

Headline: Aquino, Hollande to call for int'l action on climate

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French President Francois Hollande FILE PHOTO

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MANILA, Philippines—French President Francois Hollande and President Benigno Aquino III will issue a joint call for the world to act together in responding to climate change during Hollande's state visit to the Philippines next week.

"It will be significant to make this call in the Philippines, a country which is facing climate change consequences courageously," said French Ambassador to the Philippines Gilles Garachon.

The French head of state will be making a two-day visit from Feb. 26 to 27, the first time for a French president to visit the country, the French ambassador announced on Wednesday.

He said Hollande would be reciprocating the visit made by President Aquino to Paris in September last year.

Garachon said the main purpose of the visit is to affirm the close friendship between France and the Philippines, but with a special focus on climate change.

He said Hollande wants to make a call for international mobilization to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, especially since Paris will be hosting a climate change conference at the end of the year aimed at getting 95 nations to agree to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius.

"The reason why we want to make the call here is because of the Philippines' stand on this issue which is a constructive one and this is a country badly hit by climate change," he said.

Along with three Cabinet members, Hollande will be joined by international personalities and leaders known for their strong support for the environment and climate change mitigation, the most prominent of which is Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Archbishop of Constantinople and the head of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Garachon said the celebrities in Hollande's party included British actor Jeremy Irons and French actresses Marion Cotillard and Melanie Laurent, as well as two French schoolchildren who were winners of a climate change-themed contest.

He said an earlier report of a list of big foreign celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Leonardo DiCaprio joining Hollande's delegation should not have been published as it was just a list of people who were active in the environment and climate change issues.

Garachon said they decided to invite people who were not as high-profile as these Hollywood stars so as "not to drown" the climate change issues.

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President Aquino will host a state dinner for the French President on Feb. 26.