

This book is lovingly dedicated to all those seeking climate justice and to the numerous climate heroes who continue to inspire me.

**CLIMATE CHANGE
MESSAGE OF
OUR TIMES**

EXCERPTS FROM SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA'S SPEECHES



LIBRO NI LOREN FOUNDATION, INC.
48 Dunwoody St., University Hills Subd., Malabon City

Climate Change Message of Our Times
Excerpts from Senator Loren Legarda's speeches

A Joint Project of the Senate Committee on Climate Change, Senate
Committee on Cultural Communities and the Department of
Environment and Natural Resources

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The publication, *Climate Change Message of Our Times*, reflects the strong commitment of Senator Loren Legarda to sustainable development.

As UNISDR Asia-Pacific Champion, Senator Legarda has been a passionate and tireless advocate of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation with a gender perspective at different regional and international fora, including the United Nations Assembly.

Her advocacy has brought more attention to heads of state in the region on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and has inspired a number of political leaders across the region and the world. Hence, disaster risk reduction has increasingly become a shared concern, especially among parliamentarians in various regions.

I hope this publication will further encourage other political leaders to take more concrete actions in building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters toward achieving sustainable development, which we all aim for.



Dr. Feng Min Kan

Special Advisor to UN Assistant Secretary-General
for Disaster Risk Reduction

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat (UNISDR)

IT is sobering to note that the people of the Asia and Pacific region are four times more likely to be affected by disasters caused by natural hazards than someone living in Africa, and 25 times more likely than someone living in Europe or North America.

While the region generates a quarter of the world's GDP, it has suffered close to half of global economic losses due to disasters. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be realized in the region if hard-fought development gains are not protected from the impacts of disasters.

It is because of this that we are proud to have found a Champion in Senator Loren Legarda. Accepting our appointment in December 2008, Senator Legarda is the first UNISDR Champion on disaster risk reduction in the world. She quickly showed us why it was a fitting appointment, with vital pieces of legislation adopted, and her continuous engagement in advocacy missions and high-level policy debates.

This book, a compilation of her policy speeches at national, regional and international events gives us a glimpse of Senator Legarda's position on issues ranging from environmental protection, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and provides us with a history of her advocacy in various fora, engaging world leaders, heads of states, parliamentarians, civil society, and the public.

The book also leaves us with a firm belief that Senator Legarda's advocacy is rooted in good development and is about people.

At the end of the book, it leaves us asking for more and it also leads us to what possibly lies ahead.

Introduction

In recent years, as development is threatened and set back by catastrophes described with words like biggest, deadliest and worst-ever in places like Haiti, Russia, China, Australia, Pakistan and Japan, we hope that we can call on the continuous engagement of Senator Loren Legarda.

UNISDR is proud to work with Senator Loren Legarda as our Champion, and is even prouder to know that her advocacy is strong as exemplified by this book.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Velasquez", with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Dr. Jerry Velasquez
Senior Regional Coordinator
United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Asia and Pacific

THE Philippines has been blessed with an environmental heritage that is the envy of many nations, and which we have been trying our utmost to protect against degradation. Fortunately, we have also been blessed with a most capable and captivating champion of the environment in our legislature, in the person of Senator Loren Legarda.

Even before she was elected to the Senate on her first attempt in 1998, topping the elections in the process, Loren Legarda, the broadcast journalist, was already a strong voice for the environment. But it was in the Senate where her contributions to the environment truly came to count, with some of her advocacies ultimately acquiring the force of law. She was a prime mover behind the Ecological Solid Waste Management Law and the Climate Change Act of 2009, among others. Aside from these laws of national application, she authored numerous bills for the establishment of protected areas in various parts of our archipelago.

In addition, her Luntiang Pilipinas Foundation has thus far greened our land with over two million trees, and aims to reach the ten million mark by the end of this year.

Senator Loren Legarda is an environmentalist extraordinaire. She is an articulate, brainy, and very effective communicator. Equally important, her commitment has been intense, total, and unwavering. These qualities powerfully shine through this volume of excerpts from her speeches, *Climate Change: Message of Our Times*.

These excerpts are drawn from speeches delivered from 2007 to

Introduction

2011 at the Senate and various fora like national and international conferences and global bodies. They take us across time and space, and offer views of climate change from a variety of perspectives, including biodiversity, national security, disaster risk reduction, and the roles of local government units, grassroots initiatives, and parliamentarians. These provide a wealth of reference materials for students and scholars as well as for planners and policy makers.

Doubtless, this inspiring and enlightening book deserves a special place in the libraries of environmental literature, not only in the Philippines, but globally as well.



Ramon J.P. Paje

Secretary

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Preface

THIS book takes you on a journey that started from a vision. It all began in 2007 when I dreamt of enacting a Climate Change Law. With environmental disasters lashing the Philippines one after another, I felt it was time for environmental protection and climate change action to take center stage. Surviving the hurdles of the legislative process for a measure that will strengthen the country's response to the threats of the climate crisis was an uphill climb. I had to be relentless in turning ignorance into a desire for understanding and apathy into a genuine regard for the people vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

It was also on one rainy day of 2007 when Dr. Feng Min Kan of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) came to my office and presented to me a role I wholeheartedly accepted. As the appointed Regional Champion on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Asia-Pacific, I had the honor of spearheading fora and engaging in high-level dialogues to raise the political commitment among world leaders in moving toward a disaster-resilient development path.

This compilation of speeches seeks to educate everyone from all walks of life who are affected by climate change. Through this book, I hope to engage everyone in positive change that would bring about a livable and secure home for us, our children and generations to come.

I extend my gratitude to the UNISDR and to various academic and research circles in the Philippines for their invaluable help in this important piece of work.



Loren Legarda

Senator, Republic of the Philippines

United Nations Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction
and Climate Change Adaptation for the Asia-Pacific

Chapter 1

Privilege Speeches

FOR countless times, I have stood up in the Senate and spoken on issues that required utmost government attention. Delivering privilege speeches was an opportunity to influence a change in mindset among members of the institution who have now become more concerned and committed to helping the national government address global concerns. Here are excerpts from my privilege speeches that pertain to sustainable development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

CPR for Mother Earth

10.01.07

LET ME tell you a story about how a grandson spent in just ten days what took his grandfather eighty-two years to accumulate, to show how we, as a people, intend to destroy what took billions of years to form, unless we change our mindset and undertake a paradigm shift on the environment.

A grandfather died intestate and left his only grandson 100 million pesos as inheritance. Prior to his death, he told his grandson to spend only the income of his inheritance and preserve the capital of P100 million. However, contrary to his grandfather's wishes, the grandson gambled and spent P10 million a day on losses. Thus, by the end of the tenth day, the whole inheritance was gone. But instead of treating this as a loss, the grandson asked that the money he spent for gambling be reported by his accountant as losses that are allowable deductions on his gross income.

This story demonstrates how we treat the environment. The Earth has taken 4.5 billion years to put together; Man, one million years, and Civilization, 6,000 to 7,000 years.

However, the Industrial Revolution, which started only 200 years ago, intends to destroy what took thousands of years to form. The rate of extraction and consumption is way, way faster than the rate at which the Earth can replenish her resources.

The air we breathe—we have polluted it to alarming levels that we have exposed ourselves to respiratory and pulmonary diseases.

Our waters—what have we done with the source of life? We did not only use it and used it up, we even dirtied it. We all know about the recent Blacksmith-Green Cross Report that includes Meycauayan City and Marilao, Bulacan, among the world's 30 dirtiest places. Into

the river system that is the source of drinking and agricultural water for 250,000 residents, untreated wastewater laced with hexavalent chromium is dumped by tanneries. So are other heavy metals from lead battery recycling and gold refineries, pesticides and solid waste from “guerrilla” dumpsites.

What about our minerals that took 55 million years to form? We intend to extract these minerals in 30 to 50 years even if future generations of Filipinos will have nothing left.

This is how we treat the benefits we receive from our natural resources. This is the mindset of an extractive and consumptive economics, a flawed model for progress and development that, unfortunately, official policies and actions espouse.

The Philippines’ GDP grew by five percent in 2005, followed by a 5.4 percent growth in 2006. A higher growth rate of 7.5 percent has been reported in the middle of the year. The government is optimistic about achieving a milestone eight percent growth in 2008.

Yet, the value of goods and services turned out by our market economy—which government economists translate into GDP or GNP growth—conveniently factors out one thing: the toll these activities exact on the natural environment.

This is the unreported truth in our growth stories. For every percentage rise in our economic activity, for every point up on the NEDA charts, hectares of wondrous and thriving biodiversity are extracted from our natural environment.

The Worldwatch Institute, in its Vital Signs Report for 2007 to 2008, tracked 44 trends that illustrate how 6.6 billion humans are pushing the limits of ecosystem services. In 2006, the world used 3.9 billion tons of oil. In 2005, 7.6 billion tons of emissions were released and more wood was removed from forests than ever before.

Economic gains from exploiting and extracting through unsustainable mining, illegal logging, overfishing and unabated industrial production enter into statistical columns for gain and growth.

In contrast, irreparable harm or lasting damage are not made part of the gain or loss equation. We live in a delusional world in which nature suffers no depreciation despite the greed-induced savagery we inflict on it.

We build our growth statistics on the bloodied, tortured corpse of our natural environment. The skewed emphasis on the gains has caused government to fail on a policy imperative—to provide the necessary measures to enhance the restorative capacity of our ecosystems. To nurture nature, to bring our soil, seas, forests and mountains back to health and vibrancy. To heal Mother Earth.

We have passed many laws, perhaps too many. After spending some twenty years of studying and compiling all the Environmental Laws of the Philippines resulting in a book of 850 pages, 8.5” x 11”, an author wrote this in his dedication: TO FILIPINOS—MAY WE LEARN TO MAKE LESS LAWS....

It is toward this end that I seek your help, the men and women of Philippines Inc., to help the government make our laws work ... just a little bit more. Let me share with you a little formula for a simple action agenda for the environment.

CPR = EEE

CPR stands for the conservation, protection and restoration (of the Earth) that is the product of EEE—Education, Engineering, and Enforcement.

As early as 1977, we have had a law that mandates that environmental education must be incorporated in all levels of the curriculum. That was one generation ago. Yet, has the Department of Education complied with this? Recently, the Senate passed on the third reading the Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2007, where I am one of the authors. This bill, once enacted into law, should not suffer from lack of or poor implementation. The Department of Education must consider environmental awareness an integral part of the education of our children and youth.

We must also encourage the formulation and production of mass media educational tools to raise the level of environmental awareness of our people, especially the young. It is said that a great movement may be born in the minds of a few, but it must be spoken by the mouths of many, and must be carried on the shoulders of all—of every man, woman and child.

All the education—formal and informal—result in a very important engineering marvel: the re-engineering of the mind. With a changed mindset, we will begin to think differently and then act accordingly. We will then not debate on the why of the things that we need to do for the CPR of our country. Rather, we will only cooperate; we will work together on the when, the where, the who and the how we can do the job faster, better, and with greater effect.

In the matter of our lands—our forests, and watersheds, the recurring floods and droughts have taught us, or so I hope, that unless we CPR the forests and the watersheds, the situation will only get worse in the years to come. But how can we protect something if we do not even know where it is? That question is so basic, and so obvious that it is a

wonder why it has escaped us for so long. Perhaps, it is true that that is the difference between the obscure and the obvious. The obscure is figured out sooner or later; it is the obvious that takes a little longer.

Yes, it is so basic that twenty years ago, the framers of the Constitution precisely wrote that:

“Congress shall, as soon possible, determine by law the specific limits of the forest lands and national parks, marking clearly their boundaries on the ground.”

Yet 20 years hence, Congress has not complied with this Constitutional mandate.

Some may say it is expensive, it is time-consuming. But no one will dispute that it must be done. In fact, if Congress started doing it 20 years ago, it would have been finished a long time ago. That is why I have filed Senate Bill No. 1650 or An Act Providing for the Delineation of the Specific Forest Limits of the Public Domain and For Other Purposes.

There is nothing that says we must do it all at once. What is needed is that it must be done. Mayor Ed Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa City did it in his critical watershed in Puerto Princesa – the Irawan Watershed with an area of more than 4,000 hectares. How much did he spend out of his own budget? It is an amount that many may consider insignificant: One million pesos. Yet what he has is called political will.

Government must closely monitor mining in our country. There is a need to ensure strict enforcement of the provisions of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, particularly those for environmental protection and rehabilitation.

On this note, I have filed a resolution looking into the state of compliance of existing grantees of exploration permits and contractors under mineral agreements to safety and environment protection.

In the area of solid wastes, we have a law, yet the implementation and enforcement has been very wanting. We will inquire from the DENR and from the local government units why this is so. But we will not seek to find fault, rather, we will see how we can help them strengthen their efforts to comply with the law.

In this regard, may I make mention of the recent commendable initiative of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Law of Nature Foundation to conduct an environmental compliance assessment or audit of the compliance with basic environmental laws, beginning with the Solid Waste Management Law. We commend them and express our fullest support of this initiative.

As responsible members of our community, we must ask the government why it has failed to effectively implement Republic Act

No. 8749 otherwise known as the Clean Air Act. This law, enacted in 1999, has provisions, which, if those had been fully implemented, would have improved the air quality of the country during the last eight years. Compliance with the tightened standards on industrial emissions and motor vehicle exhaust and the encouragement of citizens' arrest must be monitored and assessed.

CPR OF WATER

In the matter of water, we recently saw the serious dangers of a prolonged drought. But Republic Act No. 6716, otherwise known as the Rainwater and Spring Development Act of 1989, was passed almost twenty years ago. Why has the DPWH not constructed wells and rainwater collectors, developed springs, and rehabilitated existing water wells in all barangays during the last 18 years? If it had, DPWH would have mitigated the effect of the recent dry spell, which caused an estimated PhP600 million to PhP1 billion loss to our country.

In the matter of the sea, yes, we are the center of the center of marine wealth on Earth, the Amazon of the Seas, so to speak. The sooner we understand that, the sooner we will begin to protect and restore it.

In Chinese, the character for 'crisis' represents two other characters—'danger' and 'opportunity.' We have seen that the Visayan Sea—the geographic epicenter of marine wealth on Earth—is now in crisis. To the great honor and pride of the Philippines, the valiant efforts of two men to protect the Visayan Sea from illegal and destructive fishing practices were recently featured in a full-length documentary in the prestigious BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and beamed several times to some 130 countries all around the world.

Perhaps this is the only time that our country's efforts to protect its natural wealth have been featured in a positive light. But these men have paid a high price for it. One of them—Jojo de la Victoria—paid the ultimate price for their advocacy. Last April 12, 2006, as he was entering his house after work, he was shot four times with a .45 caliber and died.

But the now world-famous Visayan Sea Squadron is undaunted. With dedicated NBI operatives from Region 7 and volunteer fishermen, they have achieved the impossible by eliminating illegal fishing in significant parts of the Visayan Sea. These ordinary men and women have made it their life's mission to protect and restore this body of water of unparalleled wealth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The state of the Philippine environment has deteriorated from a gloomy *Silent Spring* into the next stage, an apocalyptic one. All around us we are witnessing the birth of death, the refusal of life forms to flourish and to thrive, the black curtains that hang over former enclaves of biodiversity.

Only after the last tree has been felled, the last river poisoned, and the last fish caught, will man know that he cannot eat money.

