

Keyword: global-warming

Headline: Still on eco-suicide mode

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Published Date: 09:25 PM January 15, 2013

Section: opinion

Word Count: 503

Content:

The year 2012 passed into history with a record-breaking number of calamities: floods, droughts, storms, supertyphoons. Calamities hit the planet, all in extreme degrees, sparing no country.

The United Kingdom experienced the worst flooding in years. Ukraine and its neighbors went through extreme cold weather conditions; it “stood still” as the winter snow breached -27 degrees Centigrade.

In our country, an unusual pattern of weather disturbances took shape, causing unprecedented destruction in parts of Mindanao that through decades have come to be considered “storm-free.”

2012 broke both the “hottest” and “coldest” weather records.

How can we forget Superstorm “Sandy” after it humbled the United States, the most powerful country in the world, when it pummeled its eastern seaboard and the cities of New York and New Jersey, and left them in a “state of calamity.”

Frankly, I expected that after Sandy, the United States and the world would wake up and seriously tackle the urgent issue of battling global warming and climate change. But I was wrong.

The concerned leaders are looking instead into accelerating consumption and production. This is tantamount to spewing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, thus increasing their countries’ contribution to the worsening unpredictability of global weather patterns.

This is eco-suicide! Did anybody else ever notice?

In Doha, Qatar, the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change failed again to reach an agreement that would abate and mitigate global warming and climate change.

Do the world leaders see all the strange climatic disasters? Are they so blinded by greed and an insatiable lust for power that they refuse to take a stand? How can they not see even the simplest indicators such as whales and big fish beaching themselves? Or the common occurrence of red tide, algae blooms and fish kills? Or the continuing ocean acidification and Arctic ice meltdown? The list goes on.

Are they waiting for Greenland to disappear from the map to convince themselves that global warming is real? Why can’t the world learn from Germany whose economy is moving ahead, with solar power replacing nuclear power as its main source of energy? Germany has disproved the claim that harnessing solar energy slows down progress.

We must follow Germany’s lead and abandon the world’s present “development model of destruction.”

Sadly, renewable energy development slowed down in 2011 and 2012, according to Bloomberg Energy. If this is any indicator of how things will be, then the future is bleak for our planet.

Still, we look forward to a new and challenging year, bearing in mind the worst calamities of 2012, but confident that mankind is up to this point still in a position to prevent the conditions that could lead to greater disasters.

For a better year to come, let us learn from the year that was.

—ANTONIO M. CLAPAROLS,

president,

Ecological Society of the Philippines,

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