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WE express our solidarity with the urgent plea made by climate-action and climate-justice advocates urging the government to declare, amid a raging health pandemic, a climate emergency in response to the massive destruction in the Philippines brought about by the climate crisis.

It can neither be denied nor ignored that we are in a climate crisis. Now more than ever, our vulnerable people — who bear the brunt of a warming planet—are experiencing first-hand the cruel consequences of climate change as manifested in our series of battles against more frequent and more destructive weather disturbances, which are claiming lives and causing massive damages to homes and communities, the food, agriculture, and fisheries sectors, and the ecosystems that provide vital goods and services for sustaining the people's well-being.

To put climate action and justice at the heart of the government's policy and program, we urge President Duterte to declare a state of climate emergency now. Such a declaration will compel the government and society to acknowledge that we live in, and are seriously threatened by, a climate crisis.

We strongly believe that the declaration of a state of climate emergency will pave the way for the urgent implementation of climate action strategies and plans to address the vulnerabilities of the most impacted sectors and communities, including the suspension of environmentally destructive and climate change-driving activities, and the allocation of funds for climate mitigation and adaptation to protect, repair, and rehabilitate destroyed ecosystems, to increase society's adaptive capacity and resilience, and to reduce the crisis' economic, environmental, health, and social costs. Our government must also use and prioritize in our COVID-19 recovery efforts policies and programs to address the longer-term climate emergency, and not simply put in place stopgap and short-term measures.

This declaration will also drive the country toward more ambitious mitigation measures that faithfully adhere to our Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, it will speed up our efforts to transition toward healthy, sustainable energy and away from fossil fuels, including false solutions such as waste-to-energy incineration that are designed to perpetuate the extraction from, exploitation, and destruction of our environment and natural resources.

To this end, we further urge the government to embrace zero waste and clean production as key strategies for protecting the climate and our people and for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These strategies are proven to conserve energy and raw materials, stimulate product design for environmental sustainability and local economic development, promote substitution for hazardous chemicals, reduce waste and pollution from extraction, manufacturing, transportation, and disposal activities, create jobs and livelihoods, and support local self-reliance and a local circular economy.

Finally, we urge the government to ban single-use plastic, reduce plastic production, issue a list of nonenvironmentally acceptable products and packaging, stop waste importation, and halt deceptive schemes undermining zero waste, including the coprocessing of waste in cement kilns and waste-to-energy incineration.

Declare a climate emergency now, and pursue the path toward a zero waste and toxics- and fossil fuel-free society.

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