We have to reverse the onslaught, to usher in an environmental springtime, the surge of new life forms, the explosion of forested mountains, clean air, clear rivers and bountiful seas.

Let it be said that during our watch, while gifted with intelligence and insight, with privilege and position, with the wealth of wisdom, and with the freedom and power of the human will, that in our time, we did our share.

And maybe, just maybe, we will make a little difference.

An Agenda for Climate Change Adaptation

01.28.08

THE GLOBAL view on global warming has undergone its own evolution in a half century since a few brave souls contended—amid public scorn and ridicule—that human activity may be burning too much fossil fuel and igniting forest fires that unleashed lethal greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

The stages of development can be generally broken down into four phases.

First, it was considered a hoax.

The second stage moved scientists, climatologists and public leaders to give it faint recognition. It was discussed, but only grudgingly and marginally.

The third stage pushed global warming into the mainstream of scientific research. Finally, it has sunk into the global consciousness.

Then came the day of reckoning.

In a landmark event on February 2, 2007, the fourth stage came in the form of a public statement released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which undertook a three-year study on global warming and climate change.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization created the panel, whose members included hundreds of scientists, climatologists and researchers across the globe. They were unpaid and they did the work for Mother Earth.

They were considered as among the world's best and brightest in their line of work.

The report said climate change was “unequivocal.” The report also raised realistic but dire scenarios on what will be the planet's future if nothing is done to reverse this.

“February 2, 2007 will be remembered as the date when uncertainty was removed as to whether humans had anything to do with climate change on this planet. The evidence is on the table,” said Achim Steiner, the executive director of the UNEP, who briefed journalists and the public on the report.

Seas, according to the report, will continue to rise. Temperatures will continue to climb. The weather patterns will be shifting and erratic, tipping to the extreme, not the mainstream. While seas rose by about six to nine inches in the entire 20th century, the report forecasts a sea rise of seven to 23 inches by 2100. Sea level rise is particularly lethal to small islands. It will exacerbate inundation, storm surge and erosion that threaten roads, bridges, dams, homes, entire settlements and the facilities that support the livelihood of island communities.

Global temperature is likely to warm 3.5 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit if carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere reach twice the levels of 1750, which was before the Industrial Revolution.

There is a more than 1-in-a-10 chance of much greater warming, a risk factor too high to be ignored. In many parts of the globe, these findings are real-life, real-time apocalypse.

Drought in Sudan has triggered war in Darfur, the first recorded war in history that was rooted in rainfall decline. Blood freely spilled into the parched, cracked earth of Darfur.

Last year, Tokyo had its longest snow-less winter. China had the warmest year in 30 years.

A total of 13,500 square kilometers of ice shelves in the Antarctica disintegrated. It is melting at an alarming pace. Water from this melt is enough to bury coastal towns along its rampaging path.

The Thames Barrier, the underutilized flood defense system of London, was forced to defend London from floodwaters at an unheard-of utilization rate of six times last year due to increased rainfall.

At home, all the dire warnings about a global warming-triggered apocalypse are no longer empty words. Climate change is now a serious public issue, trumping the massively-funded but inherently abhorrent initiative that also carries the word change – charter change.

Floods and droughts, heat waves and super typhoons regularly strike us with their attendant savagery. All of these kill people, wreak havoc on property, upset our production and planting schedules and gnaw at the economic foundation of the nation.

We no longer have a climatic pattern, the comfort of a rainy and dry season splitting half of every year. Now, it is all about weather in extremes.

The impact of extreme weather patterns on forestry, biodiversity, coastal and marine resources, water, energy and health has yet to be given peso and mathematical valuations.

But the toll is definitely high.

If developing countries are more vulnerable to climate change, the Philippines, due to its place in the geological order, has the misfortune of facing the highest degree of risks, a country deemed by experts most vulnerable to change.

It is located within the Pacific typhoon belt. It is highly susceptible to ground movements such as landslides and mudslides.

In December 2003, more than 200 people died from landslides and flooding.

In 2004, there were 412 deaths recorded after Typhoon *Winnie* lashed at the eastern seaboard of Southern Luzon. A total of 177 people were reported missing and presumed dead.

In February of 2006, more than 2,000 people, mostly kids attending class, were buried by mudflow in St. Bernard, Leyte. For three days, rain pounded the town, triggering mudflows that created a pocket of Armageddon.

In September 2006, super typhoon *Mileny* jolted a totally unprepared Metro Manila and nearby provinces, killing at least 18 people and cutting a vast swath of destruction.

The rise in sea levels will strike hard in the Philippines, with 70 percent of its towns and cities, including the most economically-vibrant, classified as coastal areas. Food production, perhaps the most important economic activity of the country, is also directly threatened. Long dry spells and savage floods are the equivalent of food shortage. And a high level of food insecurity.

Many of our people are just becoming aware of the connection between the worsening disasters and climate change. Very few are prepared for stronger storms, floods and landslides, not realizing the future threat. The first order must be a massive IEC campaign. I envision the use of multimedia for this—print, radio, TV, movies, the Internet—to inform and to inspire our people to face this challenge. For there is much work to be done.

Pioneering Grassroots Initiatives for the Environment

04.21.08

FRESH and audacious initiatives for the environment have been taking roots in pioneering local communities, their dynamic leaders driving and pushing these environmental initiatives into certain success.

I have been witness to the dedication and intensity of purpose, the burning passion to do something bold and concrete for the environment. I have seen how they have triumphed past the usual skepticism and cynicism directed at environmental workers to design, implement and create their own successful environmental programs.

On the month we celebrate Earth Day, let us focus on viable environmental agenda, on doable programs. On the eve of celebrating Earth Day, we should make public their deeds.

COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE IN ALBAY

The Albay Declaration on Climate Change of 2007 was a fresh gust of wind to fatigue-stricken environmental work. It showed that local initiative can be brighter, more purposeful and more dedicated than the best of national environmental programs. It was a powerful message to local community leaders across the country that there was no reason for inertia, atrophy and torpor in confronting natural onslaughts and climate change.

The Declaration launched the prototype for local Climate Change Adaptation, the first in the country by an LGU. The Albay Action on Climate Change, known as the A2C2, came with the powerful invocation that the province was no longer at the mercy of climate change. Climate-proofing and disaster-proofing became part of the provincial lexicon.

The Centre for Initiatives and Research in Climate Adaptation or CIRCA was established to educate communities on climate change and at the same time lay the groundwork for partnerships and collaboration. The Centre is working to pull various sectors into climate change reversal. It seeks to create a virtual army of stakeholders for the environment.

CIRCA engages institutions and experts from the Environmental Management Bureau, the UP at Los Baños, the Department of Education, the Bicol University and the World Agro-Forestry Centre as partners of the provincial government. I am part of the support group.

Last week, CIRCA invited 25 scientists and community development practitioners to a two-day dialogue with leaders and citizens of Albay. The visiting experts from its partners and UP-NIGS, DOST's PAGASA and PHIVOLCS, IRRI, Silliman University, Manila Observatory, Xavier University, Lingkod Tao Kalikasan and COPE shared their scientific studies as well as their experiences in addressing climate-related risks.

Agreements with the UP in Los Baños for the development of curricula of Albay's grade and high schools, as well as with the DOE for the conversion of incandescent bulbs into energy efficient compact fluorescent lamps have been signed. The UPLB with the Bicol University will assist Albay teachers in lesson planning to mainstream climate change adaptation while the DOE effort can save the participants up to 80 percent of their current energy use.

Climate-proofing at the grassroots is also facilitated by CIRCA. The A2C2 is an explosion of specific projects. The barangays organized workers to clean up major rivers, canals and tributaries to avoid flooding when the heavy rains, typhoons and mudflow come in. Under the *Linis Kanal at Ilog* project, workers get food, plus appreciation from the grateful communities in exchange for their hard work.

Following the Darfur strategy of clustering, the Albay Integrated Agriculture Rehabilitation Program (AIARP) establishes farm clusters to assist farmers and fisherfolk with agricultural, technological and training needs, and for food assistance. The members of each cluster are usually professionals and civic leaders of the communities who identify their needs, prepare plans to address such gaps and lead the projects. For example, target clusters are trained in environmentally-sound farming and fishing methods by the AIARP through CIRCA and its experts; logistical support comes from the LGU.

In Albay, the communities never rest in building their resilience to climate and other disasters.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE MARINE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN STA. FE

Sta. Fe, a beautiful town in Bantayan Island, Cebu, is a study in contradiction. Its white beaches and the pristine waters serve like a picturesque cover to the harsh reality of grinding poverty.

Its marine resources have been exhausted by over-fishing, illegal fishing, dynamite fishing. The seas off Sta. Fe, once rich fishing grounds, can no longer provide for the fishing town. As a result, four out of 10 residents live below the poverty line. The rest live just above this critical threshold.

This, of course, is a familiar story. Several coastal communities across the country are in the same dilemma. But unlike most uncaring towns economically crippled by over-fishing and the degradation of their marine environment, Sta. Fe sprang into action.

A two-day workshop was organized late February to plot a course of action aimed at reversing the despoliation of the marine resources in the seas off Sta. Fe. Broader and more sweeping environmental problems were also discussed. Every stakeholder was there: fishermen, elected officials, fish wardens, NGOs working for the environment, and the head of the local maritime police.

The workshop was able to generate a draft Local Fisheries Code to govern the conduct of fishing activities in the area and put in place steps to protect and nurture the area's marine resources. It also kicked off the crafting of a Coastal Resources Management Program to enhance and conserve the coastal resources of the island.

Beyond developing a local coastal management plan, barangay folks are already moving into action. The Law of Nature Foundation, an NGO, has introduced the concept of Marine Protected Areas or MPAs in coastal barangays of Sta. Fe. The MPAs are pockets of areas in the sea, which have old growth corals and are conducive breeding grounds of fish. To ensure that there is continuous abundance of marine resources, these MPAs must become "no-take zones" where fishing is not allowed.

The Law of Nature Foundation and the Coastal Dynamics Foundation educate the fisher folks on the importance of preserving the MPAs and help in mapping out these areas. The NGOs work with the barangay communities, particularly the local fisherfolks, in identifying and demarcating these MPAs by setting buoys. Moreover, these same stakeholders are trained to be involved in ensuring that these MPAs are indeed protected. Out of the 10 barangays in Sta. Fe, nine have already finished mapping and marking their MPAs. As we speak, the remaining barangay is in the process of doing the same.

These are concrete steps being undertaken by local communities of Sta. Fe towards more sustainable fishing practices.

THE KARUSEL IN PUERTO PRINCESA

The stretch of the Puerto Princesa Bay Walk offers a grand view of the city's bay area. Local residents and visitors strolling through the Bay Walk are often amazed by the absence of litter and plastic, the usual curse of coastal cities. The devotion of the city to cleanliness is amazing.

Now, the attention of visitors is divided but the distraction is most welcome. The other attraction is the Karusel.

The Karusel, a mini-train, plies the whole course of the Bay Walk on steel tracks designed for it. Powered by little human exertion, it represents the fondest dreams of environmentalist—a transport system that does not use fossil fuel.

It represents a convenient mode of transport in the context of an inconvenient truth—that the massive use of fossil fuel has been the main abettor of climate change.

I was there during its launch on February 14. City Mayor Ed Hagedorn, an avid environmentalist, is now studying the viability of using the Karusel to augment the transport service at the city proper.

Puerto Princesa was also the launching place for another innovation for the environment, a tricycle that runs on electricity. The Trikebayan uses PHP48 worth of electricity in a day's run, the cost of a liter of high-octane gasoline.

Puerto Princesa is no longer a city famous for its eco-tourism offerings. It has moved into energy conservation as well, frenziedly weaning away the city from too much dependence on fossil fuel.

EL NIDO: NATURE'S NEST AND SANCTUARY

I recently visited El Nido and was fascinated by how the place has preserved its natural beauty over the years. While this is not surprising as El Nido is well known as a premier showcase of biodiversity in the world, I have been inspired by how ordinary folks—the boatmen, the resort staff—have ingrained the value of preserving the natural wonders of their place. This value was evident in the way they conduct their daily chores, always conscious and doing the little things that help preserve their environment.

The company, Ten Knots, has institutionalized environmental conservation by having an Environment Manager, who supervises

Environmental Officers and Environmental Enforcement Officers in its resorts. This institutional set-up enables the company to conduct programs to keep the environs of the resort in their pristine state through activities such as coastal clean-ups, environmental education, ecological solid waste management and regular patrolling in the bay. It liaises with fishermen and other bay stakeholders to agree on a code of conduct for shared areas, like the regulation of fish catch in reef areas and the use of mooring buoys instead of dropping anchors.

The company also actively seeks collaboration with the LGU, NGOs, and local stakeholders for its environmental initiatives. There is a dynamic collaboration with the people in the community who have rebuked the temptation of succumbing to crass commercialism.

The Ten Knots Environment Department is supported by institutions such as the El Nido Foundation, WWF, the UP Marine Science Institute and others who have provided services to help enable its programs to succeed.

CONCLUSION

These stories for the environment of local communities—inspiring, trailblazing, pioneering—are slivers of light in a country of sludge, garbage dumps, mine tailings, bald mountains and discarded plastic scarring our once-magnificent seas.

The local communities took up the cudgels and have shown dynamism and creativity in pursuing projects to help resuscitate our degraded physical environment. These stories show that the determination and creativity of public and private entities, NGOs, people's organizations, law enforcement agencies, and even universities and research institutions can go a long way.

The support of LGUs in environmental protection, preservation and conservation is also the guarantee that projects for the environment get off the ground, are pursued aggressively, and succeed. For in the overall scheme of project implementation for the environment, it is the LGUs that set up offices at ground level, provide the staff, pass local ordinances and regulations to support or complement the projects and organize the stakeholders.

A Call to Build Capacities to Combat Global Warming

06.03.08

WE will be celebrating World Environment Day in two days in the horrific context of the second deadliest cyclone in recent history and a 7.9 earthquake in Western China.

And right here at home, we had a mid-May typhoon that ravaged La Union, Zambales and Pangasinan—provinces just a bus ride from this chamber. Close to 50 people were reported killed. Damage to infrastructure and crops was massive.

It has been this way for years. The planet with a gentle and kind temperament, though with occasional outbursts of rage, is a thing of the past.

Even in the idyllic parts of the United States, the picture-perfect little house on the prairie is more likely to be ravaged by tornadoes and thunderstorms than swept by the bliss of spring and the gaiety of summer.

Much as we long for the less portentous World Environment Day celebrations of the past, these joyful affairs, attended by the usual parades, pageantry and speeches, we can't.

Much as we want to play down the agony and the horror in the disaster-stricken areas and say that nature is entitled to a display of occasional lethal tantrums, we can't.

Much as we want to deny the extremism of climatic patterns, we can't.

Footage after footage from recent disaster scenes—from Burma to Western China to Northwest Luzon—are all too jarring and unnerving. So are the statistics on death and destruction.

In Myanmar's Irrawaddy Delta, the area hardest hit by Cyclone Nargis, no one was left to bury the dead in communal graves.

Ponds, rivers and paddies are overflowing with the rotting corpses of the cyclone victims. The figures on the number of fatalities vary, from the 78,000 officially recorded by the Myanmar government, to the 200,000 dead and missing tallied by the international aid and relief agencies.

