vulnerable sectors suffered during the last super typhoon, just as we have seen the incremental damages that kept setting the country back in past calamities.

Calls of environment warriors should resound loudest now, as even global organizations are insisting on immediate decisive action from world leaders to act in favor of the planet's protection and sustainability.

Our leaders should not turn a deaf ear to advocates calling for an end to developments like dam projects that raze our forests, mining, land misuse, and weak and arbitrary law enforcement.

A prime example is the Masungi Georeserve Conservation, the group that has long tried to protect one of the last remaining natural forests of the Philippines.

Its president Ben Dumaliang said, in a report, that "they are protecting the 3,000-hectare land to bring it back to the government." Recently, he added, the area has been "occupied and claimed by individuals, persons, and businessmen for themselves."

Meanwhile, it might be a timely move to consider a bill filed in the House of Representatives that "seeks to establish the Sierra Madre Development Authority to protect and conserve the mountain range."

House Bill 1972 was filed by Rizal Rep. Juan Fidel Felipe Nograles on 14 July to create an agency that would "also be required to conduct an extensive inventory of the physical and natural resources in the Sierra Madre region and to establish a detailed strategy to protect and utilize them to promote the region's social and economic development."

These are tasks that concerned government agencies had undoubtedly been remiss in accomplishing for decades now. Otherwise, organizations taking up the cudgels for nature would not raise a hue and cry over human activities like "mining, logging (illegal and legal), land conversion, and construction of roads and dams," as Araceli Mercado, chair of the Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance, said in a news article recently.

The life-giving and life-saving Sierra Madre is nature's gift we must do our best to preserve. Only a strong political will can ensure such gifts endure.

“
*Our
leaders should
not turn a
deaf ear to
advocates
calling for
an end to
developments
like dam
projects
that raze
our forests,
mining, land
misuse, and
weak and
arbitrary law
enforcement.*



We must prioritize the environment now, before natural disasters get even worse

I don't know about you, but these storms are getting ridiculous.

Parts of the country are still reeling from the passage of Typhoon Karding (International name Noru) that made its second landfall in the wee hours of Sept. 26, 2022.

People watched as meteorologists documented Karding's transformation from a tropical depression to a supertyphoon as it made its way through Central Luzon.

NGOs and even private citizens began readying themselves to help potential victims, posting their appeals on social media. Farmers with internet access wrote posts or made vlog posts about how they were going to lose their harvests. One

particularly viral vlog post had a farmer showcasing his lush rice field that would have been ready to harvest in two weeks, if it were not for Karding. Now, he would lose everything, and there wasn't anything he could do about it. He spoke evenly, yet the resignation and weariness of experiencing yet another natural disaster was plain in his demeanor.

Also on social media, like followers



AVANT GARDENER
YVETTE TAN

crying out to their god, people called on the Sierra Madre Mountain range to protect the area from the worst of the typhoon. Mountains with healthy ecosystems can weaken or stop storms because of their upward sloping terrain and because the moisture contained therein can affect the flow of wind, making it lose volume. The Sierra Madre has been doing this for as long as it has existed, but is slowly becoming less effective as a typhoon barrier as its ranges become denuded by illegal logging and mining activities, as well as other projects that are harmful to its ecosystem.

It is because of the second fact that environment and climate change activists and allies took the opportunity to remind people that if we want the Sierra Madre to keep protecting us like it did with Karding, we have to protect it in turn. There is a huge call among citizens to protect the mountain range, but responsibility still lies with the government in terms of drafting and implementing laws to safeguard its environment, as well as denying projects that could harm it.

Some of Karding's aftermath included floods,

power outages, at least ₱3 million in infrastructure damages, at least ₱1.29 billion in agricultural damages, with almost 70,000 people affected and eight killed. And that's with the help of the Sierra Madre. One shudders to imagine what the effects would have been if the mountain range wasn't there. Unfortunately, that could be the scenario sooner than later, if it continues to be ravaged of resources.

The climate crisis is real, and those who deny it now can only afford to do so for so long. The sooner we realize that everything is connected — that the effects of a typhoon in Central Luzon ripples out and affects the entire country in a myriad of ways, from national expenditure to furthering the country's food insecurity and therefore, bolstering its dependence on importation amidst the rising dollar — the easier it will be to course correct and support what's really important: the environment, social safety nets, and so on. Otherwise, things are just going to get worse. By then, it might be too late, even for the people who think they will not be affected.

Don't say I didn't warn you.



Gov't backs efforts to widen access to clean water

FINANCE Sec. Benjamin Diokno assured stakeholders and partners in the development and private sectors that the government is supportive of initiatives towards achieving universal access to clean water.

