

Headline: Marcos wants water-related projects prioritized amid El Niño

Byline: Nestor Corrales

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President Marcos on Friday renewed his order to government agencies to finish water-related projects as he warned that the El Niño phenomenon expected to hit the country next year would be “a serious problem.”

The Philippines is forecast to experience the worst drought in decades due to the El Niño phenomenon in 2024, the Department of Science and Technology said on Tuesday.

“With the El Niño projected to last until the second quarter of 2024, we must prioritize the repair of water pipes to prevent leakages and the completion of ongoing water supply projects to ensure that we have adequate supply,” the President said in a speech during the inauguration of the Poblacion Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in Muntinlupa City.

The Poblacion WTP of Maynilad Water Services Inc. is an P11-billion facility that taps into Laguna Lake as an alternate raw water source.

Meanwhile, activists in some of Asia’s most climate-vulnerable nations responded to the COP28 agreement with disappointment on Thursday.

The deal, approved by nearly 200 countries on Wednesday, contains their first call for a transition from fossil fuels, language hailed by US President Joe Biden as a “milestone.”

Lavetanalagi Seru, a Fiji-based climate activist, acknowledged that the language was “an incremental step in the right direction.”

However, “it falls short of climate justice and equity for our front-line communities,” he said.

It “continues to allow for dangerous distractions and loopholes ... which is deeply disappointing.”

Representatives from some of the most climate-vulnerable nations in the world—small island states, which face inundation by rising seas—were not even in the room when the deal was approved.

Marshall Islands negotiator John Silk described the deal as a “canoe with a weak and leaky hull, full of holes.”

“We have to put it into the water because we have no other option.” In Bangladesh, regularly ranked as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, activist Sohanur Rahman also worried about what the deal leaves undecided.

“Though we demanded phasing out fossil fuels, they adopted transitioning away,” said Rahman, executive coordinator of YouthNet, Bangladesh’s largest youth network for climate justice.

“It remains a question as to how they’ll implement it. More actions are needed on this. It has many loopholes.”

Among the concerns expressed by experts is a lack of clear goals for what countries should do on the move away from fossil fuels and by when. —With a report from AFP

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