Those who survived are in refugee camps. Or atop rooftops, waiting for rescue helicopters that may never come.

Relief workers say they are faced with the largest international relief effort in 30 years with at least 2.5 million cyclone victims without adequate food, clothing and medicine. The rich delta that used to provide rice and sustenance to Myanmar is now a watery graveyard.

The Sichuan earthquake is the deadliest and strongest earthquake to hit China since the 1976 Thangshan earthquake, which left 250,000 dead.

Close to 15,000 fatalities have been reported; more are believed buried under the massive rubble. The number of missing is estimated at 100,000 people.

Entire townships have been flattened by the powerful quake that was felt in Vietnam, Thailand and Pakistan. Survivors are mourning their missing next of kin. Hope that they will be rescued is fast fading.

Mother Nature, the great nurturer, is now an unforgiving destroyer. But we ask, why is nature running amok?

The answer is climate change. And in this season of celebrating World Environment Day, climate change should be declared as the greatest scourge of our generation.

Clashing civilizations can forge amity and come to peace. Religious and ethnic strife can find resolution.

Wars end. Guns are stilled. Swords are fashioned into plowshares.

There is always a term limit to discord among races and creeds. But climate change is a problem of another kind.

It is a multi-headed hydra, manifesting its destructive power in cyclones and tsunamis, in droughts, in massive flooding, in snowless winters, in summers of baking heat, in the wild and erratic climate shifts.

Its destructive powers are whimsical. Ungoverned by rules, they leap across territorial boundaries and are without limitation.

A manifestation of the widespread and unsettling impact of climate change is the current global food crisis, a climate change-induced global emergency.

According to the World Food Program, over 100 million people from across the globe are threatened by the silent tsunami of hunger. Food riots had toppled the government of Haiti, where hungry and desperate people have been forced to eat baked mud laced with little amounts of flour and sugar.

The Philippines has roiled on the global grains market by posting the biggest rice import orders in history.

Tenders for premium rice have breached the US\$1,000 per metric ton price.

Other basic food commodities are now being sold at record-high prices, shutting out much of the developing world from the global food trade and plunging their citizens deeper into hunger and desperation.

Some knee-jerk reactions to the food crisis involved clear-cutting forest areas to expand the arable lands for food production and intensifying chemical-based farming. These further upset the environmental equilibrium, which in turn abet climate change.

The desperate efforts to ease the food crisis further aggravate the despoliation of the environment and intensify climate change. The search for solutions ultimately creates bigger problems.

And when food shortages and skyrocketing food prices plague disaster-stricken areas like Myanmar, the double-whammy creates problems of impossible scope and magnitude.

Climate change is a man-made monster. Cavalier, wanton and reckless use of fossil fuel and the clear-cutting of irreplaceable forest resources have conspired with weak environmental policies to push our planet nearer to an environmental holocaust.

Worse, much of the developed world was in a state of denial on the issue of climate change for decades and this upset the environmental equilibrium even further. Even certain sections of the scientific community called climate change a hoax or non-life threatening.

The multi-headed hydra is a parasite that feeds on the wastefulness, on the complacency, indifference and weakness of its host. This parasite will overpower mankind, even put an end to life as we know it, unless it is purged.

What man's folly had created, man's sense of survival and sense of purpose have to reverse—before it is too late.

Responding to the Present, Securing the Future

11.10.08

ENVELOPED with a sense of elation and urgency, I rise to share with you, my fellow legislators, our recent triumphs in moving the international community to reexamine the climate change agenda. But before I do so, however, let me first backtrack a bit.

For more than two decades now, the world has been grappling with the issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction. As we have witnessed within the confines of our own territory as well as in the experience of our neighbors, the unraveling of climate change effects has resulted in disasters of unprecedented proportions, causing multiple losses—economic, social, political and even cultural.

Being peculiarly located in a natural disaster-prone zone, the Philippines has incurred enormous losses brought about by various calamities such as earthquakes, typhoons, and droughts. Our neighbors China and Japan have also lost billions of dollars to snowstorms and earthquake. We were likewise baffled by the way Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean Tsunami ravished the livelihood of countless families and communities. The drawback on the national economy cannot be underestimated.

What is immensely disturbing—and in fact unpardonable—is that every time a disaster strikes, the already vulnerable segments of society, like the poor, the women, and the children—are the most severely affected and rendered even more helpless.

Yet, despite the obvious interconnection among climate change, disaster risk reduction, poverty, and sustainable development, we have contented ourselves with reactionary, piecemeal, and often incoherent and insufficient responses and strategies.

We address each disaster occurrence by distributing relief goods, which is of course needed. But this type of response is much like that age-old remedy of coating a leaking pipe with a sealant when what is actually needed is a new and more durable rust-proof pipe that could withstand the next surge of water.

It simply will not do anymore.

The need to develop a new global legal framework for disaster risk reduction vis-à-vis climate change adaptation can no longer be ignored. It is time to disaster-proof and climate change-proof our people, livelihoods, and national economic agenda.

I am pleased to say that through the Philippines' leadership, we have steered this novel discourse to the forefront. This is one of the triumphs I am proud to share with you today.

A couple of weeks ago, I, in partnership with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, convened the "Roundtable Consultative Meeting for Parliamentarians: Disaster Risk Reduction as a Tool for Adapting to Climate Change." Ten Parliamentarians from nine nations gathered in Manila to discuss how to create an enabling environment for promoting disaster risk reduction, to mainstream it into socioeconomic development, and make it a national and international priority.

Appreciating the need for immediate implementation of these strategies, the Parliamentarians came up with The Manila Call for Action of Parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.

In this statement, the Parliamentarians present made various commitments. As an immediate course of action, we promised to report on the outcome of the meeting to our respective Parliaments. This is why I have come before you today—to impart the lessons and consensuses of this two-day high-level caucus and implore your cooperation and active participation in realizing the goals of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction, and human security as components of the higher goal of sustainable development for all.

Acknowledging that this cause requires international cooperation, we also called on fellow parliamentarians around the world and on all governments to take proactive steps in reducing disaster risks and adapting to climate change. On the part of each Parliamentarian

present, we also committed to advocate for policy changes that advance disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at national and international levels and to propose national legislation that mainstreams gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction in national and regional development plans.

Recognizing the value of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which was adopted by 168 countries as a guide for effective disaster reduction at national level, the Parliamentarians likewise undertook to look into the compliance of our respective Governments with our Hyogo commitments.

Finally, we arrived at a consensus to call on the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations to work together in developing and elaborating an international legal framework to secure the synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

The Message of Our Times

06.02.09

THE RECENTLY released Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction conveys a most important message for all of us today, a message we must heed and act upon decisively if we are indeed responsible custodians of the future.

Disaster risks will only be reduced and the Hyogo Framework for Action, the global blueprint for reducing disaster risks, will only be achieved if countries successfully address the underlying drivers of risk. These drivers are (1) poor urban governance, (2) ecosystems decline, and (3) vulnerable rural livelihoods.

If these drivers are not addressed, climate change will lead to dramatic increases in disaster risk and associated poverty outcomes in developing countries.

It also shows that dealing with climate change and disaster risks decisively is the key to reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President and my dear colleagues, the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction is now out. It is a combined product of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and many other institutions. It is most credible and authoritative. As such, it warrants the attention and action of the Philippine Senate.

The Report embodies the best knowledge and analyses on the state of disaster risk in our present time. It provides us with clear evidence of the threats and the drivers that convert these threats into risks and into poverty. It provides us with recommendations and evidence on what actions need to be done and can be done as soon as today.

It calls for (1) improving urban governance, which involves stopping corruption and enforcing building codes, among others; (2) protecting ecosystems, which involves protecting our forests, cleaning our

rivers, and stopping pollution, among others; and (3) enhancing rural livelihoods, that is, enhancing agricultural productivity and supporting farmers better.

Mr. President, allow me to elaborate on these three recommendations of the Report:

URBAN GOVERNANCE

For example, in Japan, approximately 22.5 million people are exposed annually to typhoons, compared to 16 million people in the Philippines. However, the estimated annual death toll in the Philippines is almost 17 times greater than that of Japan. Overall, tropical cyclone mortality risk in low-income countries is approximately 200 times higher than in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), for similar numbers exposed.

In the case of floods globally, from 1990 to 2007, the risk of death increased by 13 percent despite the finding that vulnerability declined because of better early warning systems, awareness and preparedness mechanisms. What offsets the improvements in vulnerability was the drastic increase in exposure—the number of people exposed to floods increased by 28 percent in this period, while exposed GDP increased by 98 percent. Therefore, we are putting our people, our houses, our industries, and our economy in high-risk areas.

In the case of earthquakes, while global exposure is distributed across all income classes—rich, middle and lower income, and poor countries—almost 85 per cent of mortality risk is concentrated in lower middle income countries. What this report highlights is that economic development must be accompanied by the strengthening of governance capacities, such as the quality of institutions, transparency and accountability. Development cannot be focused only on economic gains without the accompanying responsibility of good governance. Development should not create risks for our people and our economy. We need to ensure the resilience of our development investments.

Although we tend to focus only on the big disasters—the mega typhoons and disastrous floods and landslides such as Typhoon *Frank* in 2008 that killed 98 people; Super Typhoon Durian in 2006 that caused volcanic mudflows that buried eight villages, displaced thousands of families, and killed hundreds of people in Albay; and the Guinsaugon, Leyte landslide tragedy in 2006, which killed more than a thousand people, the Report also highlighted that it is the smaller disasters—the ones that kill less than 10 people and destroy less than 10 houses—which we should be especially wary about.

This kind of disasters is on the rise—turbocharged by climate change. They diminish our capital, especially for the poor—human, economic, social and environmental capital—making us less resilient and unable to resist disasters and any crisis a typical household may face, be it disease, loss of jobs or livelihoods.

We should be inspired by The Kingdom of Bhutan. Their development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) transcends the concept of GNP as it presents its four pillars (1) sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, (2) environmental conservation, (3) promotion and preservation of culture, and (4) good governance. The adoption of GNH makes the Bhutanese people resilient to both small and large-scale disasters.

RURAL LIVELIHOODS

Mr. President, another underlying risk driver is livelihood vulnerability in rural areas. Approximately 75 percent of the people living below the international poverty line (US\$1.25 per day) live and work in rural areas.

Rural poverty is associated with unequal land distribution, lack of access to improved seeds, irrigation technology and other inputs, the lack of economic diversification, weak markets and trade barriers.

Poor rural livelihoods, dependent on rain-fed agriculture and on a single main harvest for annual food and income, are highly vulnerable to weather fluctuations and hazards, which can lead to crop or livestock loss. Poor and indebted households have little or no surplus capacity to absorb these losses and to recover.

The Philippines is periodically affected by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon that induces prolonged wet and dry seasons. The most severe ones are those that happened in 1982 to 1983, 1992 to 1993, and 1997 to 1998 El Niño that resulted to a GDP contraction and a dramatic drop in agricultural production, among other factors.

From 1990 to 2003, the damage due to ENSO-related drought was estimated to be more than US\$370 million. As a result of the massive loss in agricultural production in the 1980s, several measures are being implemented to minimize its effects. A key to this is an early warning and forecasting system, which allows government agencies to mobilize resources and farmers to plan ahead.

For example, in the recent case of rice shortage in 2008, the Philippines imported about 2.7 million metric tons of rice, posting the biggest rice import orders in history. Over the past ten years, the Philippines has been importing more than one million metric tons of

rice a year. Climate change, and resulting extreme events, will further upset our agriculture production schedules and exacerbate the problem of food security.

ECOSYSTEMS

Mr. President, the Millennium Ecosystem Report, released in 2005, found that 60 percent of ecosystem services—services that nature provides to sustain human life—are in decline with some services, like fisheries, beyond repair.

The Global Assessment Report found that in addition to these general decline of ecosystem services, we are also creating trade-offs between ecosystem services—mangroves have been destroyed to create shrimp ponds thereby increasing storm surge hazard, wetlands have been drained thereby increasing flood hazard, and deforestation has increased landslide hazard.

Yet, in Bhutan, where cautious development is their mantra, even mild development such as widening of the road between the airport in Paro and the capital Thimphu, has caused massive landslides, destroying precious development investments by the Government.

Furthermore, vegetation regulates floods, erosion, and landslides. This regulation service is neither free nor unimportant and we should value them equally with the provisioning services such as timber and agriculture.

I note with deep concern the rapid deforestation in our land. Over the last century, the proportion of land area covered by forests in the Philippines has fallen from 22 percent in 1990 to just 19.4 percent in 2000. As recorded, large areas of forestlands were already converted into tree plantation, mining and marginal upland agriculture which gave a 1.4 percent average deforestation rate from 1990 to 2000, the highest among Asian countries.

The Luntiang Pilipinas, an organization that I helped organize several years back, is the Philippine partner of the United Nations Environmental Programme in its *Billion Tree Campaign*. It started out with very modest goals – to create oases of greens in open spaces and public areas. Today, it has planted and grown almost two million trees nationwide. The Luntiang Pilipinas markers are now a welcome presence on what used to be wide-open spaces.

Privilege Speech on the Ondoy Disaster

09.28.09

Mr. President,

Two years ago, I remember delivering a privilege speech urging the government to mainstream adaptation and disaster risk reduction in government plans and policies at all levels. And every quarter thereafter, I would reiterate that the realities on the ground deserve priority for action.

It is unfortunate that it took *Ondoy* for us to realize the grim scenario of climate change impact. The intense and record-high rainfall last Saturday left at least 100 persons dead and 32 missing while tens of thousands were brought to evacuation centers.

It took *Ondoy* to expose the government's failure to anticipate the worst through disaster risk reduction. Even our response is too weak. But this is not a time for blaming. We all know that we have fallen short of the appropriate response to this disaster.

Mr. President, early action should have happened long before *Ondoy* made a landfall.

The 2009 World Disasters Report says and I quote, "At the shortest timescales, early action could be evacuation. On the longest timescales, early action means working closely with local communities to assess and address the underlying causes of the changing risks they face."

I hope this recent manifestation of climate change would persuade leaders and decision-makers to make adaptation and disaster risk reduction a national priority. After all, spending on disaster risk reduction is not a cost but an investment for a safe and secure future.

Understanding that what compounded the effects of the heavy downpour is our poor drainage system and garbage problem, we

must order massive cleaning of *esteros* and all waterways to reduce our vulnerability to flooding. We must implement the Solid Waste Management Law.

We must dredge rivers that have become oversilted because of soil erosion brought about by logging.

Let us not place our people, mostly the poor and vulnerable, their homes and industries in high-risk areas, as identified in geo-hazard maps. Plant trees everywhere. Let us not cut down forests and expose our people to risks of landslides.

Community discipline must be instilled. The public must be educated on the impact of climate change, of simple and doable actions such as proper waste disposal and waste segregation.

Our early warning system must facilitate early actions. It is crucial that we communicate warnings to everyone at risk.

The Human Face of Climate Change

10.05.09

FUNDAMENTALLY, we need to measure the impact of climate change by its social, economic, cultural and humanitarian implications as climate change is not just a scientific and environmental issue, but an all-encompassing threat to our basic human rights—food, potable water, shelter, decent livelihood and life itself. And it is this human face of climate change that I would like to bring to your attention.

Climate change threatens our agricultural productivity and food security.

