

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PH SIGNS THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT



The Philippine Statement delivered by DENR Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje
United Nations Headquarters, New York
22 April 2016

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and Excellencies, we sign the Paris Agreement today, Earth Day, with faith and hope in the 196 parties to the UNFCCC that adopted the agreement.

The Philippines, a highly vulnerable developing nation, with one of the most ambitious targets, has already taken steps to pursue national actions to address climate change through its intended nationally determined contribution or INDC.

Despite financial limitations, the Philippines has already demonstrated its commitment to meeting its pledge with the implementation of the National Climate Action Plan and the integration of climate change in national and local development plans and budgets. It will continue to cascade climate change mitigation and adaptation

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actions to sub-national levels and to invest in climate- resilient local economies, consistent with post-2015 international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and most especially, this Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

To secure a sustainable future, the Philippines is pursuing value-adding strategies to ensure the provision of ecosystem services and green growth to address pollution and environmental degradation. To this end, a greenhouse gas inventory management and reporting system is being developed to create a transparent, accurate and comparable baseline of emissions.

It has also submitted recently its Instrument of Accession to the DOHA Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol.

As a highly vulnerable country, the Philippines has committed early to contributing its fair share to the global action consistent with the Climate Vulnerable Forum's Manila-Paris Declaration which calls for a mitigation goal of below 1.5 degrees Celsius and full decarbonization and 100% renewable energy production by 2050.

Too much is at stake. Developed countries therefore need to do more in terms of dramatically raising their NDC ambition compatible with the 1.5-degrees Celsius threshold, as well as raising funding contribution to the climate action plans of vulnerable countries, which require adequate, predictable and sustainable financing. The Philippines also urges developed and developing countries alike to take urgent pre-2020 action.

Finally, to echo Philippine President Benigno Aquino, the Philippine contribution to the global problem that is climate change is admittedly a drop in the well. But like the droplets in the ocean, the concerted efforts of all parties can surely mitigate the impacts of climate change. Therefore the Philippines strongly urges all countries to build upon the momentum from Paris and work together toward full implementation of this Agreement.

Thank you and Mabuhay!



Department of Environment
and National Resources

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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US Secretary of State John Kerry holds his two-year-old granddaughter Isabel as he signs the Paris Agreement on climate change at the United Nations headquarters in New York last Friday. Top photo shows Environment Secretary Ramon Paje signing the agreement for the Philippines. AP/REUTERS

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Despite financial limitations, the Philippines has already demonstrated its commitment to meeting its pledge with the implementation of the National Climate Action Plan and the integration of climate change in national and local development plans and budgets. It will continue to cascade climate change mitigation and adaptation actions to sub-national levels and to invest in climate-resilient local economies, consistent with post-2015 international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and most especially, this Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

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Department of Environment
and National Resources

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175 states sign landmark Paris deal on climate change

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The historic agreement on climate change marked a major milestone on Friday with a record 175 countries signing on to it on opening day. But world leaders

made clear more action is needed, and quickly, to fight a relentless rise in global temperatures.

With the planet heating up to record levels, sea levels rising and gla- ►22

ciers melting, the pressure to have the Paris Agreement enter into force and to have every country turn its words into deeds was palpable at the UN signing ceremony.

"The world is in a race against time," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his opening speech. "The era of consumption without consequences is over."

"Today you are signing a new covenant with the future. This covenant must amount to more than promises," he said.

The agreement will enter into force once 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions have formally joined it, a process initially expected to take until 2020.

But following a host of announcements at the signing event, observers now think it could happen later this year.

China, the world's top carbon emitter, announced it would "finalize domestic procedures" to ratify the agreement before the G-20 summit in China in September. The United States, the world's second-largest emitter, reiterated its intention to ratify this year, as did Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the leaders of Mexico and Australia.

Maros Sefcovic, the energy chief for another top emitter, the 28-nation European Union, has also said the EU wants to be in the "first wave" of ratifying countries.

Congo's President Joseph Kabila,

speaking on behalf of the world's 48 least-developed countries, said all were committed to "to move in one irreversible direction to secure a safer climate." Even though small emitters, he said they would take the steps required to ratify the agreement "as soon as possible," a reflection of the wide reach of the agreement.

The Washington-based World Resources Institute said that at least 25 countries representing 45 percent of global emissions had either joined the agreement Friday or committed to joining it early.

French President Francois Hollande, the first to sign in recognition of his key role in achieving the December agreement, said he would ask parliament to ratify it by this summer.

US Secretary of State Kerry said the signing of the agreement had to be followed by a recommitment by world leaders to actually win the "war" against carbon emissions that are making the world hotter every year.

Academy Award-winning actor Leonardo Dicaprio, a UN messenger of peace and climate activist, captured the feelings of many when he said: "We can congratulate each other today, but it will mean absolutely nothing if the world's leaders gathered here go home and do nothing."

"No more talk, no more excuses, no more 10-year studies," he told the VIPs. "The world is now watching. You will either be lauded by future generations or vilified by them."

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175 Atpoc sign landmark Paris deal on climate change

After he spoke, leaders and diplomats from the 175 countries were called to the front of the chamber to sign the agreement. Kerry carried his granddaughter in his arms, a symbol of the future generations the agreement is aimed at protecting.

The ceremony, held on Earth Day, brought together a wide range of states that might sharply disagree on other issues.

Under the agreement, countries set their own targets for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The targets are not legally binding, but countries must update them every five years.

Already, states face pressure to do more. Scientific analyses show the initial set of targets that countries pledged before Paris don't match the agreement's long-term goal to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), compared with pre-industrial times. Global average temperatures have already climbed by almost 1 degree Celsius. Last year was the hottest on record.

PH: Commit to action

Having signed the historic Paris Agreement along with over 160 countries, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) of the Philippines urged member-states to turn commitments into individual and concerted actions to combat the ill-effects of climate change.

Secretary Emmanuel De Guzman, vice-chairman of the CCC, said the signing of the deal comes at the most

appropriate time when impacts of global warming are becoming fiercer, harsher, and more dangerous especially to highly vulnerable countries like the Philippines.

