

Headline: Gov't vows to make climate-sensitive policies for children

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Ahead of the upcoming 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai next month, leading government figures have pledged to make climate-related policies more responsive to children, acknowledging their unique vulnerabilities and growing anxieties about climate change.

During the annual World Children's Day celebrations last Sunday, Vice President Sara Duterte, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and youth delegates to the COP28 also committed to provide them "the platform and opportunity [to] voice their concerns and ideas" about solving the climate crisis.

"The climate crisis is a child's rights crisis and it hits Filipino children hard," Duterte said. "[They] struggle with fear and uncertainty about the climate crisis, but in spite of this, they are not passive climate victims. We must listen to their voices and empower them to take action."

"Youth are our most active force in nation-building, and we must maximize their skills and talents to secure the success of our climate change initiatives," echoed Belmonte.

These calls come amid efforts to improve its current slate of climate policies, including its nationally determined contribution (NDC) plans, which are climate action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts.

A 2022 Unicef report had classified the Philippine NDC as a Category C plan, meaning that there was little to no children-related policies integrated in it, despite being a high-risk country to climate change.

Children face unique vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change, which has triggered stronger and more frequent typhoons and droughts.

Millions are often displaced from their homes during floods, while many are forced to halt their schooling, said Unicef country representative Oyunsai Khan Dendevnorov.

Filipino children have also been ranked as the most affected by "ecoanxiety," defined as chronic fears about environmental doom, Dendevnorov added.

But this year, the COP28 delegates led by Deputy Finance Secretary Luwalhati Tiuseco said they would do their best to make sure that children-centered concerns are represented in the upcoming negotiations especially for loss and damages and climate financing.

She added that they were currently accepting plans and proposals on the inclusion of the children's agenda in the negotiations.

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For her part, Belmonte expressed hopes that any climate financing commitments could trickle down to local governments so they can craft a sound climate plan that's responsive to children. INQ