The Philippines is periodically affected by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon that induces prolonged wet and dry seasons. It contracted the nation's GDP when agricultural production dropped drastically. From 1990 to 2003, the damage due to ENSO-related drought was about US\$370 million.

Again, an unconventional dry spell that occurred in 2007 caused rice shortages in 2008, which prompted the importation of 2.7 million metric tons of rice, the country's biggest rice importation in history. Over the past ten years, the Philippines has been importing more than one million metric tons of rice each year.

With climate change, more extreme weather events would further affect agriculture production and food security.

Crop yield potential is estimated to decline by 19 percent in Asia toward the end of the century, and rice yield in the Philippines would decline by 75 percent.

Climate change threatens our health.

Higher temperatures cause the surge of diseases such as dengue, malaria, cholera and typhoid. Communities that have been displaced by disasters will most likely be exposed to health threats in evacuation centers.

A study of the World Health Organization revealed that the most apparent effect of climate change in the country was the sudden increase in dengue, malaria and typhoid fever cases in 1998 when the Philippines experienced the El Niño phenomenon.

In 1998, almost 40,000 dengue cases nationwide, 1,200 cholera cases and nearly 1,000 typhoid fever cases were recorded.

Climate change threatens economic growth.

The poverty assessment conducted by the World Bank in 2001 cited the rise in poverty level to 28 percent due to the impact of El Nino.

Another World Bank study in 2004 reported that the economic impact of disasters totaled US\$500 million annually (about four percent of GDP). However, the government reported that economic losses and damages due to disasters dramatically rose to US\$1.6 billion in 2006, borne mostly by the rural areas where poverty is most prevalent.

Based on a recent ADB study on the economics of climate change, the country stands to lose six percent of its GDP annually by 2100 if it disregards climate change risks.

Climate change threatens our right to life.

Such threat is much pronounced in low-lying small island nations such as the Maldives. Eighty percent of said country's islands are no more than one meter above sea level. Vulnerable to sea level rise, the Maldives must seek a new homeland elsewhere as a final adaptation solution. But what happens to the Maldives today might happen to other countries tomorrow.

In the Philippines, a mere one meter rise in sea level is estimated to submerge 129,000 hectares of land in 28 of our 80 provinces.

According to Kofi Annan's Global Humanitarian Forum, climate change is already responsible for 300,000 deaths a year as heat waves, floods and forest fires become more severe.

Given these far-reaching implications of climate change, it is indeed the greatest humanitarian challenge today.

State of the Climate

08.10.10

AT HOME, disaster risks abound. The Philippines being an archipelagic State located in the western edge of the Pacific Ocean—and directly within the Ring of Fire—faces the constant risk of typhoons, drought, as well as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. With climate change, we are to expect longer droughts, heavier rains, more flashfloods, and more landslides.

SEA LEVEL RISE

As one of the countries most affected by sea level rise, the Philippines is inundated 9 to 12mm per year, which is much higher than the global annual average of 3mm. A one meter rise in sea level would inundate an estimated 129,000 hectares of land, affecting two million people. Manila invariably registers the highest rise in sea level and this impact will be grave for the country's administrative and financial capital.

WEATHER AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTER RISKS

There is a need to improve our scientific and technical capacity to forecast the shifting hazards and their links to disasters. Downscaling, which requires time, skill and the human and computational resources, is now possible to help our municipalities prepare for the possible impacts of their alternative climate futures.

Current modeling runs show Mindanao and the southern part of Visayas as warmer and dryer in 2020 and 2050 compared to Luzon. But Western Mindanao, particularly the Central and Southern Peninsula, are projected to have the highest increase in temperature.

It is also projected that, except for Western Luzon, there will be less rains over Luzon and Mindanao and more rains in the Visayas.

Aside from the change in the pathway of the storms, the findings of the PAGASA and Manila Observatory reveal that there have been fewer but more intense rainy days. As the number of rainy days decrease, water-dependent sectors will need to anticipate and innovate approaches to achieving and maintaining sustainable supplies of fresh water while preparing for floods and landslides. This highlights the two extremes that the country is currently experiencing: drought and deluge.

DROUGHT

Experts agree that the looming water crisis is the result of the combination of rapid population growth, pollution, the destruction and mismanagement of freshwater resources, and climate change. All these factors create a growing water security challenge. Even as we speak, one out of five Filipinos has no direct access to clean water, based on World Bank estimates. This uneven distribution of water is echoed throughout the farms in the countryside. The lack of storage infrastructure also leaves the Philippines highly sensitive to droughts and floods.

The agriculture sector, accounting for 81 percent of total water consumption in 2007, is most affected in the event of a water shortage during prolonged dry spells. To address this, I have filed a resolution pushing for better adaptation in the water sector, which entails comprehensive watershed management, irrigation efficiency, introduction of low-water-use crops, recycling of water, creation of water impoundment and rainwater harvesting systems, and improvement of monitoring and forecasting systems for floods and droughts.

The capital is not spared from the dangers of a prolonged drought. As water level in the Angat dam has plunged, long queues for water have become a common sight in many affected barangays.

A disturbing study from PAGASA reveals that water entry in the Angat Dam has decreased by 500 million cubic meters in the last 50 years. This strongly supports our resolve to think of long-term development interventions.

At the root of this water shortage is the deterioration of the country's forest areas. Under nature's order of things, watershed areas store water for release into the water receptacles during the dry months, ensuring a continuity of water supply. Yet most of the proclaimed watershed areas have been classified as deteriorating or dying. We lose 1.4 percent of our forest cover a year.

I have also filed a resolution urging the Department of Public Works and Highways to implement a 21-year-old law, Republic Act No. 6716, or the Rainwater and Spring Development Act of 1989.

Why has the DPWH not constructed wells and rainwater collectors, developed springs, and rehabilitated existing water wells in all barangays during the last 21 years?

DELUGE

Our experiences with *Ondoy*, *Pepeng* and *Basyang* exposed the country's lack of an effective weather forecasting and early warning systems. Our equipment and communications systems are outdated and inadequate to effectively predict typhoons, determine their intensity, and communicate warnings to everyone at risk. This inadequacy increases the vulnerability of the poorest sectors—those living in high-risk areas and whose livelihoods are at the mercy of extreme weather events.

The Senate Committee on Climate Change conducted a series of public hearings last year after the onslaught of *Ondoy* and *Pepeng*. A matter of discussion in these hearings was dam operations as waters were released based on antiquated protocols, flooding several provinces in Luzon.

We now call upon NAPOCOR to review their operations in light of the science available and then to ensure that extreme weather events are taken into consideration in the process. Our hydropower systems must be climate-resilient, which entails measures for improved management of our dams linked to reliable weather forecasts and effective early warning systems for communities at risk of floods due to dam water releases.

I have already filed Senate Bill No. 1406 or the PAGASA Modernization Act of 2010, which will give the agency PhP5 billion for the acquisition of modern equipment and communication systems, providing for the necessary information requirements.

With regard to our problem on flooding, I have also filed a resolution urging the Metro Manila Development Agency (MMDA) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to implement a river rehabilitation program in order to recover the length, width and depth of our rivers, and promote better water flow along our major tributaries to prevent flooding.

EARTHQUAKES

Another disaster risk that we should address is the alarming number of our children exposed to earthquakes. A study from Columbia University reveals that compared to the rest of the world, the Philippines has the largest number of schoolchildren at risk from earthquakes—with 15.6 million school-age children in earthquake zones.

To ensure the safety of our schoolchildren, we urge (1) the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) to identify earthquake hazard areas within the country; (2) the DPWH to immediately conduct a nationwide structural evaluation of all schools, enhance the structural integrity of public schools, and help private-run schools improve on the same; and (3) the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure that schools are structurally and organizationally resilient to earthquakes.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Higher temperatures also trigger the surge of diseases such as dengue, malaria, cholera and typhoid. Communities displaced by disasters will most likely be exposed to health threats in evacuation centers.

In 1998, when the Philippines experienced the El Niño phenomenon, almost 40,000 dengue cases, 1,200 cholera cases and nearly 1,000 typhoid fever cases, were recorded nationwide. These sicknesses make our population more vulnerable, especially those who cannot afford health care, much less health insurance.

We must strengthen our people's health to make them resilient against diseases that the change in climate may bring. It is for this reason that I advocate the passage of the Mandatory Universal Healthcare Coverage of Every Filipino Act and the Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act, as well as a bill providing for nutrition workers in every barangay.

These laws shall ensure that proper healthcare and accessible, cheaper, and quality medicines and knowledgeable nutrition workers will be on hand to help our citizens, especially the poor, avoid diseases heightened by warmer temperatures.

AGRICULTURE

From 1970 to 1990, typhoons, floods and droughts resulted in an 82.4 percent loss to total Philippine rice production. With continued climate change, crop yield potential is estimated to decline by 19 percent in Asia and rice yield in the Philippines by as much as 75 percent towards the end of the century.

FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY

Philippine forests, host to a large variety of plant and animal species, have been declared as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. The

IPCC predicts that with a 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Celsius rise in temperature in a span of 50 to 100 years, 30 percent of species would be at risk of extinction.

For this, I urge the passage of the Barangay Greening and Forest Land Rehabilitation Act, which empowers local officials as frontliners to advance greening, rehabilitation and protection of the different forest lands in our country. This shall be a priority adaptation strategy that will be implemented from the provincial down to the barangay level.

ENERGY

The country is a leader in the use of renewable sources of energy: hydropower, geothermal and wind power. However, even with pro-alternative energy policies, hydropower currently accounts for less than 10 percent of total national capacity. Moreover, since hydropower is dependent on rainfall, the historical trend of fewer rainy days threatens the sustainability of this energy source.

On our most recent experience, Typhoon *Basyang* paralyzed the energy sector causing a massive blackout throughout Luzon. This only shows how vulnerable energy-related infrastructure are; thus, a call for the need to climate-proof our energy sector.

Therefore, a diversification of our energy systems must be put in place. Setting up plants in provinces to generate renewable energy may reduce total reliance of power on a national grid. Exploring and developing geothermal and wind power, apart from hydropower, as renewable sources of energy would be a great leap in the country's goal for energy sustainability.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

A 2004 World Bank study revealed that the annual economic impact of disasters totals US\$500 million or about four percent of GDP. Rural areas, where poverty is most prevalent, bear the brunt of these economic losses.

Based on a study by the Asian Development Bank on the economics of climate change, the country stands to lose six percent of its GDP annually by 2100 if it disregards climate change risks.

However, this same study found that if the Philippines invests 0.5 percent of its GDP by 2020 in climate change adaptation, it can avert losses of up to four percent of its GDP by 2100—clearly a short-term investment with a long-term eight-fold gain.

The science is clear and irrefutable.

It is high time to rethink development—the kind of development that transcends traditional economic yardsticks such as GDP; the kind that values the social, cultural and natural capital of countries; and the kind founded on sustainability and socio-economic progress, ecosystems protection, cultural resilience and good governance.

Evidently, we are one of the most vulnerable. The Philippines is a climate hotspot, ranking 12th for the most number of deaths because of disasters. The capital even landed second place in World Wildlife Fund’s list of climate-vulnerable coastal cities in Asia.

With the clock ticking, I call on:

- The government to make our laws work, which entails the review and understanding of socio-economic implications of complex climate risks we face and ensuring that these insights are incorporated into the efforts for the full implementation of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and now the Climate Change Act of 2009 and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010;
- The government to institute transparency and accountability mechanisms that will ensure the prudent utilization of dedicated budget lines, financing facilities and international aid for climate change financing;
- The Philippine negotiating team to the United Nations Climate Change Conference to bravely assert “climate justice” and persuade high-emitting countries to commit drastic cuts in their greenhouse gas emissions;
- The newly created Commission on Climate Change to support scientific research collaboration and innovation in order to design evidence-based decision support systems. This critical task lies at the core of its capacity to fulfill the mandate to decrease our vulnerability by ensuring the integration of climate change and disaster risk reduction, into national, sectoral and local development plans and programs;
- My colleagues in Congress to fully exercise their legislative and oversight functions to advance adaptation;
- Local leaders to drive and push for environmental protection and clean energy initiatives in their respective jurisdictions;

- The private sector to invest in clean new technologies, adopt energy efficiency measures and help their local communities adapt to climate change;
- The scientific and research community to intensify collaboration on risk science and innovation, and help us prepare for localized impact assessments;
- The academe to share practical knowledge with their communities and teach our youth the urgency and importance of climate change action; and
- Non-government organizations to be a channel between the academic and scientific institutions, and communities, in helping address the impact of climate change on the most vulnerable populations.

Millennium Development Goals and Climate Change

09.20.10

ABOUT five percent of people exposed to earthquakes, cyclones, floods and drought live in developing countries where the MDG initiatives are of central importance. The disasters pose significant threats for the world to achieve the MDGs, in particular, the first goal of halving poverty by 2015. The direct damage costs of disasters alone have shot up by around 13 times, from US\$75.5 billion in the 1960s to roughly a trillion dollars in the past decade.

Even these ballooning figures cannot capture the long-term cost to the people and communities that bear the brunt of disasters, paying with their lives, livelihoods and development prospects.

Asia—very prone to the impact of earthquakes, floods, landslides, storms and drought—bears a large share of the total number of people killed by disasters, ranging from 74 percent to 85 percent of the total fatalities in recent years.

Among the most deadly disasters each year, at least five of them occurred in Asia. The 2010 floods and drought in Asian countries once again remind us of the vulnerability of Asian people to natural hazards.

Disasters are not natural; they are often the result of accumulated risks and vulnerabilities caused by non-sustainable development. For example, building a school or a hospital without enhancing an inadequate construction code in an earthquake-prone area will surely lead to heavy loss of lives and public property. Therefore, integrating disaster risk reduction in development planning, policies and programs

is a strategic investment for achieving the MDGs, and for protecting development gains more generally.

With each disaster that we allow to happen, Filipinos are dragged even deeper into poverty as they lose whatever they own and have to start anew. With each disaster, houses and critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, bridges and highways are destroyed. With each storm or drought, our poor farmers lose what they toiled for, for their very subsistence.

With each disaster, money from the government coffers is diverted to relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Billions in government money—money that ought to have been spent on reducing poverty, on providing universal primary education, and improving health for women and children—are instead placed into projects aimed at rebuilding the lives of the most vulnerable, in reconstructing expensive infrastructure from the ground up, in supporting our internally displaced brothers and sisters in evacuation centers, among others.

We, as decision-makers must make intelligent policies—development policies that take into consideration disaster risks. We cannot waste billions of our already limited resources in building schools, roads, and implementing development projects that will be destroyed by one typhoon or earthquake.

A Year After Ondoy

09.27.10

AS OF September 25, Mr. President, 27 evacuation centers continue to exist in many barangays along the shores of the Laguna de Bay and several areas in Region IV-A, Region III, and Region I. These serve as “temporary homes” to 1,783 families or 9,271 people. DSWD estimates that 42 percent of them are children.

Funding came, Mr. President, but how could it be that one year after *Ondoy*, *Pepeng*, and *Santi*, we still have people living in evacuation centers?

We need not look far away. They are just in Antipolo, San Mateo, Angono, Pililia, among many other places just 26 kilometers away from where I stand now. There are thousands more in Pampanga, Pangasinan, Zambales and Benguet.