It is also a crucial tool for the Philippines, as it will provide for the country the mechanism to obtain resources to fully support its climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

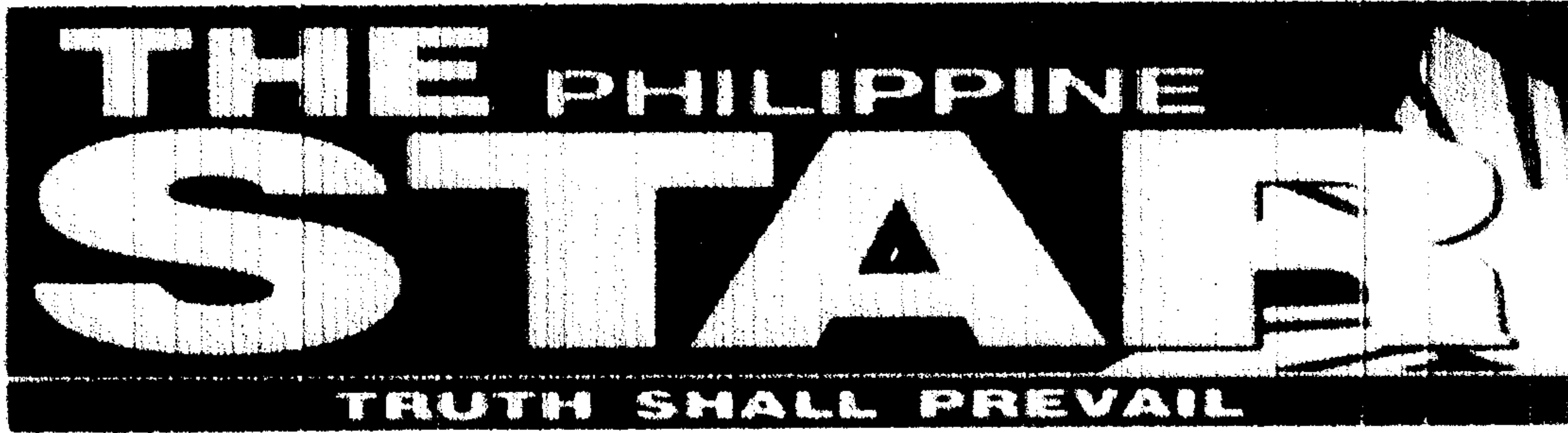
De Guzman however noted that commitments to the new climate accord should not stop with the mere signing and must usher in revolutionary, concrete and decisive actions from member-countries.

"We must all look beyond the signing of the Paris Agreement. For it is now time to walk the talk; we cannot afford any more delays in carrying out concerted action to combat climate change and its impacts," he pointed out.

De Guzman and Department Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ramon Paje led the Philippine Delegation to the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement.

President Aquino designated Paje to sign the Paris Agreement on behalf of the Philippine government.

The signing of the Paris Agreement paves the way for member-countries to respectively ratify it and integrate environment and climate change programs to their specific national development policies in order to deliver commitments to keep global temperature increase to, at best, well below 1.5 degrees Celsius. (With a



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Legarda to push for ratification of Paris climate pact

By MARVIN SY

Now that 175 countries, including the Philippines, have signed the legally binding Paris climate agreement, Sen. Loren Legarda said that the challenge now is to ensure its early entry into force.

The Paris agreement will come into force once 55 countries responsible for 55 percent of the world's greenhouse gases have ratified it, including the world's top polluters China and the United States. Altogether, the 175 signatories at the United Nations signing ceremony account for 93 percent of global greenhouse gases, according to the World Resource Institute.

Legarda said that she will work on getting the agreement ratified by the Senate within the year while also calling on legislators from other countries to do the same.

"We will muster all the energy and resources within our means, sustain advocacy at the grassroots level and rally the executive and legislative branches of the government, as well as the local government units, so that the Philippines can be true to its commitment in Paris to keep global temperature rise this century well below two degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels," Legarda said.

In her capacity as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Global Champion for Resilience, Legarda has written to parliamentarians of the 43 countries making up the Climate Vulnerable Forum, urging them to ratify the agreement.

"I also call on my fellow legislators in the Women in Parliaments Global Forum, my fellow policy-makers in GLOBE International and everyone who values life and our future, let us continue to rally our networks, organizations and civil society in ensuring that our governments keep the promises they gave in Paris," she said.

Sen. Grace Poe supports the ratification of the Paris agreement and the fulfillment of its commitments.

"I call on the Senate to immediately ratify the Paris Agreement. I will certainly lead and participate in this effort. After ratification, the next task for us is to honor our commitment as captured in our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)," Poe said.

If elected president in the May 9 elections, Poe said that she is committed to the country's pledge under the agreement and will work to reduce emission by 70 percent relative to business-as-usual levels by 2030.

"This means that we will have to make a rapid transition to renewable energy and protect our forests and ecosystems. We will also accelerate adaptation efforts so that our people and communities become

more resilient," Poe said.

Public should pitch in

The Philippine Climate Change Commission (CCC) urged the public to help the government in its efforts to deal with climate change and its impact.

With the continued rise of global temperatures, CCC Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman stressed that the adverse effects of climate change do not discriminate and will not spare anyone. — With Janvic Mateo, AFP

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CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN ALBAY

LEGAZPI CITY—Albay, declared recently by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a world biosphere reserve, has launched a sustainable ecosystems management program with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change in the province.

The Albay-DENR partnership agreement signed last week provides for the establishment of the Sustainable Coral Reef Ecosystem Management Program, initially covering three municipalities and one city in the West Coast area in the third district of the province.

Albay Gov. Joey Salceda said SCREMP aims to promote sustainable management of coastal and marine resources, including biodiversity, through habitat protection, conservation and rehabilitation as well as IEC to promote public awareness and social and environmental consciousness on the value of coral reefs, and associated coastal and marine ecosystems on mitigating the impacts of climate change.

SCREMP includes a livelihood component, managed by a legitimate people's organization, which is seemed critical to sustainability by providing alternative cashflows to slow down, among others, overfishing, said Salceda.

Unesco declared Albay as a world Biosphere Reserve Albay during a recent conference in Lima, Peru. With some 257,000 hectares of diverse terrestrial and marine ecology supported by the local government's pioneering sustainable development strategy, the province now is a special protected site for learning the management of social and ecological systems.

The Unesco's declaration puts Albay among its 20 new sites of protected World Network of biospheres under the international coordinating council of its Man and the Biosphere program. Biosphere reserves are places for learning about sustainable development to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of natural resources.

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FPI urges gov't to be cautious in anti-carbon emission campaign

The Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) is asking the government to exercise caution and consult closely with the private sector before it commits to have local businesses significantly cut their carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions without well-studied rationale.

The FPI made the call as it expressed alarm over the ambitious mitigation target set by the Philippines as part of its contribution to the global drive to control climate change.

Specifically, the Philippines has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by about 70 percent by 2030. The reduction in CO2 emissions will come from the energy, transport, waste, forestry and industry sectors.

The country's commitment is contained in the draft Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) that has been submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In its position paper, FPI urged the government not to blindly accept promises considering that several issues, concerns and ambiguities still surround the program to reduce global CO2 emissions.

Instead, it appealed to the government to

By Ed Velasco

conduct public consultations to help the administration "take (a) realistic position on certain key aspects of the INDC" and ensure that this stance is "aligned with national priorities, circumstances and capabilities."

The hearings will also allow FPI and other industry sectors to have a clearer understanding of the INDC, in particular the mitigation options to be adopted to meet the 70 percent mitigation target.

Meneleo Carlos, FPI chairman emeritus, also suggested that rather than focusing on cutting CO2 emissions considering that the Philippines' GHG emissions are "minuscule compared to developed countries," the country can focus on a massive reforestation program as a better solution to the domestic pollution problem.

"This should be supported by carbon credits from the primary polluters, the developed countries. It is essential to finance the extensive and continuous reforestation and afforestation throughout the world. All GHG emitters everywhere should provide carbon credits in proportion to their volumes of emission," he

said in a position paper obtained by the *Daily Tribune*.

