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The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is urging for the preservation of the country's coastal and marine resources to ensure the sustainable sources of goods and services amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

During "The Great Web: Covid-19, Climate Change and The Ocean" online forum, Climate Change Commissioner Noel Antonio Gaerlan said that the public should give preferential attention in reinforcing, observing, and developing coastal and marine activities to facilitate the conservation, rehabilitation, and sustainable management of the Philippine coastal and marine resources.

Gaerlan also highlighted the value of the coastal and marine resources in the field of medicine and in providing services for the health sector.

Dr. Doralyn Dalisay of University of San Agustin said that the marine environment is a very dynamic and fascinating ecosystem of diverse organisms that are continuously interacting with themselves and with their environment. These organisms are said to develop strategies to live, thrive and survive in the competitive environment.

"Why is the marine ecosystem important to our discovery? As we all know, oceans occupy 71 percent of the Earth's surface, and hold 97 percent of the Earth's water and nearly 87 percent of life which is essentially unexplored and untouched life forms, and is a great source of undiscovered organisms, including microorganisms," said Dalisay.

Dr. Jonel Saludes, also from University of San Agustin, meanwhile, emphasized the importance of raising awareness and educating the public in implementing environmental policies.

"The country does not lack laws; we have a stockpile of laws to protect our biodiversity, whether that's on wildlife, marine resources, plants, natural products, and many more to protect biopiracy. In my opinion, what we lack is awareness among ourselves. What do we do to protect and implement those laws? I believe, educating our fellow Filipinos is the key to this, if not the lack of laws," Saludes said.

Ocean and marine conservation advocate Dr. Mudjekeewis Santos of the Department of Agriculture's National Fisheries Research and Development Institute also discussed the importance of fisheries in the Philippine economy and how climate change affects the livelihood of local fisherfolks.

He stressed that the Philippines is always ranked top 10 in terms of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change mainly because of the country's exposure to natural hazards, typhoons, flooding, and many more.

"Our systems are very sensitive right now, meaning there's a lot of pollution, degradation in our reef system, and our adaptive capacities are very low. Seventy percent of the communities in coastal areas, a lot of them are fisherfolks, are considered the poorest of the poor in our country," Santos said.

He added that mobilizing protection and conservation efforts are necessary in order to maintain a healthy marine biodiversity that is resilient to climate change.

Santos also noted that while the country needs to address the Covid-19 pandemic, the public should not forget the big picture with the larger issues that the country needs to think about, related to climate change.

The said online forum on climate emergency and ocean conservation is a partnership between the CCC and RARE Philippines, with support from the Center for Chemical Biology and Biotechnology and CND3 of the University of San Agustin, and the Department of Agriculture – National Fisheries Research and Development Institute.