Initial information gathered by my office indicates the following funding sources:

A total of US\$409.5 million worth of direct loans acquired from:

1. Japan International Cooperation Agency for the Short-Term Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project;
2. Instituto de Credito Oficial & Deutsch Bank S.A.E. for a Bridge Construction and Replacement Project; and
3. the World Bank for Food Crisis Response Development Policy Operation and Supplemental Support for Post-Typhoon Recovery.

This is on top of the PhP14.8 billion that had been released to various departments in relation to emergency response, relief and rehabilitation efforts for *Ondoy* and *Pepeng*.

It is crucial to ask, what have we done with the money so far?

Initial reports indicate that since the change of administration, the Special National Public Reconstruction Commission (SNPRC), whose task, by virtue of Executive Order No. 838, was to oversee and raise funds for the rehabilitation of affected sectors has yet to convene. We would like to know how this Commission, along with the Philippine Disaster Recovery Foundation as its private sector partner, has helped in the rehabilitation effort. We certainly hope to build on their initial gains.

An accounting of what we have done and what we have spent is in order. This is the very least we can do in honor of the people who, by their death in *Ondoy*, *Pepeng*, and *Santi*, would have hopefully issued a wake-up call for everyone.

International Day of Disaster Reduction

10.13.10

TODAY, we join the world in marking the International Day for Disaster Reduction, celebrating the small victories that we have so far won yet recognizing the persistent challenges that remain—foremost of which is the challenge to build more sustainable and disaster-resilient towns and cities.

In many parts of the globe, disasters of unprecedented proportions made it to the headlines. The earthquake in Pakistan, the flooding in Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and tropical storm *Ondoy* and typhoon *Pepeng* in the Philippines have one thing in common—they have been labeled as the deadliest or worst-ever disasters that these countries have faced.

What is more disturbing is the even worse impact of disaster risks in more urbanized societies, where higher concentrations of national population and economic power are located.

Who could forget how *Ondoy* jolted a totally unprepared Metro Manila?

Mr. President, the central campaign of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) for this year, “Making Cities Resilient,” enjoins cities and local governments to get ready, reduce the risks and become resilient to disasters.

We take pride in the fact that United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has cited the Province of Albay as an ideal model of a resilient and safe community towards sustainable development. Albay is among the first local governments in the globe to commit to a ten-point checklist identified by the UNISDR to scale up investments in urban planning,

infrastructure and building safety; protect ecosystems to mitigate floods; and install early warning systems, among other measures.

The challenge to us, decision and policy makers, is to help make cities resilient to hazards because losses due to disasters are always greatly felt in the local level, but sometimes invisible from a global perspective. Bringing it down to the city or town level also allows active participation from everybody—the local government, national government, civil society, donors, academe and stakeholders. After all, reducing disaster risks is everybody's business.

The strong engagement of local governments in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is also the guarantee that projects to make our communities disaster-resilient get off the ground, are pursued aggressively, and succeed.

Mr. President, elected leaders—national or local—have a moral obligation to the people. We must lead responsibly and wisely. We must reduce disaster risks in our midst. We must prepare our people to adapt to a changing climate.

Are our cities and towns ready for the worst that climate change could bring?

This question is inevitably asked of ourselves and of every local leader. And the people who chose us to lead them deserve nothing less than our definitive response and effective intervention.

International Year of Biodiversity

12.15.10

“**B**IODIVERSITY is life. Biodiversity is our life.” This is the slogan launched by the United Nations General Assembly when it proclaimed the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity.

As the year ends, it is imperative to understand and address the challenges in sustaining our biological diversity, which is the foundation of life on Earth.

The Philippines is very fortunate to be one of the 17 mega-biodiversity countries. It ranks fifth in the number of plant species, fourth in bird endemism, and maintains five percent of the world’s flora.

However, our country is also one the world’s top biodiversity hotspots, with a large number of species threatened by overexploitation, habitat loss, pollution and degradation of habitats. In fact, the country ranks third for threatened birds and eighth for threatened mammals. Furthermore, there are 695 plants and 223 animals in the Philippines that are considered as threatened species.

During a Senate hearing by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources last week, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources stated that of the country’s total land area of about 30 million hectares, our forest cover is only 7.2 million hectares. The ideal should be at least 12 million hectares or 48 percent of the total land area.

Mr. President, the way we have lived in the past decades, our failure to protect our natural resources mainly due to lack of concern, and

now the threat of climate change cause more stress on our biodiversity resources, which are already in danger of deterioration.

It has been forecasted that about 30 percent of species face a high risk of extinction if global mean temperatures exceed 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

All of these cause alarm as our ecosystems supply priceless environmental services that we need for our existence.

We have the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act, which was passed to ensure the continuous existence of all native plants and animals through the preservation, protection and management of the country's natural habitats.

However, Mr. President, even if we have the legal mechanism to prevent biodiversity loss, our efforts would be wasted if people are unaware of the importance of conserving biodiversity and of the underlying threats to it. We are confronted with the task of protecting our country's unique but endangered biodiversity. Pursuing a kind of development that has genuine regard for the state of our natural wealth has never become more crucial than today.

The ecological clock is ticking away. The challenge is for all of us to make our environment cleaner, greener and safer for the future generations. If we do not act today, tomorrow may be too late.

Revealing Risks, Redefining Development

06.01.11

AS WE observe World Environment Day this week, I rise to bring to the attention of this august chamber the main messages of the recently launched 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction of the United Nations, which aims to reveal risks and redefine development.

The world has been seeing the worst, biggest and deadliest disasters over the years— the floods in Pakistan, the earthquakes in Haiti, China and Chile, and the triple tragedy in Japan. In the Philippines, the threat of typhoon *Chedeng* brought back the fears of another *Ondoy* or *Pepeng*, which killed nearly a thousand people and affected about two million families in 2009.

Two years ago, I conveyed to the Senate the message of the previous Report (GAR 2009): disasters will only be averted if countries successfully address its underlying drivers—(1) poor urban governance, (2) ecosystem decline, and (3) vulnerable rural livelihoods.

Inferring on new and enhanced data, the 2011 Report underscores the political and economic imperative to reduce disaster impacts and offers suggestions to governments and stakeholders on how we can effectively meet this objective. Allow me to highlight its main findings.

RISK TRENDS: ECONOMIC LOSSES UP, MORTALITY DOWN

The good news is that globally we are protecting more people from disasters. The bad news is that we are losing more of our economic assets

due to the same disasters. The risk of being killed by a cyclone or flood is lower today than it was 20 years ago. However, this is not the case for those who live in a country with low GDP and weak governance. The August 2010 flooding in Pakistan, which caused 1,700 fatalities and US\$9.7 billion in total damage and losses, is a testament to this.

What is alarming is that across all regions, economic losses due to disasters continue to be in an upward trend—and seriously threatens the economies of low-income countries. In absolute terms, the proportion of the world's GDP exposed to tropical cyclones tripled to more than US\$1.9 trillion.

We observe the same trends in the Philippines. According to a UNISDR-World Bank report in 2010, in the last 30 years, even though the number of disaster events have increased three times in the country, the reported number of deaths have decreased slightly, and the number of affected population staying the same, but alarmingly, the economic losses increased drastically by more than 17 times. *Bagama't bumaba nang kaunti ang bilang ng mga namatay sa mga kalamidad, nakababahala na ang kawalan sa ekonomiya ay lumaki nang labimpitong beses.*

It may baffle our minds why the trend in disaster mortality is down while economic losses are up. The Report reveals that while governments may have improved its disaster preparedness measures such as pre-emptive evacuation, we still expose our population and assets in hazard-prone areas, a clear manifestation of poorly managed urbanization.

This highlights the need to ensure the integration of disaster risks into our local land use and development plans.

For local governments in the Philippines, the authority and system of comprehensive land use planning provide the opportunity for the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

With the advent of the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act of 2010 and the Climate Change Act of 2009, the time and institutions are ripe for this kind of integration.

The latest figures from Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board show that many cities and municipalities prepare their respective Comprehensive Land Use Plans or CLUPs, and most of these have not integrated the tools of DRR and CCA, except for the simple hazard maps, in delineating the use of land resource in their jurisdiction.

At present, there are 340 LGUs, which still need to update their CLUPs. Most of these are 3rd to 6th class municipalities that have low income but high vulnerability to various types of disasters.

In addition, 23 provinces are also in need of developing their Physical Framework Plans.

This is a good opportunity to institutionalize DRR and CCA in the local planning process and practice of LGUs and the time is right to call on the National Economic Development Authority and the Department of Interior and Local Government, together with Office of Civil Defense and the Climate Change Commission, to assist LGUs in this process.

ISSUES OF VULNERABILITY:

CHILDREN, DISPLACEMENT, COMPLEX VULNERABILITIES

The Report also tells us that at least 66 million children are affected by disasters each year. Disasters have resulted in increased incidences of diarrhea in children under five years of age in Bolivia, more malnourished children under the age of three in Nepal, and increased infant mortality in Viet Nam, emphasizing the need for greater intervention to address children's vulnerability.

I urge the Department of Health and the Climate Change Commission to undertake a similar study as a first step to safeguard the health and welfare of Filipino children from the risks of disasters.

Meanwhile, the fact that disasters lead to large-scale internal displacement is not new to us and must be seriously looked into by our housing agencies. Looking back, two million families or 10 million individuals were affected in the flooding or landslides caused by *Ondoy* and *Pepeng*. Totally or partially damaged homes reached 220,000. Other Asian countries faced this predicament, with Pakistan's 2010 floods and India's 2008 floods leaving an estimated six million people in need of shelter.

In March, we have seen new and emerging patterns of vulnerability linked with the growing interdependency of the different technological systems: energy, telecommunications, finance and banking, transport, water, and sanitation. The triple tragedy in Japan – earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster – revealed how these new vulnerabilities multiply disaster risks and exponentially magnify impacts.

DROUGHT: THE HIDDEN RISK

The Report asserts that globally, drought impacts remain inadequately understood and poorly managed. As only a few countries thoroughly document drought losses or have a national policy to address risks, drought has become a "largely invisible risk" despite its significant impacts on agricultural production, rural livelihoods, and urban and rural economies.

Here in the Philippines, the damage to agriculture due to El Nino-related drought from 1990 to 2003 was estimated to be more than US\$370 million. Warmer temperatures also put pressure on our fisheries yield. With coral bleaching, as much as 8,000 to 24,000 metric tons of fish per year are estimated to be lost. This projected loss, valued at PhP4 billion, can feed about 150,000 impoverished families.

Add to this concern the unabated degradation of our marine resources that ultimately result to the pitiful catch of our fishermen. Considering that the rural poor, highly dependent on farm and fishery sectors, increasingly feel these pressures, we need to ask the Department of Agriculture on their strategies to help this vulnerable population in buffering and absorbing drought impacts.

REFORMING RISK GOVERNANCE

The success of reducing and managing disaster impacts rests with policy coherence in the national government, competent and accountable local governments, and an openness to work in partnership with civil society.

LGUs have a better understanding of the needs of their communities and the concerns of their citizens, especially during disasters. We need local leaders who possess wholehearted commitment to effectively address these needs.

As lawmakers, we must urge the national government to prioritize and harmonize disaster risk reduction strategies. We also have the opportunity to lay the foundation for increased investment in risk reduction at all levels. We play a critical role in arresting the chronic cycle of disaster vulnerability and poverty.

REDEFINING DEVELOPMENT: SCALING UP DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The message of the Report is straightforward: Development must be redefined to be sensitive to disaster and climate risks.

The important starting point is political commitment and our measure for success will be more disaster-resilient financial investments for development efforts and ultimately, better and greater quality of life for our long-suffering people.

Disaster impacts should be evaluated in public investment planning from national to local levels. We therefore pose important questions to the NEDA: Will the Philippine development and investment plans, as they

currently stand, be able to withstand the projected ill effects of climate change on various sectors? How can we be assured that we will not put to waste the billions of pesos to be invested in our new infrastructure and urban development programs?

Mr. President,

The Philippines has begun heeding the social demand for disaster resilience. But the greater challenge remains, and this is what the Global Assessment Report fundamentally urges us to do—to sustain this renewed engagement among us, leaders and stakeholders, in protecting our development gains, and in building a safer tomorrow.

Chapter 2

Speeches in Various Fora

BEYOND the halls of the Senate, I have organized a nationwide climate change awareness campaign in schools and universities to inspire the youth to act and care for the environment. I also delivered speeches to local governments and various organizations towards enjoining multi-stakeholder support and participation in this advocacy. Whether the audience was 100 or 1000, it did not matter for as long as I helped bring about change where it matters. Here are excerpts from the speeches.

A New Hue of Agroforestry

05.19.09

WE HAVE to prepare; we must arm ourselves with the necessary information, skills, and technology to adapt to the changing climate. We must devise techniques for climate change adaptation. In this, I am truly glad that the International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) is offering a concrete adaptation strategy in the form of agroforestry.

As Chair of the Standing Committees on Climate Change and Agriculture, the Oversight Committee on Climate Change, and Congressional Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization, I am thrilled by the prospect of forging a bond between climate change and agriculture to better address the needs of our people.

Inasmuch as climate change is a cross-cutting issue, it is very comforting to find that the solutions are also, shall we say, in the same backyard.

From its inception, agroforestry has been crafted as a combined solution to the problems in agriculture and environment. It serves the dual function of addressing food security and maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Agroforestry improves forest goods and services and increases productivity. It improves soil quality and enhances the conservation of other biomes. Through agroforestry, farmers' incomes are augmented, since cash crops are planted simultaneously with forest trees. This, in turn, translates to greater access to health services, food, shelter, etc.

Further, agroforestry improves the quality of water and air, thus promoting water and energy conservation. Clearly, agroforestry has countless benefits. It is quite a blessing, therefore, that we can also turn to agroforestry as an excellent strategy for climate change response.

Agroforestry is a good example of adaptation action to climate change with positive mitigation effect. It promotes cool and good quality environment, which reduces heat stress, while reducing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Agroforestry has high carbon sequestration capacity, averaging at 21 tons per hectare for sub-humid zones and 50 tons per hectare for humid zones of which the Philippines is an example.

Furthermore, it promotes biodiversity and wildlife habitat and enhances aesthetic and amenity value of lands.

Having thus established the potentials of agroforestry for climate change adaptation, it now bears upon us to ensure that these are realized. As the theme of this workshop suggests, we must build relevant capacity at the local and national levels. We must:

- intensify efforts to raise public awareness of the impacts of climate change and the benefits of promoting agroforestry to enhance the country's adaptive capacity;
- enhance central government-local government coordination, planning, and funding mechanism to boost agroforestry in the country in support of sustainable development;
- improve compilation of relevant scientific data to enable our farmers to adjust their planting practices to the changing climate; and
- develop an effective system for disseminating technologies to agroforest farmers affected by climate change.

The Challenge of Our Times

10.26.09

I FEEL a sense of relief and fulfilment now that the arduous process of legislation that I went through for the past two years—from authoring and filing the bill to its present enactment into law—is finally over.

However, I am fully aware that with our new climate change law, the greater challenge, especially to all gathered here today to translate the law into concrete local actions and measurable gains for the people, particularly the poor and vulnerable, has just begun.

With the grim scenarios of climate change impacts on our people's lives, our nation's economy, our environment, and our children's future, ensuring the successful implementation of the Climate Change Act is not only a legal requirement, but more so a moral imperative and a social responsibility.