He added the wood should "preferably be converted into long-life products like houses, furniture, etc. in order to lock up the carbon dioxide therein. This is how GHG can be reduced effectively."

This approach, he said, has the added benefit of providing livelihood for the country's mountain people, and supplying wood to the wood-processing and construction industries and exporters.

Other than these, other co-benefit measures to reduce GHG also include traffic decongestion and energy efficiency or Demand-Side-Management programs.

FPI also said the business community needs to know more about the INDC and its potential impact on business.

Industries are also asking why the Philippines is committing to a 70 percent percent target, whereas other major users of fossil fuels (which are among the primary sources of greenhouse gases), including China, the US, the EU, India, Russia and Japan, are pledging much lower percentages.

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A broader look at today's business

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Plant a tree, help save the planet

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA


@jonlmayuga

WHAT can help save the planet? Trees. Stop cutting and start planting trees.

Top officials of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) highlighted the importance of maintaining a healthy ecology to ensure the survival of every Filipino, as the Philippines joined the international celebration of Earth Day 2016 on April 22.

The Philippines marked Earth Day with the signing of the Paris Agreement in New York on April 22. The deal includes a covenant in support of the country's commitment to the global effort to reduce carbon emission and limit global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius between 2020 and 2030. Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje represented the Philippines during the historic signing of the Paris Agreement that was forged in December 2015 in Paris, France.

70%

 The percentage of carbon-emission reduction the Philippines committed to the United Nations

Earth Day every day

THIS year's international Earth Day theme was "Trees for the Earth. Let's get planting." The Philippines's campaign slogan, "Step Up and Deliver, #GreenEnvironment-GawingForever," highlighted the importance of trees in fighting climate change, considered as the most serious threat to the planet and human existence today.

"Make every day Earth Day," FMB Director Ricardo Calderon said.

The Philippines, through its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which it submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in October, committed to reduce its carbon emission by 70 percent by 2030. Top environment officials said that to sustain growth, the country needs to expand its forest cover and increase its carbon-absorption capacity, as well, underscoring the need to continue the "greening" of the country's forests.

Volunteerism

EXTOLLING the sense of group and individual volunteerism and the support of the private sector, Calderon, who is also the national coordinator of the National Greening Program (NGP), said the government's ongoing reforestation program was a success, but could even be more successful with the support of every Filipino.

"Imagine if every Filipino will plant just one tree, we will already have 120 million trees, and if we do

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that every year, our closed canopy forest will be back in no time," he said. Because of NGP the trend of environmental degradation was reversed, he added.

"Now, the rate of reforestation is 240,000 hectares every year," Calderon said. From the last quarter of 2010, over 1.35 million hectares of open, degraded and denuded forests have been covered by massive tree planting as of December 2015.

Calderon is confident that the overall target of 1.5 million hectares will be met before the end of 2016. He noted that seedling production has become institutionalized with 35 state universities and colleges maintaining clonal nurseries and five regular tree nurseries producing quality-planting materials. Once completed, the reforestation program would translate to an absorption capacity of 30 million tons of carbon dioxide annually. "That is generally the direction. By expanding our forest cover, we are expanding our carbon reservoir. More trees, more forest [means] more carbon sink," he said.

Carbon footprint

THE country's economic growth in the last six years saw the country's carbon footprint increasing. Carbon footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide and other carbon compounds emitted due to the consumption of fossil fuels.

Currently the country's carbon footprint is increasing by 1.3 percent, which was partially the basis of the country's INDC submission to the UNFCCC. Calderon said

that, even after the NGP expires in 2028, the government would have planting materials for future tree-planting activities.

Last year, a year before the original NGP deadline expires, President Aquino signed Executive Order 193, expanding the NGP to cover the remaining 7.1 million hectares that need to be reforested. The program covers the period 2016 to 2028.

Before the NGP, the rate of deforestation was pegged at 42,000 hectares a year. The country's forest shrank tremendously that because of the depletion, the forest's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) shrank and is now below 1 percent.

"We are hoping that with the sustained reforestation, forestry's contribution to the GDP will increase and breach 1 percent," Calderon said.

The Aquino administration's flagship reforestation program, the NGP, aims to plant 1.5 billion trees in 1.5 million hectares of land by 2016 in its original plan.

So far, the government had spent over P25 billion from 2010 to 2015. This year the government has allotted P8 billion to complete the program. But Calderon emphasized the need to reduce waste and energy consumption as well by living a simple life with not too much use of fuel and energy that contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Tree-farming

THE DENR, through Paje, is gloating with the success of the program, which he attributed to the twin

policy on reforestation: Executive Order (EO) 23, signed on February 11, 2011, which imposes a total log ban on natural and residual forest, and EO 26, signed on February 24, 2011, which established the NGP. From 1960 up to 2010, before the total log ban was imposed, the DENR estimates that 1.7 million trees are cut and harvested from natural forests.

According to Calderon, to promote sustainable forest management, the DENR tapped the community-based forest management partners of the DENR to plant fuel wood, fruit-bearing trees and wood of commercial value, such as falcata and Philippine mahogany.

The plan is to encourage more people to invest in tree-farming to support the wood industry, particularly in Mindanao.

Calderon said farmers with small landholdings would find tree-farming a worthwhile venture. He also urged businesses to diversify and invest in the establishment of forest plantations to further boost the government's "greening" effort with the backing of the private sector. "We are hoping that through reforestation, we will realize the gains of reforestation in terms of increased contribution in the GDP," he said.

Unaccounted benefits

"[BESIDES] the oxygen we breathe, a healthy forest helps clean the air, protect our watersheds. Whether there's El Niño or not, it ensures good supply of water, in terms of quantity and quality, for irrigation of our agricultural areas and

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domestic requirements," Calderon said. The benefits of a healthy environment, he said, could not be fully accounted, as there are no means to measure the cost of clean air and water, the protection against natural calamities, or even the aesthetic beauty that provides the boost to ecotourism.

More important, Calderon said, the forest's contribution in terms of carbon capture is perhaps the biggest unaccounted benefit of planting trees.

"With El Niño, planting trees or reforestation is very important. It will help increase our carbon-sequestration capacity and help fight climate change," Calderon said.

Stand up against coal

OTHER environmental groups, reacting to the country's signing of the Paris Agreement on Earth Day, meanwhile, criticized the Aquino administration for its conflicting policies. While the government is claiming to promote the environment through reforestation, they said the promotion of coal as a source of energy is confusing, at best, and somewhat "hypocritical."

Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment national coordinator Clemente Bautista said that, while the Paris Agreement binds the country to reducing carbon emission by 70 percent by 2030, current policy on energy leans heavily on coal dependency.

He said the Aquino administration has approved 47 coal-power projects from 2014 up to 2020.

"Under Aquino's term, carbon emissions from coal-power sources

have increased by 30 percent. It has also inaugurated at least three new coal-power plants under its administration. If all approved coal [plant] projects will be realized, an estimated total of 60 metric tons of carbon-dioxide emissions will be released by 2025," he said.

