

Keyword: global-warming

Headline: UN lauds Philippines' climate change laws 'world's best'

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Published Date: 02:33 AM May 04, 2012

Section: globalnation

Word Count: 558

Content:

An environmental crusader for two decades now, Senator Loren Legarda authored the Climate Change Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 9729), which created the Climate Change Commission and cosponsored the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (RA 10121)..
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The country's laws on climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) are the "best in the world," UN special envoy Margareta Wahlström said Thursday.

Wahlström, special DRR representative of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, praised the Philippines for taking the lead in the global campaign to mitigate disaster risks brought about by global warming.

She commended Senator Loren Legarda, the UN Champion for DRR and CCA for Asia and the Pacific, for ensuring the passage of climate-responsive laws and for mainstreaming the CCA and DRR mechanisms into the national political agenda.

"You do have now an excellent legal framework for disaster risk reduction and an excellent legal framework for climate adaptation. The basis [of the laws] is really for empowering local governments," Wahlström said in a press conference.

Legarda thanked Wahlström for the compliment, but told the media that the "challenge is to translate them into local community action to save lives, and reduce disaster risks and economic losses."

An environmental crusader for two decades now, Legarda authored the Climate Change Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 9729), which created the Climate Change Commission and cosponsored the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (RA 10121).

Wahlström stressed that both laws highlighted the policy shift from a reactionary to a proactive stance in addressing disasters.

"We have in the Philippines the best two laws—not only in Asia-Pacific, but in Margareta's words—in the world," said Legarda.

Since her arrival on Tuesday, Wahlström has met with government officials, businessmen and donors. She will be here until May 5 to engage both the government and private sector in strengthening the country's disaster resiliency initiatives.

She will go to Albay province, where she will have a discussion with 31 mayors in a two-day seminar sponsored by Governor Joey Salceda.

“We are here to really sustain engagement in the Philippines, and support the realization of the legal basis of the action plan that already exists in the country,” Wahlström said.

Wahlström talked about the international strategy on disaster risk reduction, or UNISDR, that called for “safe schools, safe hospitals and safe cities” through programs such as the retrofitting of buildings, the relocation of communities and government public infrastructure from hazard-prone areas, and capacity-building such as disaster-preparedness training.

Other environment laws

Legarda also authored other environmental laws such as the Renewable Energy Act, Solid Waste Management Act and the Environmental Awareness Education Act.

She pointed out that “the challenge is to translate national policies, plans and programs into local action with measurable gains.”

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She said that with the policy framework already in place, what was needed was to make the laws work at the grassroots’ level.