"[A]llow me to assure you that in our capacity as chair of the administration's economic team, the Department of Finance (DOF) stands ready to support all efforts toward our shared goal of achieving universal access to clean water and fighting climate change at the soonest possible time," Diokno said at the Water Forum 2022.

He said that the Marcos administration recognizes the critical role of sustainable water supply and systems in the daily reality of Filipinos.

Thus, the National Economic and Development Authority introduced the Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan.

"This Plan serves as the blueprint to achieve universal access to safe, sufficient, affordable, and sustainable water supply, hygiene, and sanitation by 2030. To accomplish this goal, the Master Plan focuses on eight key reform agendas that include strengthening our regulatory environment and enabling access to financing," he explained.

The DoF chief said that the plan calls for a total investment of over P1 trillion to achieve universal access to clean water by 2030.

He said that this requires a harmo-

nized orchestration of investments and increased participation from the private sector, international development partners, as well as local and national agencies.

At present, the country's green finance structure is focused on financial tools that are designed to increase revenue generation while taking into account environmental risks to finance projects.

The DoF has been vigorously advocating the protection of the environment and the sound management of its resources.

"To deepen our financial markets and enable green financing to grow, the Department of Finance has been working closely with various government agencies and multilateral partners in building a supportive green finance environment. As a result of this multi-sectoral effort, we have put together a policy package that supports this agenda," Diokno said.

He cited the Sustainable Finance Roadmap that incorporates a whole-of-nation approach in mobilizing finance to support the transition to a clean, sustainable, and climate-resilient economy.

He said that the roadmap aims to address policy and regulatory gaps in promoting sustainable investments through finance, implementing sustainable government initiatives, facilitating investments in public infrastructure, and developing projects that

promote sustainability in the country.

The Bangko Sentral and the DoF also co-lead the Green Force that aims to synergize public and private investments in greening the business landscape and mainstreaming climate action across the financial sector.

The Finance chief cited strong support from multilateral partners and investors for the government's climate finance initiatives.

The government recently issued the country's first-ever sustainability global bonds, sustainability samurai bonds, and first Environmental, Social, and Governance bond issuance that marks the country's opening salvo of efforts to develop the sustainable financing market.

On top of these, the Asian Development Bank has extended to the Philippines its first-ever climate change policy-based financing worth \$250 million, making the country one of the pioneers in climate policy development financing.

Diokno said that the Marcos administration is also building the capacity of local government units for the formulation and implementation of sustainable development projects on the ground.

Through the Climate Change Commission, the government has also assembled a team of Filipino experts to engage climate-vulnerable communities and prepare them to execute localized action plans.



News Briefs

Mt. Arayat protection seen

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources signed a memorandum of agreement with Pampanga 3rd District Representative Aurelio Gonzales Jr., the Kapampangan Development Foundation Inc., the Department of Agriculture and the Samahan ng Magsasaka ng Ayala sa Mataas na Lupa Inc. to facilitate site adoption of the Mount Arayat Protected Landscape.

The agreement aims to protect and boost reforestation efforts and under the MoA, the KDFI will adopt two sites of National Greening Program in the Magalang and Arayat sides of MAPL, covering 70 hectares of the mountain.

These sites will be planted with agroforestry, fruit trees, indigenous forest trees, and bamboo with technical assistance from the DENR and the DA.

JONAS REYES



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Half of world's birds in decline - report

ALMOST half of all bird species are in decline globally and one in eight are threatened with extinction, according to a major new report warning that human actions are driving more species to the brink and nature is "in trouble."

The four-yearly *State of the World's Birds* report, which provides a snapshot of the plight of species globally and more broadly a barometer for biodiversity, comes as the United Nations steers an international process to

protect nature.

"One in eight bird species is threatened with extinction, and the status of the world's birds continues to deteriorate: species are moving ever faster towards extinction," said the report released this week by BirdLife International.

Using data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the report said 49 percent of bird species

►BirdsA8

■ BIRDS FROM A1

Half of world's birds in decline

worldwide have declining populations, with populations falling even in species not normally rare or at risk.

Roughly 13 percent are considered threatened.

The main threats include the growth of unsustainable agriculture, logging, invasive species, over-exploitation and climate change.

Most bird populations face a combination of human-caused threats.

"The natural world is in trouble. Human actions are driving species rapidly towards extinction, undermining ecosystem functions and services vital to our own survival," the report said.

BirdLife International, which has decades of survey data, said there are now 2.9 billion fewer individual birds in North America than there were in 1970, an estimated drop of 29 percent.

The European Union has

seen a net loss of around 600 million birds, roughly 18 percent since 1980.