"How can we contribute to keeping global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius? We are still not calculating the contribution of carbon emission because of forest denudation, and vegetation lost due to logging and commercial mining. [President] Aquino is through and through climate liar," he added.

Stop tree cutting

IN an interview, Chuck Baclagon, campaigner of 350.org East Asia, said tree planting is a positive action for individuals and institutions. However, he said a "proportionate response is needed to address environmental problems."

He said "because of the magnitude of the environmental problems we are facing, we can always plant trees but we should also see to it that the cutting of trees, whether old or new, should stop."

He also said there's a need for transformation as to how the country produces energy, noting that "to be more pro-environment, renewable energy, and not coal, should be the way." Incidentally, the Climate Change Commission has called for a review of the country's energy-mix policy as the share of renewable energy continues to shrink despite the passage of the Renewable Energy Act in 2008.

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Refrain from practicing 'kaingin' in mountainous areas – DENR 10

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY – Local residents, particularly those living in highland communities around the Mount Kitanglad and Mount Kalatungan protected areas in Bukidnon and nearby areas, have been warned not to engage on the "kaingin" or slash-and-burn system of clearing farming, to avert grass or forest fires.

The regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR 10) has also cautioned those who will be going to the two mountains to be more responsible in disposing of lighted cigarettes and putting out camp fires in these areas where there is already a considerable number of inhabitants.

"These are really the causes of fires," stressed DENR 10 Director Ruth Tawantawan.

She said the local officials have a key role in implementing these "No Kaingin, No Burning of Grass, No Hunting" rules in their respective information and dissemination drives.

Tawantawan ordered the four community environment and natural resources offices (CENROs) in Bukidnon under the supervision of

the Bukidnon provincial environment and natural resources office (PENRO) to also conduct wide information dissemination drive, so will not repeat the recent grass and forest fires with some areas of Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan.

The official believed that the fire originated from extremely parched areas of the mountains. She said the thin canopy and dry leaves are likely to have caused the fire.

The DENR 10 has commended local communities, people's organizations (POs) and mountaineers for helping authorities put out the forest fires that hit Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan last week.

It particularly cited the members of Kitanglad Guard Volunteers (KGV), a group of indigenous people in Northern Mindanao, and several volunteer mountaineers who helped DENR forest rangers and personnel construct an 11-km. firebreak to contain the blaze.

Firebreak prevented further destruction of natural forests, grasslands and areas covered by the National Greening Program in the two protected areas. On April 10, fire has been contained in all the damaged areas, RED Tawantawan said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

ON EMPOWERING THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

Environmental calamities, military threats, and other dangers



By **FIDEL V. RAMOS**
FORMER PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT

(Last of Two Parts)

SIGNIFICANT global developments of the last few months have served to highlight what FVR has been emphasizing consistently as serious concerns for our citizenry, and are particularly grave problems which the incoming Administration must positively address without delay come 30 June 2016. At this point in time, this task involves all the 5 wannabe Presidents and the 6 Vice-Presidentials, plus all the potential lawmakers in the new 17th Congress, and all functionaries in local government at every level.

Uncertainties Facing the People

AT NO TIME SINCE THE AF-TERMATH OF 9-11 – WHICH WAS THE TERRORIST (AL QAEDA) ATTACK ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY AND THE PENTAGON IN WASHINGTON D.C. ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2001 – HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A COMBINATION OF MILITARY THREATS, ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES, ENVIRONMENTAL CALAMITIES AND OTHER RISKS AS WE ARE NOW SEEING DURING THIS CRUCIAL YEAR OF 2016.

There is no need to elaborate here on these misfortunes which are almost daily being reported by multi-media and constantly viewed by the Filipino audience like, for instance:

- Severe effects of El Niño (drought) incidence in Asian countries, particularly the Philippines.
- Costly encounters between the Abu Sayyaf and the AFP/PNP, and creeping international terrorism.
- Death and destruction within the Syria-Iraq borders because of prolonged civil wars/Islamic terrorism which have forced more than a million Arab refugees to escape from their homeland to seek sanctuaries in Europe – even if this means traversing the treacherous Mediterranean Sea on flimsy rubber boats.
- North Korea's claim of successful tests of a ballistic missile engine designed for an ICBM that would guarantee an eventual nuclear strike in the US mainland.
- Devastating earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in Nepal, Japan, Taiwan, and Ecuador with the suddenness and deadliness of lightning strikes.

- Continuing threats of shooting encounters in the South China Sea and across the 38th parallel border of South and North Korea that could lead to WWII.

- US/EU vs. Russia confrontations on Ukraine, Iran and Syria issues in the negotiations for an effective ceasefire.

- Uncertain, mixed indications of weak global economic recovery which has been slowed down by China's overheating to single-digit growth.

- Continued decline of oil prices causing long-standing economic crisis in some countries.

Defense Chiefs Visit 'Flash-point Waters'

Agence France Presse (16 April) reported that US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter visited a warship close to the disputed flash-point waters of the South China Sea last 15 April in a show of American commitment to maintaining stability in the hotly contested waterway amid China's increasingly aggressive behavior.

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"This is a strong message to the region that the US intends to continue to play a role in keeping peace and stability in this region," Carter told reporters aboard the USS John C. Stennis, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that can carry 75 fighter planes plus several helicopters. He was accompanied by our Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hernando Iriberry, and Defense Undersecretary Emmanuel Bautista.

BEIJING, MANILA AND WASHINGTON HAVE HEATEDLY TRADED ACCUSATIONS

OVER WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING TENSIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, WITH THE US, THE PHILIPPINES AND OTHER NATIONS CITING CHINA'S ISLAND-BUILDING PROJECTS AND RELATED EFFORTS TO BLOCK OTHER DISPUTANTS FROM PARTS OF THE CRUCIAL WATERWAY - THROUGH WHICH PASSES MORE THAN \$5 TRILLION IN GLOBAL TRADE EACH YEAR.

Responding to what it called provocative plans for stepped-up US-Philippine military cooperation, China said it would "resolutely defend" its interests and accused the two longstanding allies of militarizing the South China Sea and harboring a "Cold War mentality."

The comments of China's Defense Ministry came shortly after the 14 April announcement that the US would send troops and planes to the Philippines for more frequent "rotations" and would increase joint sea and air patrols with Philippine forces in the widely disputed South China Sea.

China justifies its island developments as mainly for civilian purposes and says US naval activities - especially the intrusion of ships close to its newly built islands - threaten China's security, according to the *Agence France Press* (16 April). These American naval operations could involve Japan, China's historical nemesis with which it has been feuding over the ownership of a string of uninhabited Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

Tonkin Gulf and Other Sources of Uncertainty

Vietnam and China also continue to squabble over the latter's persistence in drilling for oil and gas in the Gulf of Tonkin. Reuters reported (09 April) that *"China moved a controversial oil rig and started drilling in waters where jurisdiction is unclear - the latest sign of festering unease among the two Communist neighbors."*

The \$1-billion rig, which was at the center of a fierce diplomatic stand-off between these countries in 2014, had moved into an area of the Gulf of Tonkin in the South China Sea about which Vietnam said the two countries were still "executing delineation discussions."