The recent flood disaster was indeed a wake-up call for all. It revealed to our nation and the community of nations how vulnerable our cities and communities are and how the magnitude and extent of the disaster could stretch the current capacities of the government to respond and recover from the losses.

The recent flood disaster also suggests that climate change is in our midst. With reference to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, there is more than 66 percent likelihood that such extreme weather brought by *Ondoy* and *Pepeng* is due to climate change. Furthermore, the report forewarns us that worse scenarios are bound to happen in the future with more than 90 percent certainty.

More recent international studies have further shown that the Philippines is a hotspot for climate change impacts.

The Mortality Risk Index (MRI) of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) ranked our country 12th among the 200 countries most at risk from tropical cyclones, floods, earthquakes and landslides.

In a January 2009 study funded by Canada and Sweden, the Philippines ranked highest among Asean countries as a hotspot for cyclones, landslides, floods and droughts, while the National Capital Region ranked 7th most vulnerable city in the Asean region.

Disasters have been a fact of life for Filipinos. Their impacts linger for years, imperil our development gains, and make our sustainable human development goals even more elusive.

Keynote Speech

Conference on Sustainable Forests: Key to Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity Conservation

11.06.09

RECENT events have shown us the grim scenario of climate change impact. The intense and record-high rainfall by *Ondoy*, *Pepeng* and *Santi*, as well as the consequent fatalities and damages, have shown us that the price we pay for denuding our forests and abusing the environment is well beyond our means.

It is therefore an imperative for us to do everything in our power to protect the forests left for our children and for humanity. It is an uphill climb but we must gather courage. We must pool in our knowledge, our skills, our commitment, and our passion. Essentially, we could find the know-how, the skills, and the passion among our foresters.

Our foresters are the ones who are literally “on the ground” in protecting our forests from abuse and misuse. They are the foot soldiers. They are our forests’ caretakers. And incident to their vocation, foresters are also our partners in reducing poverty in the rural areas. Indeed, many are already rising to the challenge, and our gathering here today is a testament to this.

Let me reiterate that forest protection, like environmental protection, is not its own end. As always, the strong environmental thrust of my advocacy is part of my larger plan and vision of eradicating poverty in the grassroots. Taking care of our forests not only responds to climate change and other environmental concerns but also deals with persistent local poverty because forests are a vital part of the development in the rural areas. I envision every part of the country—every nook and cranny—to be planted with trees so as to be eventually capable of developing to their fullest potential.

Keynote Speech

National Conference on Climate Change Adaptation in Watershed Context

11.10.09

WITH climate change exacerbated by poverty, weak policies, deforestation, urbanization and industrialization, extreme weather events, temperature rise, and excessive rainfall are expected to happen. Monsoon rains alone account for more than 60 percent of the total rainfall in the country and are associated with high intensity rains, which are responsible for most of the soil erosion and sedimentation problems in the watersheds. These cause changes in our land cover and water quantity, quality and demand.

It is not surprising, therefore, that our watersheds today are degraded, although it is unfortunate that the effects of degraded watersheds on the environment and the socioeconomic situation of our people are serious and alarming.

Let us take Sultan Kudarat as an example. A villager of the Allah Valley areas elucidated the gravity of the situation eloquently. The villager said, “The changing weather has made farming harder for us. We lost all of our livelihoods. We can no longer depend on farming. The land is gone. Our children have stopped going to school; our food is not enough. In our village alone, more than a thousand hectares were lost.”

When we hear of the misery of our vulnerable people, we know that we have to take concrete and appropriate action in order to alleviate their hardships. We know we must preserve and protect our watersheds. This is that forum where we can formulate and integrate our solutions

and ideas on watershed protection, as well as our progress in attaining our goals.

Climate change adaptation is water adaptation. Implementing sustainable management of river basins builds the resilience of communities and the economy. This results from both effective water governance, which builds adaptive capacity that is vital to successful climate change adaptation and well-functioning watersheds.

It is my aspiration for the people of Sultan Kudarat to be able to plant and harvest their crops. It is my aspiration for the people of Mindanao and of the entire Philippines to have a safe and productive life with sustainable natural resources and environment.

Each of us has opportunities to make a difference for our future. We must take hold of the opportunity to responsibly manage and develop our watersheds. We must maintain focus and momentum in order to restore health to our watersheds and thereby protect our citizens from the impacts of climate change. We must, we can, and we will.

Whether the issue is climate change, forestry, or protecting our valuable watersheds, we are truly fortunate in this country to have so many dedicated and knowledgeable individuals helping us in our efforts to build clean, sustainable and healthy communities.

A Good Reason to Hope

10.11.10

THROUGH many decades, the complexity of the development problem that prevails in our world has been widely examined for insights into better approaches and solutions.

Yes, we have known the problem, but our ways that let the problem persists remain unchanged—careless lifestyles, inadequate laws, weak standards enforcement, insatiable greed for wealth and money. In short, the business-as-usual attitude still prevails.

With the grave consequences of climate change and the many disasters that continue to strike all over the world, mother nature seems to be talking back to us, demanding that we change our way of thinking and our ways of doing that risk and weaken life on Earth.

The simple passage of generations and the emerging necessities of life on Earth naturally change us. And by nature, we, humans, are adaptable beings. Yet the change that nature now demands from us is perhaps the greatest adaptation challenge ever posed to humanity.

While the imperative to cherish the earth and to protect the global environment that sustains all of us has become widely accepted, and while the call for more resilient and safer communities resounds all over the world, the mitigating steps we have taken, in the grand scale of the problem, are too small and too slow.

In choosing life over death and destruction, we have yet to secure our choice with responsibility, prudence and unrelenting passion for change. Unified by a common foresight and by our respect for the laws of nature, we have good reason to believe that humanity will see safely through this difficult passage.

We may not probably see fully the change we seek within our lifetime, but we can fervently hope, with abiding faith in our Creator, that our endeavors today will ensure a safer world and a more resilient human society for many generations to come.

Keynote Speech

Cebu Resilient Cities Campaign

01.13.11

THE tasks before national and local leaders are straightforward. We have to make our communities safer, more resilient, and even more ready to act when disaster strikes.

Committing to make cities and municipalities disaster-resilient means increasing our investments in disaster risk reduction, conducting and sharing risk assessments, establishing effective and efficient early warning systems, and protecting our ecosystems, among other actions.

We must link disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to national and local development planning.

We must build homes, schools and hospitals that are safe and secure amidst natural hazards.

We must design and construct roads, bridges, and other infrastructure that help spur economic growth with disaster risk reduction in mind.

We must recover and rebuild from any disaster impacts with building-back-better-and-greener as objective.

Disaster risk reduction essentially means genuine development—development that is sustainable and economic growth that is resilient.

As national and local government leaders, we have the moral responsibility to usher in and achieve genuine development for the country and our communities.

Closest to the people, local government leaders have the privilege to translate national policies, plans and programs into concrete and visible actions for the people. Much is expected from you by the people.

The people expect good governance. But let me assure you that governing with effective disaster risk reduction is certainly a mark of good local governance.

The people expect a better life, a brighter future. Let me further assure you that there is no better way to realize that aspiration than planning rightly and pursuing development that promotes equitable and sustainable growth and good care of the environment.

Delivering well in these two expectations are legacies that you could certainly be proud of and for which the people will surely appreciate and long remember your service to them.

Opening Remarks

Lecture on the Security Implications of Climate Change

01.26.11

WE NEED to know the serious security risks that a changing climate present, the conditions that this will create, how these may affect a country's national security interests, and what actions should the nation take to address these consequences.

We need to encourage the mainstreaming of climate change into national security and defense strategies. We need to explore partnerships, amidst national boundaries and divergent economic status, that will help the country build the mechanisms necessary to enhance resiliency to climate impacts. We need to do these now in order to achieve a safe, stable, and secure environment for our people.

The Philippines joins the rest of the global community in not just recognizing the security implications of climate change, but also in finding ways to address these issues.

Conserving Biodiversity Amidst Climate Change

02.01.11

A FEW DECADES back, man and nature used to be the best of friends. We used to savor the goodness that nature brings—the right warmth of sunshine that energized our mornings, the occasional rain showers that brought excitement during summer days, the fresh air and clean water that invigorated our bodies, the green fields that allowed us to de-stress and daydream, the fireflies that lit the rich meadows during the night, the butterflies that flew from flower to flower to sip its rich nectar.

These are just a few of nature’s wonders. Mother Nature took care of us because we also took care of her.

Today, however, our own environment has started turning into a foe that connives with natural hazards to reciprocate the kind of treatment that we give it.

Pollution, illegal and excessive mining, logging and fishing activities, and deforestation—among many other abuses—have contributed to the degradation of our environment. These dangers that we bring upon nature ultimately affect us too. When disasters strike, our ailing environment will have no power to defend itself and would even intensify the risks in our communities.

Closing Remarks

Technical Briefing on the Joint World Bank-United Nations Publication: *Natural Hazards, Unnatural Disasters, the Economics of Effective Prevention*

02.09.11

TO ALL political leaders of our country, we must realize that reducing disaster risk is our moral responsibility to the people, a commitment to good governance that transcends political boundaries.

And to the highest leader of our land I have a few messages: Mr. President, now is the time to make a difference.

We have known the risk and you must act now. We cannot allow another *Ondoy* and *Pepeng* to happen again in Metro Manila.

First, improve our early warning system and strengthen PAGASA. This measure is deemed most cost-effective in reducing the impacts of disasters.

Second, invest in flood protection and earthquake mitigation in Metro Manila. Heed the lessons of *Ondoy* and *Pepeng*.

Third, convene the Climate Change Commission and make disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation high in your development agenda.

Fourth, engage our local government leaders in the fight against disaster and climate risks. They are in the frontline and most in need of capacity building.

Finally, seize the opportunity to act decisively. The message today is reducing disaster risk not only makes good economic sense but secures our children's future.

Opening Remarks

Manila Launch of “My City, My Town is Getting Ready!”

02.11.11

TODAY, we make history here in East Rembo Elementary School as Metro Manila and the Alliance of Seven join more than 150 cities and municipalities all over the world who have committed to undertake essential actions in line with UNISDR’s global campaign launched last year.

Metro Manila has been dubbed as the convenience store of disasters because based on the latest Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) risk assessment synthesis report, NCR is most at risk of flooding and earthquakes within the region.

Presented with such facts, the logical step would be to put in place proactive measures to reduce the cities’ risk to disasters. We cannot be complacent and wait for another *Ondoy* or *Pepeng* to start doing what we ought to have done many years ago.

A great start would be to take part in the UNISDR’s crusade to build more sustainable and disaster-resilient towns and cities.

By signing up in this world disaster reduction campaign, towns and cities commit to the “Ten Essentials” to scale up investments in urban planning, infrastructure and building safety; protect ecosystems to mitigate floods; and install early warning systems, among other measures.

The impact of disaster risks can be more pronounced in more urbanized societies, where higher concentrations of national population

and economic power are located. As elected leaders we have a moral obligation to the people, a commitment to good governance that transcends political and territorial boundaries. The tasks before national and local leaders are straightforward: We have to make our communities safer, more resilient, and ever ready to act when disaster strikes.

The magnitude of the work ahead of us seems daunting, but this gathering of leaders gives me hope and strength—that together, we can make our municipalities and cities resilient against disasters. Our people expect and have a right to nothing less than our wholehearted commitment to this.

Issues and Challenges in Legislation on Climate Change

02.14.11

IF THERE is a single biggest challenge in legislation at this point, it is ensuring that appropriate resources from the government coffers are allocated for climate change adaptation. While grants and loans are being offered by development partners, it is crucial for adaptation to merit top government attention in terms of funding.

Scaling up budget lines for adaptation can avert spending for post-disaster relief, recovery and reconstruction. We have all the reasons to be concerned about the cost of disasters.

The damage wrought by Typhoons *Ondoy* and *Pepeng* in 2009 already require PhP227 billion for reconstruction.

The World Bank and the United Nations joint report, *Economics of Effective Prevention*, says that annual global losses from natural hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and flooding could triple to US\$185 billion by the end of the century, even without calculating the impact of climate change. Climate change could add another US\$28 to US\$68 billion from tropical cyclones alone.

These figures all the more support the demand for more and better spending for proactive measures.

Chapter 3

Speeches in International Fora

I TRAVELLED the world for high-level advocacy missions in Bhutan and Maldives, and international conferences in Beijing, the United Nations in New York, Geneva, Paris, Copenhagen and Hanoi where I met and interacted with world leaders, heads of states and parliamentarians, among others. Through these missions, I have advocated for 'redefining development', a rethink of contemporary approaches towards a more holistic approach to sustainable human development characterized by responsible leadership, quality living and green growth. The following pages contain excerpts from my speeches in international events.

Welcome and Opening Remarks
UNISDR Consultative Meeting with
Parliamentarians on Making Disaster
Risk Reduction a Tool for Adapting
to Climate Change

10.17.08

CLEARLY, disasters are added misfortunes our poor people cannot afford to bear. Disasters have already claimed countless lives, have impoverished even more people, and have condemned whole sub-populations to perpetual lifelong and even inter-generational poverty traps.

This is the reason why I am here with you today and why I have accepted the challenge to convene this important meeting together with the UNISDR. And, I want to join my fellow parliamentarians across the globe to learn how we can protect our poor citizens from disasters and climate risks.

In the face of this challenge, our human societies must act. And effective and sustained actions can only become possible when we secure political commitment for a legal framework for collective efforts. Our legislative initiatives must focus on reducing disaster risks and adapting to climate change that tends to drive disasters to become more destructive.

There are many ways for legislative initiatives to spur global and national actions that make disaster risk reduction a major tool for climate change adaptation of our countries and societies.

Legislation can integrate disaster and climate change risks and impacts on livelihoods and economic growth in our socioeconomic development thinking, planning and practice.

Legislation can accelerate the key process of informing and educating people about the risks and threats to their survival and prosperity coming from disasters and climate change.

Legislation can enable our social, cultural and economic institutions to perform better in reducing climate change challenges, including greater reduction of risks from disasters.

And, legislation can mobilize resources and build capacities essential for effective and timely collective action.

Welcome Remarks
3rd Global Congress
of Women in Politics
10.19.08

WE CAN do the next best thing: lead and persevere in the efforts to curb climate change and help push congresses, parliaments and all policy-making bodies to formulate gender-responsive legislation and programs related to climate change and disaster risk reduction.

This, I believe, is what this Congress wishes to accomplish.

It has become an imperative. And this is my second point. Apart from the climate change agenda being driven largely by men, current policies have not recognized the gender-specific effects of climate change. For it is women that bear the brunt of climate change's savagery.

They are the main, and the more prodigious, producers of staple crops. Any extreme weather event that affects agricultural production—whether it is a drought or rampaging floods—gravely affects the women tillers of the land.

A starving mother carrying her ailing child is often the public face of famines and food shortages.

Climate shifts play an important role in the explosions of malaria and cholera outbreaks. Women receive less medical services than men. Worse, they bear the burden of caring for the sick.

Women have distinct nutritional needs, which make coping with natural disasters tougher and harsher.

Even disaster rescue efforts discriminate against women. Women made up 90 percent of the 140,000 people who died in a 1991 hurricane in Bangladesh. African-American women made up the majority of those

killed and injured by Hurricane Katrina. In the 2006 tsunami that killed scores in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, male survivors outnumbered the female survivors 3 to 1 or 4 to 1.