In both cases, the losses are most acute among long-distance migrants and farmland birds.

Birdlife said many key bird preservation zones were in a poor state and called for a global push to protect and restore habitats.

In December, nations gather to finalize a treaty to halt the decline of biodiversity and set humanity on a path to "live in harmony with nature" by mid-century.

BirdLife International chief Patricia Zurita said the framework under negotiation was "the world's best and perhaps last chance to halt the loss of nature" and restore biodiversity.

"The birds and the rest of nature are depending on us. And we are depending on them," she said.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

Land registration reforms

It is common knowledge that over the years, our country has been plagued by all sorts of land fraud perpetrated with the use of fake land titles, survey plans and tax declarations. Numerous court cases attest to the fact that records pertaining to land ownership have been seriously compromised.

There has also been incessant public clamor for more efficient, effective and speedy delivery of services. To its credit, the Land Registration Authority has taken the initiative of submitting legislative proposals for some of the urgently needed reforms in the last Congress. Yet, despite technological advancements, processing of land transactions in some Registers of Deeds and agencies is still beset with interminable, even whimsical bureaucratic delays that hamper economic activity and social welfare.

Only recently, a property-owner bewailed the requirement of one unscrupulous RD somewhere in Southern Luzon for undocumented payment, mind you, of ₱10 to transfer every square meter of agricultural land, no less. Imagine the tremendous cost this imposes upon hapless small-time buyers and sellers of a mere hectare of agri land and how big a business this has become for corrupt government people and land syndicates. This practice must stop as it stifles the free-flow of huge economic benefits from legitimate land transactions which is crucial to our collective recovery.

Thus, to our mind, institution

of meaningful reforms is way past due, and the agencies concerned must be empowered to pursue this with the full might of an enabling law. This should repair the frayed mantle of protection afforded by the Torrens system of land registration, and exploit to the fullest extent possible the benefits offered by technology.

For instance: the loss of a certificate of title prevents the registration of transactions or interests in the subject land. To resolve this, the law can allow the use of technology that now exists – i.e. the electronic database of land titles – rather than continuing to rely on the lengthy, and costly process of judicial reconstitution or reinstating the discredited process of administrative reconstitution.

Clerical errors in certificates of title, which needlessly result in land controversies, are under the jurisdiction of the courts. With sufficient safeguards against exploitation for nefarious purposes, correction of such errors can be safely relegated to the agencies concerned.

Registration of frivolous adverse claims – against which there are no effective deterrents in the law – has been rampantly used by the crooks for harassment or extortion. Effective deterrents that will not prejudice the interest of legitimate claimants can be incorporated in the law.

The manual processes or procedures prescribed in the law were devised at a time when pen or typewriter was the only tool. Employ-

ing a system of electronic processes would reduce human intervention to the bare minimum, and thus minimize if not eliminate opportunities for wrongdoing, enhance efficiency and productivity, and easily detect wrongful acts.

And while the relatively light penalties no doubt embolden perpetrators of land/title fraud, the agencies concerned have proven incapable of policing their own ranks and ridding themselves of elements that facilitate land or title fraud. Endowing a high-level, independent and disinterested oversight body or “watchdog” with investigatory powers specifically for such purpose may give nefarious elements pause.

These salient features of the CREBA-proposed Land Registration and Administration Act, so crafted as to achieve a balance between the need for convenience and the need to protect rights, may finally pave the way for restoration of public faith. We hope that the current Congress gives this proposal due consideration.

(Charlie A. V. Gorayeb is the national chairman of CREBA, the largest umbrella association of developers, builders, contractors, suppliers manufacturers and professionals engaged in housing and various types of real estate development. With close to 30 chapters all over the Philippines, it has served as the ‘vanguard’ of the property sector since its inception in 1973.)



CREBA SPEAKS
CHARLIE A. GORAYEB



Philippines 4th deadliest country for eco-activists

THE PHILIPPINES was the fourth deadliest country in the world for land and environmental defenders last year, according to an international report, which noted that killings of indigenous peoples were rampant in the Southeast Asian nation.

The report by non-profit organization Global Witness said the country's key institutions were weak, allowing perpetrators to commit crimes with "little accountability."

Global Witness cited 19 environmentalists and land defenders killed in the Philippines in 2021, making the country the most dangerous country for green advocates in Asia.

"Steaming ahead with development projects without any

consideration for human rights raises serious concerns about the future of land and environmental defenders in a country with one of the highest levels of killings of defenders in the world," the report said, referring to the Philippines.

Latin American countries were at the top of the global list with Mexico ranking first with 54 killings, followed by Colombia with 33, and Brazil with 26 killings, the report said. Nicaragua was placed after the Philippines, with 15 killings.