Vietnam and the Philippines have been eying naval war games, similar to the just concluded Philippines-US "Balikatan" (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) exercises, and even joint sea patrols. Ties have strengthened between the two Southeast Asian countries even as China's assertiveness continues to intensify.

Last November, Vietnam and the Philippines agreed on a strategic partnership to boost security relations while China expands its presence in the strategic waterway, and deploys military equipment to the Spratly and Paracel islands.

Troops from both countries have played sports together twice since 2014 in the disputed islands they occupy. Last 11 April, Philippine Foreign Secretary Jose Rene Almendras was the first foreign dignitary to meet Vietnam's new Prime Minister, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

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SOME SILVER LININGS

Environmental

Calamities

Also, during a visit last week to Singapore by Almendras, the Philippines and Singapore agreed to exhaust all multilateral approaches, mainly through the ASEAN system, to resolve the issues surrounding the South China Sea.

In addition to these fresh initiatives, the Indonesian energy company Pertamina plans to explore for oil and gas in areas close to Indonesia's maritime border in the South China Sea to assert its territorial rights.

"The Indonesian Government needs to intensify activities around the borders and one of Pertamina's policies is to support this," Syam-

su Alam, the upstream director of the state-owned company, told Reuters in a recent interview. He said Indonesia had lost sovereignty over two disputed islands in the past because it was not developing those areas.

Depredations by the Abu Sayyaf

In *The New Standard* (14 April), retired General Florencio Fianza, a prolific military analyst, affirmed: "April 9 was another sad day for our Armed Services. In an engagement in Tipo-Tipo, Basilan between the kidnap-for-ransom group Abu Sayyaf and elements of the Philippine Army's 44th Infantry Battalion, 18 soldiers were killed and about 53 wounded. Five of the Abu Sayyaf members were reported killed including a Moroccan by the name of Mohamad Khattab and Haipa Hapilon, son of the current Abu Sayyaf head.

"There is a lot at stake. The Bangsamoro Basic Law, the ISIS connection, the fighting reputation of our Armed Services, the reliability of the MILF as a peace partner, etc... We cannot simply go on suffering huge casualty rates. During the first year of this Administration, 19 Army soldiers were killed by the MILF for not coordinating. Then the Mamasapano operation that resulted in the killing of 44 PNP SAF personnel..."

In Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and at sea, the Abu Sayyaf has also effected kidnapping atrocities that have kept the AFP-PNP and local government units busy.

IT IS NOT ONLY BAD FOR THE REPUTATION OF THE COUNTRY THAT THE ABU SAYYAF CONTINUES TO KIDNAP FOREIGNERS AT WILL. IT ALSO AFFECTS THE MORALE OF OUR TROOPS AND THEREFORE DIMINISHES THEIR ABILITY TO FIGHT. ALMOST ALWAYS, THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE DISPERSED TO AVOID LARGE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MILITARY OR POLICE. MARAUDING BANDS ONLY GET TOGETHER WHEN IT'S TIME TO KIDNAP. THEY PREFER FOREIGNERS BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE WILLING TO PAY RANSOM. THE ABU SAYYAF IS THE ONE CRIMINAL GROUP THAT CONTINUES TO GIVE OUR COUNTRY A BLACK EYE AND A BAD REPUTATION.

IN A CONCERNED CITIZENS FORUM IN ALABANG LAST WEEK TO WHICH FVR WAS INVITED, SENIOR ASSOCIATE JUSTICE ANTONIO CARPIO GAVE A CONVINCING, WELL-DOCUMENTED LECTURE ON CHINA'S AGGRESSION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND THE PROGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINE CASE BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL ON THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS) IN THE HAGUE. HE OPINED THAT WORLD OPINION APPEARS TO BE SWINGING TOWARDS THE SIDE OF THE RULE OF LAW - AND THEREFORE IN FAVOR OF THE PHILIPPINE POSITION.

FOR HIS PART, FVR REPEATED HIS FAMILIAR ASPIRATION FOR ENDURING PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WHICH IS NOW THE U.N.'S GOAL BY YEAR 2030), CONSIDERING THE MASSIVE COSTS OF ARMS BUILDUP BY THE SUPERPOWERS - THE FUNDS AND ASSETS FOR WHICH WOULD SURELY BE BETTER INVESTED TO FIGHT MANKIND'S 21ST CENTURY ENEMIES WHICH ARE MAINLY POVERTY, HUNGER, PANDEMIC DISEASES, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT THE PHILIPPINES CAN PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN ATTAINING THIS WORLDWIDE GOAL, PARTICULARLY BY OUR VERY TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.

KAYA NATIN ITO!!!

Please send any comments to fvr@rpdev.org. Copies of articles are available at www.rpdev.org.

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Grace, Mar, Miriam vow to throw out Canadian trash

Presidential candidates Grace Poe, Mar Roxas and Miriam Defensor Santiago, if elected, will take specific measures to solve the Canadian garbage scandal and prevent it from recurring, watchdog EcoWaste Coalition said yesterday.

The group said this was the common response of the three candidates to the questions it sent.

Two more presidential candidates, Vice President Jejomar Binay and Rodrigo Duterte, did not answer EcoWaste's questions.

Poe, Roxas and Santiago described what they plan to do in their first 100 days in office to ensure that illegal waste shipments from Canada are sent back.

Santiago vowed to invoke the Basel Convention to "force Canada to take back the trash it dumped in Philippine soil."

The Basel Convention, which the Philippines ratified in 1993, seeks to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes, particularly the transboundary movements of such wastes between nations.

Santiago, who filed two resolutions at the Senate pertaining to the Canadian garbage dumping, said "we must not process the waste in the Philippines, as it sets a dangerous precedent."

"If we allow one country to turn the Philippines into a garbage dump, we are telling all other countries that they can do the same," she said.

Meanwhile, Roxas said he would ask the Canadian government to ship back their garbage "at the soonest time possible."

"While these were imported by a private company, they would not have reached the Philippines without clearance from concerned Canadian authorities. The Canadian government must be asked to assume equal responsibility to remove these waste materials from the Philippines at the soonest time possible," he said.

Roxas said he will order the Department of Foreign Affairs to send an official letter to Canada, "demanding them to take back all these containers which were imported in violation of Philippine laws and the Basel Convention."

Poe said her administration will "facilitate bilateral talks with the Canadian government to repatriate the wastes back to Canada."

She also said that she will "take immediate steps to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment to ensure clean production and no hazardous wastes are shipped from developed countries to developing countries for any reason."

The Basel Ban Amendment is a revision to the Basel Convention that seeks to prohibit exports of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries for final disposal, reuse, recycling and recovery.

Duterte had previously spoken against the illegal entry of Canadian waste, he suggested that Aquino file a diplomatic protest against Canada over the shipments.

— Rhodina Villanueva

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Miriam: Renewable Energy Act is not serving its purpose

By MARIO B. CASAYURAN

As the country gears up for the third and final presidential debate in Dagupan city this afternoon, Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago urged her rivals to adopt a "people-centered approach" in their environment, climate change, and disaster risk reduction platforms.