In times of disaster and economic stress, women are the primary caregivers. They also carry out much of the household workload after a disaster.

All these realities should lead to a single resolve: the efforts to combat climate change and mitigate the risks and challenges it poses to communities should be gender sensitive and gender responsive. This means policies should come to terms with the fact that women disproportionately shoulder the brunt of shocks and trends of climate and environment change in the face of continued poverty.

They must recognize that this stems from the way people position women in society. They should understand that this is all about power—and how power works to exclude and marginalize women. It is time to redress the subordinate position of women in all spheres of their lives.

Making Disaster Risk Reduction a Tool for Adapting to Climate Change: Report on the UNISDR Consultative Meeting with Parliamentarians at the 3rd Global Congress of Women in Politics 10.20.08

LAST Friday and Saturday, 17th and 18th of October, I and Parliamentarians from Cambodia, National People's Congress of China, Costa Rica, East African Legislative Assembly, the Republic of Ghana, Jordan, The Netherlands, Republic of Korea, the Republic of Uganda, the European Parliament, and representatives from the UNISDR and CAPWIP, gathered together at a roundtable consultative meeting to discuss how we can harmonize disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) strategies and weave this integrated strategy into the sustainable development agenda.

We revisited the evolution of our approach to DRR—from one that was basically reactionary and after-the-fact to one that is proactive and centered on prevention and preparedness.

Despite this progress, however, we realized the distinct gap between DRR and CCA interventions as evidenced by the worsening impact of disasters, increasing human vulnerabilities, and rapid environmental degradation. The alarming consequences of leaving these problems unaddressed intensified our desire and commitment to find concrete ways of making disaster risk reduction an international, national and community priority.

I am proud to say that we have come to a consensus that resulted in the Manila Call for Action. The first of its kind in DRR history, this landmark document embodies our convictions and commitment to DRR and CCA and I am extremely happy to present this Declaration to you today: “The Manila Call for Action of Parliamentarians on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.”

A 21st Century Parliamentarian's Legacy

11.22.08

MESDAMES et Messieurs des parlements du monde, je vous félicite de votre zèle, I applaud everyone present in this conference for your political commitment—and what I hope you would permit me to assume to be your personal advocacy, as well—to the continuing search for new responses to *les changements climatiques*.

This forum presents a perfect venue for exploring ideas and strategies that we can harmonize right here in Paris and concretize when we go back to our home countries.

Climate change is a global phenomenon and disaster respects no boundaries, be it territorial, cultural, political, or economic. No nation is invincible; developed and developing countries alike are exposed to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, CCA and DRR cannot be pigeon-holed because they cut across issues of environment, poverty, food security, human security, gender, national growth, and sustainable development.

Crafting adequate responses is therefore no easy task. Inasmuch as consensuses such as the Manila Call are important, these must be accompanied by concerted effort among all players and stakeholders in all levels.

Indeed, there is much merit in the adage that two heads are better than one, and in the moral that a bundle of sticks is infinitely stronger than its individual strands. The integrated DRR, CCA, and sustainable

development agenda requires no less than our full and unwavering cooperation and commitment. We will confront challenges both from within, that is, how to realize these changes, and from without, that is, all the other problems competing for our attention such as the financial crisis. We can only overcome these challenges if we mobilize our collective potential.

DRR and CCA were once proverbial voices in the wilderness but through our joint and fervent efforts, the world has started to listen. Now we have no choice but to carry our advocacy forward. We have to act as we have professed; and influence others to take part. My fellow Parliamentarians, responding to the call of DRR and CCA is no longer merely optional; it has ripened into a duty—our duty.

It is an obligation that our peoples rightfully exact of us and a responsibility that the unborn generation reasonably expects us to fulfill today. My friends, this is one duty we owe to ourselves and to the rest of humanity and we simply cannot abandon it to chance. Its fulfilment is our best legacy as parliamentarians and citizens of the world.

Merci beaucoup.

Acceptance Speech

Now is the Time

12.02.08

IT IS with profound gratitude and great humility that I accept this appointment as Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for the Asia-Pacific. I am truly honored. I deeply appreciate this appointment.

This appointment inspires me to work harder and to do more—to advocate on a regional level the issues close to my heart and of deep concern for my country, the Philippines, one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

There is no more urgent time to act—for the survival and future of our people—than now.

Now is the time—to use our disaster risk reduction tools that are available, ready and tested. Adapting to climate change begins with reducing disaster risks; nothing is more basic.

Now is the time—to translate political commitments into more concrete actions and measureable gains at national and local government levels, for we are still far from achieving the goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action. And, there is no more opportune time to show political will, good governance, and exemplary leadership than these trying times.

Now is the time—to change old mindsets and reform ineffective policies so we can disaster-proof our development efforts and mainstream disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation more efficiently and more effectively into sustainable development agenda and strategies at all levels.

Now is the time—to invest more in prevention and adaptation in order to save not only human lives but also livelihoods and prospects for development. Adaptation through disaster risk reduction is proven to be cost-effective and to bring immediate benefits to our people. It is important that disaster risk reduction is made an essential element of all funding allocations.

Now is the time—to make known to each and every country of our region the many good practices on reducing disaster risks and to share lessons and solutions that work in our regional and local contexts.

Now is the time—to unite on these issues, transcending territorial boundaries, political persuasions, and institutional affiliations. Disaster risk reduction for climate change adaptation is undeniably everybody's business.

Now is the time.

Opening Address

The Challenges Are Clear

04.20.09

DISASTERS happen again and again, in every passing year, and in every corner of the world, claiming countless lives, destroying homes and properties, displacing families, ruining livelihoods and investments, and worsening poverty. Their magnitude and extent stretch the current capacities of countries to respond and recover from the losses.

In the past five years, we have seen the enormous losses in China, Myanmar, in Bangladesh, in Indonesia, in the United States of America, in the Indian Ocean countries, in the Caribbean, in European countries, and in Iran, among others. My country, the Philippines, has also suffered from perennial losses from disasters.

The impact of these disasters could linger for years, put our development gains at great risk, and make our shared goals for sustainable human development even more elusive. And yet, given the grim scenario of climate change impacts, more are bound to happen if we do not act decisively to reduce the risks.

How much of the costly humanitarian responses can we afford in the future? How many more precious lives will be lost before we act decisively to prevent them? And, how much fleeting time is left for us to stop the next disaster from happening?

We must come to understand that our social vulnerability depends much on the choices we make and the actions we take—as leaders and

decision-makers, as planners and builders, and as members of a society and a community.

While natural hazards are inherent to our environment and beyond our control, they need not lead to a disaster. They become disastrous only when we are unprepared, when we fail to take action. It is our complacency that transforms natural hazards and climate change into disaster.

The fact is we ourselves also shape the disaster risks in our midst—by the way we change our environment and the way we choose to live in it. If only we recognize the risks that our actions could bring and take decisive actions to reduce them, we could mitigate—if not prevent—disaster from happening and protect human lives and livelihoods beforehand.

Keynote Address

Redefining Development

05.29.09

MY VISIT to Bhutan is a personal longing come true. I have read and heard much about your country and people, and have been fascinated by your rich culture and your unique development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. And now, I stand before the very people I admire, with a deeper purpose and meaning, as I hold my very first official advocacy mission as a Regional Champion in the world's youngest democracy.

I was told that I have come at the most proper time—when recent floods and landslides in the country have drawn the attention and action of the Government and have tested the capabilities of the one-year old Department of Disaster Management, as they revealed the vulnerability of the communities. Indeed, the impact of the three days of unabated rains early this week is disaster risk made more manifest. It is this detrimental impact on people's lives and livelihood, on the environment, and on infrastructure that we strive to lessen or to avoid, in our effort to advance disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Climate change and disaster risks are the defining issues of our time. Their increasing trend driven by economic growth brings to fore a human development issue and a human security concern that call for urgent action.

It is in this context that I wish to listen to you and to know more about Gross National Happiness and how this development philosophy and approach could influence development policies and strategies of countries, including those of the Philippines.

I therefore come to convey an important message—a message that calls for unity in action in reducing disaster risks, a message that hopes

for a more secure and sustainable future and a safer environment for all to live in.

The world needs to revisit and rethink conventional frameworks and strategies for socioeconomic development. We could examine our respective development approaches and ask these questions: How can we further develop our societies without compromising the welfare of generations to come? How can we advance our socioeconomic standards without putting the poor at greater risk? How can we realize our shared goals on poverty reduction and sustainable development for the millennium with greater certainty of success? Our answers to these questions will redefine for us the meaning of development.

The world also needs to adopt an innovative, out-of-the box approach, to tackle effectively this most complex human development problem of the 21st century. We need a more integrated, holistic, and proactive approach of reducing vulnerabilities and of building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters—an approach that builds on partnerships, collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders. This is the spirit of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Yet we need to ensure that political commitments to the HFA translate into concrete actions and measurable gains.

The world needs to change its way of thinking and doing—to address effectively today’s complex problems of disaster risk, poverty, ecosystems decline and climate change toward achieving set goals for human development.

We need to invest today for a safer tomorrow. The investment most needed now is more political rather than financial, for there remains a wide gap between international commitments and local good practices.

Governments need to ensure the formulation and implementation of good environmental laws, to create the necessary enabling mechanisms to translate sustainable development strategies into practical and measurable gains, and to achieve desired development goals with greater certainty of success.

We need to make disaster risk reduction a primary strategy for sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development. We need to promote the linkages and synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. For reducing disaster risk reduces poverty as well, safeguards development, and helps us adapt to climate change with benefits for global security, stability and sustainability.

Item 49: Sustainable Development and Agenda 21

63rd session, Plenary Session of the Second
Committee (Economic and Financial)
United Nations General Assembly

10.27.08

Madame Chair,

Our achievements in shepherding climate change to the forefront of global and national agenda cannot be gainsaid. Two decades ago, we agreed to pursue sustainable development “to ensure that humanity meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” At Rio, we adopted the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Since then, sustainable development has sharply drawn attention to environmental problems. Yet, the increasing prevalence of climate risks and climate-related disasters and the growing vulnerability of our people make our sustainable development goals even more elusive. Realizing the urgency of mitigating and confronting climate change, we subsequently adopted the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Plan of Action.

Madame Chair,

The Philippines has been a vigorous frontrunner in translating these global agreements into concrete actions with tangible results. It fully subscribes to the principle of balance of commitments under the Convention that “the extent to which developing countries will implement their

commitments will depend on the effective implementation by developed countries of their commitments on financial resources and transfer of technology.” Mindful of this, the Philippines, together with the G77 and China, submitted proposals for more responsive financing and technology transfer mechanisms under the Bali Action Plan process. By these proposals, we hope to rectify the current situation where funding for climate change is unpredictable, inadequate, and inconsistent with the commitments under the Convention.

In the on-going process under the Convention, the Philippines has taken the position that greater focus should be given to adaptation than mitigation. Adapting to climate change requires reducing underlying vulnerabilities, building response capacities, and managing climate risks. It entails a proactive and preventive national strategy that builds the resilience of communities to accelerated sea-level rise, changing landscapes, increased frequency and severity of storms, floods, droughts and fires, climate-related illnesses and diseases, ecosystem degradation, and biodiversity loss.

Madame Chair,

The Philippines remains fully committed to its obligations under the Convention and has ingrained these commitments in various laws: The Philippine Clean Air Act, the Philippine Clean Water Act, and the National Ecological Solid Waste Management Act. Espousing a multi-sectoral and participatory approach, these laws adopt comprehensive policies that balance development and environmental protection within the framework of sustainable development. I am pleased to share that this representation authored these measures that are now effecting policy and strategy changes.

Madame Chair,

The challenge now is how to sustain a strong focus on climate change and how to reduce climate-related disasters more effectively. In this time of global financial crisis, there is a real risk that the newfound awareness and concern for climate change may be eclipsed by the startling plummet of the financial market. Whereas we have succeeded in elevating climate change and disaster risk to international consciousness, we now tackle the challenge of establishing a conspicuous and indelible space in this consciousness amidst this financial downturn.

United Nations General Assembly Agenda Item 47
Integrated and Coordinated
Implementation of and Follow Up to
the Outcomes of the Major United
Nations Conferences and Summits in
the Economic, Social and Related Fields
11.03.08

Mr. President,

The ECOSOC special meeting on the Global Food Crisis was one of the very first discussions on this problem, and one that led up to the high-level meeting in Rome and the eventual finalization of the Comprehensive Framework for Action. As one of the world's largest importers of rice, the Philippines remained critically engaged in this process.

During the meeting on the Commission on the Status of Women, the Philippines highlighted the fact that the World Economic Forum ranked our country as the only Asian country in the top ten of the Global Gender Gap index—an achievement that reflects progress in narrowing the gender gap. But that is not reflective of the vulnerability faced by women in the face of the current global crises.

On procedural matters, it has become apparent that all of the major global crises that have made the headlines over the past year are directly within the purview of the ECOSOC—the food and fuel crises, climate change and environmental degradation, and most recently, the financial crisis. These crises pose a grave threat to the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, and in particular the Millennium Development Goals.

The number and severity of these global crises challenge the UN system, including all UN Member States, in terms of trying to find quick, coherent, comprehensive and coordinated responses to the multi-dimensional and oftentimes, inter-related effects of these problems.

The large number of issues we have to deal with make it easy to be overwhelmed by the competing interests and the number of reports and documents churned out by various UN bodies and agencies. Indeed, because of the sheer volume of added work brought about by these crises, we run the risk of overlooking vital connections that could lead us to the correct responses.

The relatively new mechanisms set up under the ECOSOC—the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum—offer the possibility of tackling these problems and how they affect international development cooperation in a rational manner.

Mr. President,

The Philippines supports the recommendations contained in the Secretary General's report that are aimed to streamline and rationalize the functions and operations of the ECOSOC and the functional commissions.

In particular, we support taking a closer look at the utility of triennializing the report on integrated follow-up to reduce the amount of work that may not have any useful outcomes.

Finally, as a member of the Philippine Senate, the recommendation on the conduct of the ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) that "the inclusion of civil society organizations, parliamentarians as well as local government and private sector representatives provides for a unique opportunity to garner a wide range of inputs for a deepened dialogue on the future of international development cooperation" is of particular resonance.

It must be said that the development pillar of the United Nations must be pushed forward on the basis of a multi-stakeholder approach, as it is only in this manner that we can ensure that policy recommendations, negotiated resolutions and program implementation can have any real meaning to the ordinary person.

Thank you.

Challenging Development Norms for Disaster Risk Reduction

06.16.09

THE CHALLENGE of the 21st century to world leaders has never been more pronounced and more compelling than in the present. The challenge in politics and governance is persuasively clear.

Fundamentally, we must all understand that our socio-economic vulnerability depends much on the choices we make and the actions we take—as leaders and decision-makers, as planners and builders, and as members of a society and a community.

Truth to tell, disasters are not inevitable; these can be averted.

Our lack of political will, poor understanding of risk, disregard for prevention and mitigation, ineffectual preparedness for response, our failure to take action, and our apathy and complacency—all these transform natural hazards and climate change into a disaster.

We must therefore realize that we have actually shaped the disaster risks in our midst—by the way we change our environment and the way we choose to live in it. If we recognize the risks our actions could bring and take decisive actions to reduce them, we could mitigate, if not prevent, disasters from happening and protect way ahead human lives and livelihoods from the harmful forces of nature.

