

Keyword: climate-change

Headline: PH delegation to raise concerns of vulnerable countries in COP21

Byline: Kristine Angeli Sabillo

Published Date: 07:55 PM December 06, 2015

Section: globalnation

Word Count: 557

Content:

PARIS — The head of the Philippine delegation has said the country will speak up on behalf of vulnerable countries during the ministerial level meetings of the climate change negotiations in Paris.

Climate Change Commission (CCC) Secretary Manny de Guzman on Saturday told Filipino journalists that the Philippines, which is the incumbent president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), has vowed to represent the cause of at least 43 countries before the ongoing 21st Conference of Parties (COP21).

The CVF now has 43 members, from only 20 country participants last year.

“Since we have a common ground and shared aspiration as regards to the Paris climate change agreement, we met yesterday and we reaffirmed our solidarity as a group, as a leadership and advocacy group of vulnerable countries,” De Guzman, who heads the Philippine delegation, said at the sidelines of the COP21.

“We made that reassurance and we also expressed and conveyed to them as incumbent president of the CVF, we will initiate interventions during the ministerial level segment next week,” he added.

De Guzman explained that the group wanted a “strong voice.”

“The voiceless should have a strong voice through the incumbent presidency of the CVF. We may not be hearing them articulate in the negotiation but as one group of advocacy leaders for a meaningful Paris climate change agreement, we reaffirmed that at the ministerial level we will actively be participating as one group,” he said.

De Guzman said there are still contentious issues regarding the draft COP21 agreement, which has recently been reduced to 21 pages.

“We will present our position echoing the provisions of the Manila-Paris declaration of the CVF on the contentious issues. There are still contentious issues,” he said.

The CVF on November 30 adopted a Manila-Paris Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, which includes its views on the draft Paris agreement.

The CVF is not a negotiating bloc in the COP21 but it has been pushing for the 1.5C goal or the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius below preindustrial levels. The current goal of COP21 is two degrees Celsius.

On Friday, the Philippines convened an “extraordinary ministerial session” of the CVF after a collapse in the Review of the 2 degrees Long-Term Goal under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

De Guzman, in a statement, earlier said the resolve of the group became stronger after the meeting.

“The movement for a safe future is unstoppable. Countries denying science and reason will have to face the growing number of countries and citizens calling for the 1.5 degree target to be reflected in the Paris agreement,” he had said.

The Philippines has been one of the poster boys of climate change after it was devastated by Super Typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) in 2013. It has been taking an active role in climate change issues and events.

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President Benigno Aquino III was present at the start of COP21 and talked about the fate of countries vulnerable to climate change.

He said countries like the Philippines “bear a disproportionate amount of the burden when it comes to climate change.”