"We are resource-rich but income-poor, partly because we view environmental protection as a roadblock to development. That should not be the case. What we are doing is ensuring that whatever gains we get now will be enjoyed by generations to come," Santiago said.

Leaders from 175 countries signed yesterday the Paris Climate Agreement at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

The Philippine delegation was headed by Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ramon Paje with Sen. Loren Legarda, chair of the Senate climate change committee, as co-leader.

Santiago's statement comes amid accolades from at least three coalitions of environment groups for championing resource conservation, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction in her program of government.

Greenest candidate

She was named the "greenest candidate" by the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment for her track record. The same group named Liberal Party bet Manuel A. Roxas II the "meanest" to the environment.

Santiago was also lauded by a green group initiative called Luntiang Bayan: Boto Para sa Tao, Hayop at Kalikasan as the presidential candidate who has done the most for the environment, citing the numerous laws and bills she drafted.

The lady senator also topped the scorecards launched by the Green

Thumb Coalition on Friday, bagging 79 percent in "people-centered sustainable development," 78 percent in "human rights and integrity of creation," and 50 percent in "climate justice."

In her platform of government, Santiago highlighted the need for evidence-based planning.

"To combat climate change, we must practice both mitigation and adaptation, and our decisions must be based on data and science," she added.

Santiago also vowed to capacitate local government unit (LGUs) to better implement environment protection, climate change and disaster risk reduction programs; take advantage of indigenous knowledge; and foster transparency in the sector.

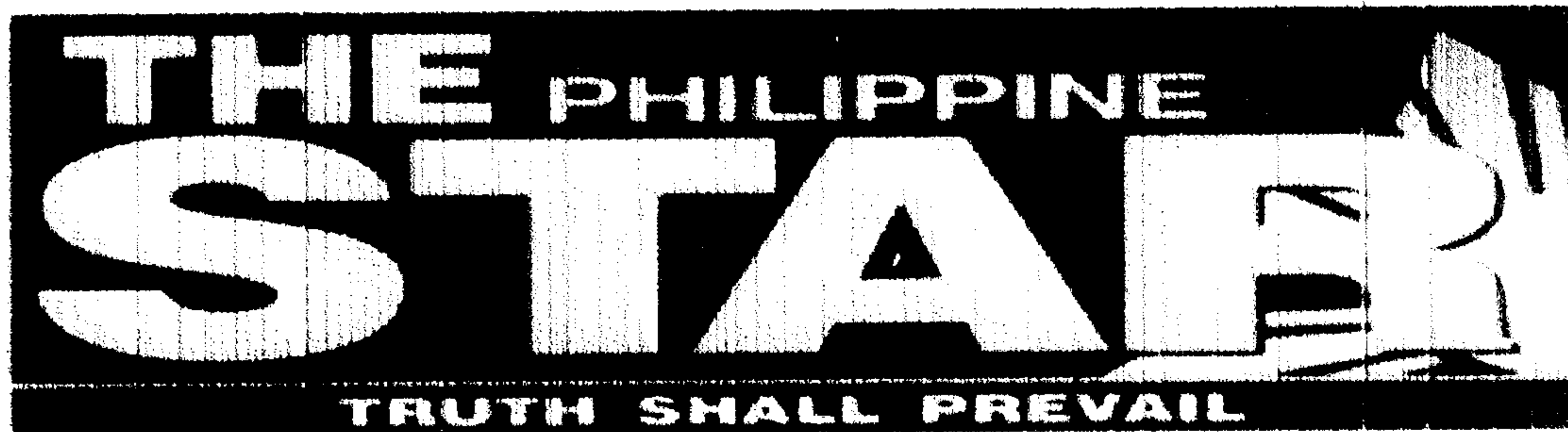
Revisit EPIRA

The lady senator also wants to revisit the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), which she said allowed the market to dictate the country's energy mix, and the Mining Act, citing research showing the cost of mining activities outweighs the benefits.

"As president, I will fully and wholeheartedly implement the Renewable Energy Act, which I authored and sponsored in the Senate. The law is not working as it should be. It has been in operation for six years, but action has been slow, and our renewable energy supply remains small," Santiago said.

She also vowed to push for the passage of the National Land Use Act, which can help in the management and efficient use of energy resources, and the Energy Efficiency Act, which encourages firms to improve energy use practices.

"We must look at environmental issues as development issues to prevent a detached approach in policy-making. We must realize that environmental degradation and climate change impact our health, economy, and survival," she stressed.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Presidential bets urged to take stand on environmental issues

With barely two weeks before the national elections, civil society groups called on the presidential candidates to take a stand on environmental issues besetting the Philippines.

Some non-government organizations (NGOs) including Oceana, the largest marine conservation group, have expressed concern on the lack of position from presidential candidates on environment issues, despite the vulnerability of the country to climate change.

"There was no definitive commitment from our presidential candidates to work in protecting our environment, including our oceans and the livelihood of those most dependent on our resources," Oceana Philippines vice president Gloria Ramos said.

The Philippines is home to more than 52,177 endemic species, making it one of the

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

18 megadiverse countries in the world. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said heavy exploitation of fisheries result to lower catch and income for coastal communities.

"The subject matter was not even touched upon as an important electoral issue, just like the global threat of climate change," Ramos added.

The Philippines remains "extremely vulnerable" to climate change based on the 2016 Climate Change Vulnerability Index. The El Niño phenomenon is one of the major effects on the country with the agriculture sector affected the most.

Economy-wide cost of climate change to the country is estimated at P71 billion annually from 2015 to 2050. Around 1.4 million people are at risk of hunger by 2030 as crop

yields decline.

"We need government leaders who will champion the environment and put their heart in protecting it. This is necessary so we can move forward and leave behind a bountiful country for our already extremely marginalized sectors and the future generation," Ramos said.

Panagat, a network of more than 20 NGOs pushing for policy reforms in fisheries, noted that government leaders remain indifferent to providing solutions towards sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation.

The group is calling for institutional reforms such as the establishment of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, to strengthen the regulatory functions of BFAR and address conflicting policies and overlapping functions among government agencies.

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Presidential candidates weigh in on Canada waste dumping mess

Presidential candidates Grace Poe, Mar Roxas and Miriam Defensor Santiago, if elected, will take specific measures to solve the long-drawn-out Canadian garbage scandal and prevent it from recurring.

In their response to the question put forward by the EcoWaste Coalition, a waste and pollution watchdog group, the three presidential aspirants specified measures that she or he will do in her/his first 100 days in office to ensure that the illegal waste shipments from Canada are sent back.

"If elected, I will invoke the Basel Convention to force Canada to take back the trash it dumped on Philippine soil," stated Santiago of the People's Reform Party.

The Basel Convention, which the Philippines ratified in 1993, seeks to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes, particularly the transboundary movements of such wastes between nations.

Santiago, who filed two resolutions at the Senate pertaining to the Canadian garbage dumping, emphasized "we must not process the waste in the Philippines, as it sets a dangerous precedent."

"If we allow one country to turn the Philippines into a garbage dump, we are telling all other countries that they can do the same," she pointed out.