There is no more fitting time to say that reducing disaster risk has become a moral imperative for governments and a social responsibility for all than now—when having less in life means losing life.

The present task of reducing disaster risks in the context of poverty, social inequality, gender imbalance, and climate change has now become synonymous to preserving humanity and securing the future of our children and our grandchildren today. It is therefore a task no one can afford to ignore.

To us leaders and lawmakers of nations and societies, the task at hand calls for a new brand of politics—the kind of politics that has genuine regard for human development and a forceful vision for the future of humanity; the kind of politics that ushers proactive laws and policies, and reforms our conventional way of thinking and doing.

The task at hand also calls for a new brand of governance—the kind of governance that ensures risk reduction laws and regulations are passed and implemented, and creates the necessary enabling environment to translate sustainable development strategies into practical and measurable gains; the kind of governance that translates political commitment into real actions and results for the people at national and local levels.

Public Launch of World Disasters Report 2009

06.17.09

THE World Disasters Report is among the most important and relevant publications the disaster risk management community looks forward to every year. The focus of this year's report on early warning and early action is most relevant and responsive to the realities on the ground, and as such it deserves priority for global action.

Disaster risk has been on the rise—a reality that prevails and constantly challenges us. The growing population in areas prone to natural hazards has exposed billions of people to disaster risks. The impact of disasters could linger for years, put our development gains in great peril, and make our shared goals for sustainable human development even more elusive. And yet, given the grim scenario of climate change impacts, more disasters are bound to happen if we do not act decisively to reduce the risks.

Our early warning system must be able to integrate risk knowledge, monitoring and warning service, risk communication and warning dissemination, and the response capacity of the community.

Our early warning system must be able to transcend its purpose for humanitarian response toward socioeconomic development of the community. It must be appreciated not only as a means for protecting and preserving human lives, but also socioeconomic gains and opportunities.

Our early warning system must facilitate early actions and link them into long-term development aims toward effective disaster risk reduction.

The Greatest Development Challenge of Our Time

06.23.09

CONTEMPORARY development practices have been irresponsible since they have allowed disaster risks to grow, to spread, and to prevail until today. Urban poverty, weak governance, ecosystems decline and vulnerable rural livelihoods, turbo charged by climate change, altogether created enormous risks in our cities and communities and put the poor in greater peril. These risks will constantly challenge our human capacity to cope and imperil all development gains.

Today's state of socioeconomic affairs should not be business-as-usual. It is high time for the world to slow down this contemporary development practices.

We come to ask ourselves: What is the true meaning of a nation's wealth? How then can we develop our societies without compromising our environment and the welfare of generations to come? How can we advance our socio-economic standards without putting the poor at greater risk? How can we realize our shared goals on poverty reduction and sustainable development for the millennium with greater certainty of success?

The real answer lies deep within us.

It is high time to rethink development—and for a more holistic development philosophy to emerge and to prevail:

- the kind of development that transcends economic capital measures such as GDP;
- the kind of development that has regard for social, cultural and natural capital of countries;
- the kind of development that is not only sustainable but also adaptable;
- the kind of development that fosters equity not just efficiency;
- the kind of development that does not create new risks and promotes resilient investments;
- the kind of development that is founded on sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, ecosystems protection, cultural resilience, and good governance.

COP 15 Parliamentary Meeting on the Politics of Climate Change Legislation

12.16.09

OPENING STATEMENT

We know our respective constituents—their aspirations, concerns and needs. We know their capacities, vulnerabilities and risks.

Likewise, we know our responsibilities and the opportunities before us to help and lead our people out of crises and uncertainties brought about by climate change. We all know that we can start adapting to climate change now by building upon risk reduction practices that are grounded in local knowledge and tried and tested in the crucible of local experience.

We have extensively discussed these actions in a series of consultative meetings of parliamentarians co-organized by UNISDR at national and regional levels, from Manila in 2008 to Malta just last month.

I am particularly pleased to know how the parliamentarians have gone far to heed the Manila Call for Action as well as reaffirm the challenges and further resound the call for immediate political and sectoral action on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

We are fully aware of the challenges ahead and the tasks at hand. Now is the time for real action.

CLOSING STATEMENT

However grim the scenario for our future may seem, the road ahead is not entirely dim. With courage of spirit, strength of will and with the force of unity among our people, we can certainly make a difference for the generations of today and tomorrow.

Fear for the loss of economic gain should never stand in the way of doing the right thing. Similarly, we do not fight global warming because we merely fear the rising seas and the many ill effects of a changing climate. Fear as a guide for action is myopic and limiting and an insult to the capacity of humans to prevail against odds.

We stand against climate change because we stand for humanity. We fight global warming because it is wrong to endanger human lives and life on Earth itself, much less to risk the future of generations to come.

With our environment-insensitive consumption patterns and lifestyles, we seem to have been harboring the illusion that we have five Earth. Yet we are fully aware of reality. We need to transform from within and change our ways in the quickest possible time to delay if not stop the tipping points of the climate crisis.

We are haunted today not only by the melting ice caps and the rise in sea levels, stronger torrential cyclones, more severe droughts, floods and flash floods, ravaging diseases, destruction of biodiversity and marine life, and stalking hunger, among other direct and indirect effects of climate change.

Yet, we are also within hearing distance from the cries of demands by those outside this conference center. They are our fellow environmental advocates who think we are not doing enough, if not outrightly doing the wrong thing at the right time.

At the end of this world conference and after all is said and done, should we consign ourselves to the charge that “more is said and done?” That there is too much talking, but doing too little and too late?

With the clock ticking, I call on world leaders and parliamentarians:

- to support early and drastic emission cuts,
- to bring adaptation technology to the developing world, and
- to legislate climate change responses that promote the linkages of disaster risk reduction and adaptation, just like our recently enacted Philippine Climate Change Act of 2009, which I principally authored and sponsored, with invaluable technical inputs from UNISDR.

Now is the time to face bravely the many challenges ahead, to renew our resolve to decisively and immediately act against climate change, and to continue and sustain our actions. Let COP 15 be not our finish line, but rather our starting point for more meaningful and successful action at national and international levels.

Let it not be said that when we were presented with a once-in-a-lifetime chance of making it right, we looked the other way.

Change is within our reach. Let us seize change now.

Welcome Remarks
COP 15 Investing
in Women's Leadership
for Climate Solutions Forum

12.17.09

WOMEN have been silently and effectively at the frontlines of confronting climate change. In the Micronesia, women farmers have developed their own useful knowledge of the islands' hydrology, enabling them to find water and dig out water wells during droughts.

A gender-sensitive community education in Honduras, one that focused on warning systems and hazard management overseen by women, led to the prompt but orderly evacuation of the communities hard hit by Hurricane Mitch in 2004. This saved hundreds, if not thousands, of precious lives.

Kenya's Greenbelt Movement, relying on cadres of women engaged in massive reforestation, hopes to capture 350,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, check soil erosion and revive lost ravaged watershed areas.

In the Philippines, women make up a sizable portion of workers, supporters and volunteers of Luntiáng Pilipinas—a tree-planting and seed-donating foundation, which I founded. It is now one of the most active organizations in the country's tree planting and reforestation work.

Women are powerful agents of change in the overall climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. We know this and we have a track record to prove this.

So much work remains to be done. And work, as this meeting implores us to do, we must.

Welcome Remarks

Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

11.25.10

IN 2009, in response to the Manila Call for Action of Parliamentarians, similar consultative parliamentary meetings were held in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, with UNISDR's support.

Several regional and international parliamentary fora and parliaments also heeded the Manila Call for Action and held meetings that advocated for the synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. These included the Pan-African Parliament in South Africa, the World Bank Parliamentarian Network Annual Conference in Paris, and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development in Hanoi.

The outcomes of these meetings advanced disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation altogether, and were reported at the high level segments of the COP 15 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen by parliamentarian delegates, myself included.

This year, we witnessed several parliamentary networks and assemblies from all regions of the world taking on the agenda and

advocacy for disaster risk reduction as an instrument for achieving the MDGs. Among the laudable accomplishments are:

Firstly, the development and publication of the *Advocacy Kits for Parliamentarians*. Thanks to the help of the parliamentary conference held in Senegal and to our UNISDR colleague Dr. Feng Min Kan for her effective coordination of the initiative; and

Secondly, the passage by the Inter-Parliamentary Union of two resolutions urging governments to support DRR actions at various levels. Thanks to our parliamentarian colleague Saumura Tioulong of Cambodia, for her persuasive leadership in the IPU.

Based on this progress, we have all the reasons to believe that parliamentarians can really make a difference.

Today, we meet again, here, in the same city, and in the same venue—where the first Call for Action was sounded—mindful of what have been accomplished by parliamentarians since the Call was made two years ago.

With focus on Asia, we ought to discuss in this meeting how we can sustain our gains and step up our initiatives on reducing disaster risks toward more sustainable socioeconomic development in the region. We also ought to discuss what remains for governments to do, and how parliamentarians can make the needed change happen.

Our mission of reducing disaster risks should transcend political boundaries and our calls for action should echo through the challenging times ahead. Our vision of improved socioeconomic standards and quality of living for our people compels us to constantly renew our commitment to responsible and effective political leadership, governance, and public service, and to work toward a more sustainable world and more resilient human societies for many generations to come.

Keynote Address

Towards Integration, Common Understanding, and Cooperation for Effective Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation

03.04.11

THE FACT is a disaster can be prevented if we consider risk reduction not as a cost but a wise investment. Your country's investment in mangrove development, reforestation, and community-based disaster risk management attests to your appreciation of this fact.

The rising trend of disaster risk can be stopped if political leaders govern with commitment, responsibility, and accountability to bring about a safer and more resilient society.

No conscientious leader would want to see the poor and most vulnerable constantly drawn back by disasters into abject poverty for lack of government action.

No responsible politician would want the government to waste millions on public infrastructure that can be instantly destroyed by earthquakes and floods.

As national and local leaders, we have the mandate to introduce change and to ensure that it happens.

Through a multi-stakeholder consultative process such as this forum, we can pursue creating an enabling law and the much needed policy environment for more sustainable disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation programs.

We can employ risk reduction strategies for adapting to climate change that are supportive of the national development agenda. Together, we can lay the foundation for increased investment in risk reduction and thereby safeguard our hard-earned development gains.

THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

The lessons of Typhoons Ketsana and Parma in 2009 have taught us that we should not train our sights merely on enhancing our capacities to respond, recover, and rebuild after each and every disaster. We cannot content ourselves with merely reacting to disaster events that claim countless lives, ruin properties, and leave lingering effects on people's livelihoods and the environment.

As a country and people constantly at risk, we realized that we need to rethink our development approach. We need to protect our development gains from the regressive impacts of disasters. We need to mainstream disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into our national development plans, policies and programs. We need to be proactive if we are to win against disaster and climate change.

LANDMARK LAWS ON DRR AND CCA

At the legislative front, we addressed the development challenge, head on. We passed the needed laws for disaster risk reduction and climate change actions during the past two years.

In October 2009, our country adopted the Climate Change Act, which I principally authored and sponsored. It provides the strategic framework for a comprehensive program and action on climate change at national and local levels.

We also passed in May 2010 the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, a law that strengthens our institutional mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and management, and lends great importance to disaster prevention and mitigation.

These two landmark legislation give our country and our people pride as they are now considered legislative models by the UNISDR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union for other nations to emulate. However, while these laws are adopted, their implementation remains a work in

progress and an enormous challenge to the government, both at national and local levels.

THE PHILIPPINE CLIMATE CHANGE ACT OF 2009

The Climate Change Act mandates the mainstreaming of climate change in various phases of policy formulation, development plans and poverty reduction strategies, among other development strategies by all the agencies of government. It also creates the Commission on Climate Change tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government relating to climate change.

To highlight the urgency of addressing climate change, the Commission is headed by no less than the President of the Philippines and composed of three commissioners, one of whom shall be the Vice Chairperson. The commissioners are experts in climate change by virtue of their training and experience. There is an advisory board, composed of secretaries of different government agencies; the presidents of the League of Provinces, Cities, Municipalities and Barangays or villages; and representatives from the academe, business sector, NGOs and civil society.

The Commission has completed the National Framework Strategy and is finalizing the National Climate Change Action Plan, which shall both serve as blueprints for comprehensive and sustained action.

Moreover, the law places the local governments in the frontline of the formulation, planning and implementation of climate change action plans in their respective areas. It also places disaster risk reduction as the first line of defense against climate change risks.

Recognizing that climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are closely linked and effective disaster risk reduction enhances climate change adaptive capacity, the measure ensures the integration of disaster risk reduction into policies, programs and initiatives on climate change.

In brief, this law is focused on strong government-wide coordination, multi-stakeholder consultation, high-level leadership, and links to science and local level action.

At present, the Committee on Climate Change, which I chair, is deliberating amendments to the climate change law to address financing issues. To support local governments in undertaking climate change adaptation programs and projects, we recognize the need to establish the People's Survival Fund. It will be a special trust fund to be used for activities that are in direct support of the climate change action plans of local governments.

Having a national institution, with a budget dedicated to climate change, has focused our work on building our community resilience. I do hope that Viet Nam, which is as vulnerable as we are to climate impacts, will also find the future climate threats compelling enough to strengthen your existing institutions.

PHILIPPINE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2010

Another significant development last year was the passage of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, which I co-sponsored. This law provides for the development of policies and plans and the implementation of actions and measures pertaining to all aspects of disaster risk reduction and management, including good governance, risk assessment and early warning, knowledge building and awareness raising, reducing underlying risk factors, and preparedness for effective response and early recovery.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), composed of a total of 41 agencies and organizations including representation from four civil society organizations and a private sector, is empowered with policy-making, coordination, integration, supervision, monitoring and evaluation.

One function of the NDRRMC is the development of a national disaster risk reduction and management framework, which shall provide for a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, inter-agency and community-based approach to disaster risk reduction and management.

At the local government level, the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMC) will ensure the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local development plans, programs and budgets as a strategy in sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The present calamity fund appropriated under the annual General Appropriations Act should now be known as the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (NDRRM) Fund and it shall be used for disaster risk reduction such as formulation of DRRM plans, training of personnel and procurement of equipment.

Of the amount appropriated for the NDRRM Fund, 30 percent shall be allocated as Quick Response Fund or standby fund for relief and recovery programs.

Beyond legislation, the greater challenge is to ensure that these landmark laws work and are fully implemented down to the local level. One opportunity is for the lead institutions empowered by these two

laws—the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and the Climate Change Commission—to transcend sectoral boundaries and build partnerships for a more effective support to local government units in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation.

Four days ago, we took a significant stride towards close cooperation between the two institutions in building our country’s resilience to disasters and climate change through mutual understanding and agreement. They will jointly endeavor to enhance the understanding of risk and reduction measures by local chief executives and community leaders, and build common risk information systems to aid development planning as well as joint action planning on risk reduction and climate adaptation at national and local levels.

In our experience, building linkages, common understanding and cooperation are key success factors in our fight against risk. For us, having an MOU between DRR and CCA institutions was one step in this direction. Inspired by this forum, I share these insights with MARD and MONRE today, as I feel that having practical understanding between these Ministries is one concrete way to make the proposed National Platform on DRR and CCA of Viet Nam truly action-oriented.