

Headline: Hollande to Aquino: We need your voice

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MANILA, Philippines – French President Francois Hollande on Thursday said they are banking on leaders like President Benigno Aquino III to speak up and lead the fight against climate change.

“We need a voice like yours, President Aquino. The voice I heard on the occasion of international summits in the UN (United Nations),” Hollande said during his state visit to the Philippines.

“We need other voices,” he said, explaining that Philippines and other nations vulnerable to climate change should lead the international community as countries like France strive to do their part.

Aquino and Hollande, the first French president to visit the country, led the launch of the Manila Call to Action on Climate Change.

The joint statement of the campaign, which was read by Oscar award winning actress Marion Cotillard and Senator Loren Legarda, called on the international community to “conclude a universal, and ambitious climate deal.”

It aims to engage the world “on the urgency of addressing climate change seriously, efficiently, and equitably. It notes the varying strengths of nations in combatting climate change.

In addition to “climate solidarity and justice,” the document also called for “financial and technological solidarity” with developed and developing countries assisting poor nations in transitioning to “resilient territories and low-carbon economies.”

The campaign is in line with France’s preparations to host the UN Convention on Climate Change in December and Hollande’s promise to achieve a comprehensive climate deal that will effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally.

Commitment

For his part, Aquino said the Philippines will submit its targets in reducing greenhouse gases per sector of the economy.

“We expect to submit these commitments by August of this year. So that is where we will formalize all of the commitments of the Philippines towards combating climate change,” he said.

He mentioned the government’s efforts to promote renewable energy but also recognized the difficulty in changing the people’s lifestyle.

Nevertheless, he said, “the Philippines intends to attend every [forum] and utilize each of these particular fora to voice the sentiments of those who are at the receiving end of global climate change, and we will try to strive a consensus with every entity so that they can contribute the most at the quickest possible time.”

Aquino said he hoped even first world countries beginning to notice changes in their weather patterns will also support efforts against global climate change.

"We, as a developing country, welcome that countries like France have emerged as champions of a global partnership to address this issue," he said.

Aquino acknowledged that the Philippines has found itself at the forefront of the fight against climate change, especially after being devastated by typhoons such as Yolanda (international name Haiyan).

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"The Philippines will continue to exert its utmost to address this issue, and follow through on the commitments outlined in this call to action. We stand in hope that many nations in the global community will do the same," he said.