LP bet Roxas was categorical in asking the Canadian government to ship back their garbage "at the soonest time possible."

"While these were imported by a private company, they would not have reached the Philippines without clearance from concerned Canadian authorities. The Canadian government must be asked to assume equal responsibility to remove these waste materials from the Philippines at the soonest time possible," he said.

"We will task the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to send an official letter to Canada

demanding them to take back all these containers which were imported in violation of Philippine laws and the Basel Convention," he added.

For her part, Poe of the "Partido Galing at Puso" said her administration will "facilitate bilateral talks with the Canadian government to repatriate the wastes back to Canada."

She also said that she would "take immediate steps to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment to ensure clean production and no hazardous wastes are shipped from developed countries to developing countries for any reason."

The Basel Ban Amendment is a revision to the Basel Convention that seeks to prohibit exports of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries for final disposal, reuse, recycling and recovery.

While Mayor Rodrigo Duterte failed to reply to the question sent by the EcoWaste Coalition, the PDP-Laban candidate had strongly spoken against the illegal entry of Canadian trash.

He had suggested to Aquino to file a diplomatic protest against Canada over the garbage shipments.

Like Duterte, Vice President Jejomar Binay of the United Nationalist Alliance did not respond to the nine-point questionnaire sent by the EcoWaste Coalition to the five presidential bets.

Moreover, Santiago stressed that "the task of protecting the country from illicit or unwanted shipments rests on the shoulders of the Bureau of Customs (BoC)," adding that "in a way, the issue of imported trash from Canada is a corruption issue."

"The BoC is so corrupt that it cannot perform its functions properly. The solution there is to appoint a few good men to run the BoC and for Malacañang to stop meddling with the bureau. Corruption at the BoC will cease only if not tolerated by Palace officials," she said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Miriam to rivals: Be environment champions

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

Presidential candidate Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, recently named the "greenest" candidate among the presidential bets by an environment advocacy group, urged her rivals on Friday to adopt a people-centered approach in their environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction platforms.

"We are resource-rich but income-poor, partly because we view environmental protection as a roadblock to development. That should not be the case. What we are doing is ensuring that whatever gains we get now will be enjoyed by generations to come," Santiago said in a statement issued on Earth Day.

The senator's statement comes amid accolades from at least three coalitions of environment groups for including resource conservation, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in her program of government.

Santiago was named the "greenest candidate" by the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment for her track record. The same group named Liberal Party bet Manuel Roxas II the "meanest" to the environment.

She was also lauded by a green group initiative called

Luntiang Bayan: Boto Para sa Tao, Hayop at Kalikasan as the presidential candidate who has done the most for the environment, citing the numerous laws and bills she drafted.

The senator also topped the scorecards launched by the Green Thumb Coalition on Friday, bagging 79 percent in "people-centered sustainable development," 78 percent in "human rights and integrity of creation" and 50 percent in "climate justice."

In her platform of government, Santiago highlighted the need for evidence-based planning.

"To combat climate change, we must practice both mitigation and adaptation, and our decisions must be based on data and science," she added.

Santiago also vowed to strengthen local government units to better implement environment protection, climate change and disaster risk reduction programs; take advantage of indigenous knowledge; and foster transparency in the sector.

More solar, wind power plants

Santiago's runningmate, Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., said the next administration should build more solar, wind and hydrogen power plants to address the looming power crisis in the country.

Marcos said the next leaders should prioritize a renewable energy program to ensure economic development while protecting the environment.

"This can be done by giving companies additional perks on their investments and cutting bureaucratic red tape," Marcos said.

He cited that when he was governor of Ilocos Norte, he led the construction of the first commercial wind farm in Southeast Asia in his province.

Ilocos Norte now has 264 megawatts of renewable energy production, boosting power in the Luzon grid.

"At present, more than 70 percent of the nation's electricity is generated from fossil fuels (petroleum, coal and natural gas). Experts have predicted that if the country remains coal- and oil-dependent, Filipinos should expect higher power costs because of the steady increase in the prices of these fossil fuels in the world market," he said.

The only solution, according to Marcos, is for the country to increase its renewable energy portfolio from the current 28 percent installed capacity. — With Perseus Echeminada

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EDITORIAL

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Dapat Earth Day araw-araw

Biyernes nang pirmahan ng 175 bansa sa buong mundo ang Paris Climate deal na inisyatibo ng United Nations (UN). Kasama raw sa pumirma ang mga top polluters na bansang Amerika at China.

Ito 'yung Paris summit na dinaluhan ni Pangulong Benigno 'Noynoy' Aquino III noong Disyembre ng nakaraang taon.

Pinakinggan ng buong mundo ang kwento ng Pilipinas tungkol sa malalakas na bagyong humambalos sa bansa, gaya ng Yolanda. Ginamit itong halimbawa ng bumabangis na hagupit ng kalikasan dahil na rin sa kapabayaang tao.

Kung hindi sobrang lakas na mga bagyo sa panahon ng tag-ulan, na ngayon ay sinasaluhan pa ng daluyong o storm surge, sobrang init naman sa panahon ng tag-araw.

Pero kung titingnan, malaki ang dapat ipagpasalamat ng Pilipinas dahil dalawang uri lang ng klima ang dinaranas natin. Sa ibang bansa na mayroong snow, malaking hagupit din sa kanila ang snow storm.

Kinailangan ang paglagda ng bawat bansa sa kasunduan dahil hindi magagawa ang pagliligtas sa mundo o sa Earth kung isa o dalawang bansa lamang ang makikibahagi. Importante na sama-sama at sabay-sabay gawin ang pagsisikap na mapagaling ang inang kalikasan sa masamang kondisyon nito.

Mahaba-habang biyahe pero kailangan nang simulan agad-agad!

Ang Pilipinas ay isa sa mga biniyayaan ng napakaraming kayamanan ng kalikasan. Mayaman ang ating karagatan. Kahit paano ay mayroon pa rin tayong mga kagubatan. Mayroon pa rin tayong mga talampas, mga kuweba, mga ilog at iba't ibang natural na yaman. Ang malaking tanong lang ay kung paano natin ito inaalagaan at pinoprotektahan mula sa pagkasira.

Unang-una at kailangan talagang madisiplina sa bawat Filipino ay ang tamang pagtatapon ng basura. Gawing panuntunan ang paghihiwalay ng nabubulok at hindi nabubulok.

Sa mga mangingisda, higpitan ang mga bawal na pamamaraan ng pangangisda na nakakasira sa coral reefs. Sa mga kabundukan, higpitan pa ang implimentasyon ng ilegal na pagtotroso at ang pagkakaingin.

Isa sa pinakamalaking hamong kinakaharap ngayon ng pamahalaan ng Pilipinas ay ang pag-awat sa industriya ng pagmimina na isa sa dahilan ng mabilis na pagkasira ng kalikasan sa buong mundo.

Maging ang pagkaubos ng mga palayan at agricultural land dahil sa industriyalisasyon at komersyalisasyon ay mahalaga ring mapagtuunan ng pansin.