Philippine Solicitor General Menardo I. Gueverra, the justice chief during the last years of former President Rodrigo R. Duterte's six-year term, did not immediately reply to a Viber message seeking comments. The new

administration has yet to issue a statement on the report.

While the Philippines saw a drop in killings of defenders in 2021 from 30 in 2020, the country recorded at least 270 killings between 2012 and 2021, the report said.

The report said that globally, 40% of all "fatal" attacks targeted indigenous peoples (IPs) "despite them only making up 5% of the world's population."

These were documented predominantly in Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Peru, and the Philippines.

It said 40% or 114 of the defenders murdered in the Philippines in the last 10 years were IPs "campaigning to protect their land and the environment."

Nearly 80% of these took place in the southern region of Mindanao.

Most of the killings were linked to the mining sector, with 27 related deaths, the group said. Most of these occurred in Mexico (15), the Philippines (6), Venezuela (4), Nicaragua (1) and Ecuador (1).

The report also cited Mr. Duterte's lifting of a nine-year-old moratorium on new mining projects on April 14, 2021, just over a year before he stepped down in end-June 2022. The moratorium was issued by his predecessor in 2012.

Global Witness said green advocates criticized the move, "warning that the new order could further endanger defenders as well as negatively impact key biodiversity areas, local

water and food supplies, and Indigenous communities."

"There is very little transparency in the Philippines' mining sector, with mining contracts and data seldom made public," according to the report, noting that rules mandating mining firms to get the consent of affected communities are "not consistently implemented."

It said Mr. Duterte's successor, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., "raised a red flag" during his first address to Congress in July, where he emphasized "investment incentives including within the energy sector" and did not talk about the country's human rights condition.

"Impunity is rife: it is suspected that state forces are behind the majority of killings in the few

cases where the identity of the perpetrators is documented," the report said. "Key state institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, are weak, and the military and police commit human rights violations with little accountability."

The Philippines is among the top five countries rich in mineral resources, the report noted, adding that nearly 30% of the country's land is known to hold high mineral deposits, of which over 8% is covered by mining concessions as of July. —

Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link < bit.ly/ecoactivist093022 >



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PHL retains 'most dangerous' tag for environment defenders

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

@jonlmayuga

THE Philippines remains the worst place for environmental activists, the environmental advocacy group Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) said in a recent news release.

Citing data collated by the Global Witness and as cited in its annual report, Kalikasan-PNE said though there may have a slight drop in ranking worldwide, the Philippines remains in the Top 5 list worst countries in the world.

The report said killings in Latin American countries also soared last year.

This is the 9th time the Philippines ranked among the top 10 "most dangerous places in Asia" for environmental activists.

The 2021 report showed a decrease in the total number of lethal attacks against Filipino environmental defenders last year or from 30 in 2020 to 18 in 2021.

According to the report, the Philippines is one of only three countries, next to Brazil and Colombia, where one-half of all the killings in the world were documented. In that

period, Global Witness recorded a total of 270 Filipino environmental defenders killed.

Kalikasan-PNE acting national coordinator Jon Bonifacio said environmental defenders in the Philippines continue to defy the odds, despite the machinery behind the vested interests behind the pillaging of natural resources.

"Environmental defenders and activists play a crucial role in our fight against climate change," said Bonifacio. "Now more than ever, we must fight back against the destruction of land and life across the world, and this can only be done if we fight

alongside those on the frontlines."

The group noted that over 80 percent of killings in the Philippines were traced to protests by environmental defenders against private company operations.

Around 40 percent of the defenders killed are Indigenous Peoples (IP), and around 87 percent of such killings happened in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, the report also said that a third of the lethal attacks against Filipino environmental defenders have been linked to the mining industry, closely followed by the agribusiness sector, the report showed.

"This situation is bound to continue unless specific measures are put in place to protect the rights of our defenders, including mechanisms to ensure perpetrators are held accountable," said Bonifacio.

In terms of mineral deposits, the Philippines is one of the world's top 5 countries, with nearly 30 percent of its lands area known to hold high mineral deposits. Records of the Philippine environment department show that 8 percent of this area is covered by mining concessions as of July 2021, the group noted.

To recall, in April 2021, President Duterte overturned a nine-year na-

tionwide moratorium on new mining projects, which had been in place since 2012. Environmental and human rights groups condemned this move, warning that the new order could further endanger defenders and damage key biodiversity areas.

"The previous administration, with its atrocious human rights record, was certainly a step back in ensuring the safety of our defenders," noted Bonifacio. "Unfortunately, the Marcos Jr. administration has not made this a priority either. In this light, we environmental activists must continue to prepare and push back," he said.