Totoong bahagi ng pag-unlad ng isang bansa ang pagdami ng mga pabrika, subdibisyon na panirahan, mga commercial buildings at establishments pero mahalagang balansehin ito dahil kailangan pa ring mapanatili ang malawak na taniman.

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It's getting hotter

BY the title of today's column, I am referring not only to the almost suffocating heat of summer, but also the campaign period.

I now see a lot of campaign materials not only in officially designated Comelec billboards, but also in front of private homes. What is the rule regarding this?

As far as I know, since these are placed in front of private properties, usually attached to fences and gates, then it must be all right because it is within the enclaves of a private home.

Being a democracy, any citizen of this country can put his or her preferred candidates propaganda material in her gate or fence.

Voters have their own preference and I can see that those who allow their homes to be made into an advertising outlet is their business.

By the looks of these house ads, it's a combination of candidates that they will vote in a few days.

Does this mean that the homeowner is not voting straight but is seriously studying the qualifications of each, in spite of the call for voting straight by some parties?

I hear people campaigning for this and that candidate for senator but not a complete 12-man line-up. Even for President and Vice-President, many might go for mixed parties. The heat is really on.

Those with enough resources almost have it going for them. They look

WOMEN TALK



like they are in the magic 12 for senator. But we must remember that this is also a local election and this is where the excitement really lies.

This is an election where not only will we have new national officials, but also local officials which is nearer to home. I also noticed that those who have a good track record are running unopposed which speaks well for that particular candidate.

It just shows that the electorate are really scrutinizing the candidates and indeed, it is better that those who have been governing well and with integrity need not worry.

Even his or her rivals see this as a fruitless endeavor if they run against someone who has done well for the past three years, as far as the local level is concerned.

There is also the social media factor in campaigning. A mistake, big or small, of a candidate, immediately goes

viral within minutes.

Any wrongdoing in the electoral process, like for the OFWs is immediately commented in social media. Talk about over-democracy, as one opinion maker phrased it, and we are seeing it now.

This is what makes this year's election really heated. We even have presidential debates and other types of fora. What is exciting and really interesting is after all these exposures, it is you and I, the voter, who will have a say when our votes are hopefully correctly counted and reported.

Again, this is where the observant social media user should really monitor the outcome.

And talking of the heat, as per weather experts, the temperature is still expected to rise for the next month and as El Niño brings in its heat, steps must now be taken to conserve our dwindling water resources.

There is no wasting anymore. Everytime we open our faucet, we can still be grateful that there is still water coming out. But shouldn't we start water rationing already. We should also appeal to homeowners to limit the watering of their gardens and grass. Even the cleaning of vehicles should already be limited.

With all these around us, it is indeed urgent that we take care of our health and to keep drinking water. Meanwhile, appreciate the remaining trees around us and enjoy their shade to keep cool.

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The Manila Times

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Compostela youth cited for zero waste project

A YOUTH project aimed at achieving zero non-biodegradable waste was awarded by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) with the "Youth on the Move" award.

The Youth Council of the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) in Compostela Valley province received the citation for its project proposal that aims to adapt to climate change and address catastrophes.

The Compostela youth's "5 K RCY 143 Project" was designed not only to increase awareness of the Red Cross movement in all 11 municipalities of Compostela Valley, but also to provide communities with ecological solid waste management practices to achieve zero non-biodegradable wastes disposal by end of 2016.

It will be implemented in local

communities with the support and collaboration of the local government, schools, households and the Red Cross Youth 143 councils in schools and Red Cross 143 volunteers in the municipal and district levels.

The Philippines' entry won as runner up in one of the four categories identified by the IFRC for the Youth Award 2015, which is "Adapting to climate change and addressing catastrophes." Fiji's "Junior Red Cross Climate Change Education" project was declared the winner in the same category.

Aside from the category where the Philippines won, the other categories for the Youth Award 2015 were: Live our principles, celebrate our diversity, change our community; Healthy youth

make a healthy world; and Bridging the digital divide—connecting people through technology.

The Compostela Youth Council won 2,000 Swiss francs as start-up money for the project implementation, a laptop computer to be used specifically for the awarded project, 20 hours coaching during the project duration, and technical support provided by the IFRC technical coordinators and departments during the project implementation phase.

The Youth on the Move award was established by the Youth Commission of the IFRC since 2005 to recognize the contribution of youth volunteers as key agents of change in society and for their contribution to the collective humanitarian work of the Red Cross

and Red Crescent Movement all over the world.

The award was presented during the Youth Award 2015 held during the IFRC General Assembly in December 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. The award was received on behalf of the Compostela Valley Youth Council by PRC Governor Corazon Alma de Leon, PRC board of governors secretary.

Compostela Valley Chapter Youth Council President, Maria Elisha Pond, together with chapter board of directors Louie Zerrudo and Ludovico Abellar, and chapter administrator Joseph Randy Loy, received the award from PRC Chairman Gordon and Secretary General Gwendolyn Pang during the PRC 31st Biennial National Convention on April 15, 2016.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPING

Albay continues to be a 'mine-free' zone

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LEGAZPI CITY—A local mining firm has filed application to mine limestone deposits in eight barangays in Albay, operating site of a strongly protested cement mining company.

Minekraft Resources Corp., based in Sorsogon province and owned by businessman Alex Wee Jr., filed with the Mines and Geoscience Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources application to mine vast limestone deposits at eight known tourist spots in the tiny town of Camalig, source of the Mayon pozzolan cement operated by Goodfound Cement Co.

The targeted mining site for limestone deposits are barangays Palanog, Bantoman, Baligang, Quitinday, Caguiba, Pirian, Binaderahan and Miti.

Tourism Regional Director

Maria Nini Ravanilla has filed her objections against the proposed mining before the provincial board Committee on Tourism and Environment and the Department of Natural Resources, strongly arguing of the historical and cultural significance of the tourism spots.

The eight barangays form part of the Albay, Masbate, Sorsogon (Almasor) tourism program, an alliance of the three provinces created to promote tourism and lure investors. It is about 3 kilometers away from the Bicol International Airport currently being constructed atop Barangay Comon in nearby Daraga town.

The affected tourist spots are the Japanese occupation-era tunnels, the Hoyop-hoyopan cave, Quitinday Green Hills comprising of more than 100 tiny hills similar to the chocolate hills in Bohol, the Quintuinan Hills, and the Sumlang Lake.

Antimining advocate Albay

Gov. Joey Salceda cannot be contacted for comment. Since becoming a governor in 2007, Salceda has imposed a "no-mining policy in the province."

In 2007, as congressman of Albay's Third District, he was the leading advocate against the Australian-owned Lafayette Mining in Rapu-Rapu island town involved in the mining of nickel, copper and silver. Lafayette sold the Rapu-Rapu Mines to a group of Korean investors two years later and closed operation in 2012 after its contract for five years with the Philippine government expired.

In fighting mining, Salceda said benefits received by the region from the mining industry is miniscule compared to the billions of pesos earned by mining investors from the mineral resources extracted in the region. Salceda's term as governor expires in June this year and he is running for the Second District which includes Camalig town.