

Headline: Toward global action on climate change

Byline: Jed Alegado

Published Date: 12:03 AM September 22, 2014

Section: opinion

Word Count: 5700

Content:

Dubbed as the biggest gathering on climate change, the United Nations Climate Summit convened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will gather the world's heads of state and representatives of the private sector and civil society in New York on Sept. 23.

It is the first time since the Copenhagen talks in 2009 that world leaders will discuss climate change in one event. After five years, many climate-related challenges still need swift action.

Over the years more people have experienced hunger, more livelihoods have been affected, and more lives have been lost because of climate-related disasters. Commitments made by global leaders in Copenhagen—both on mitigation through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and on adaptation by providing developing countries the right amount of resources to cope with impacts of climate change—have been found wanting.

In Copenhagen world leaders promised to provide \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help poor countries adapt to climate change. They also committed to provide a \$30-billion "Green Climate Fund" between 2010 and 2012, balanced between adaptation and mitigation. However, according to Oxfam's briefing paper "Climate Fiscal Cliff,"

released in time for the Doha climate talks in 2012, the Green Climate Fund "has not been balanced—adaptation initiatives have received no more than 20 percent of funds at best." Yet, even 50 percent would have been far too low to meet estimated needs, which are calculated to be at least \$100 billion per year for adaptation alone. Only a few countries have committed to increase their finance contributions in the next years. At best, \$16-17 billion will flow this year, but without some creative accounting tricks, this will probably be closer to \$8-9 billion.

In the area of mitigation, world leaders in Copenhagen agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but not enough to keep warming below their set target of 2 degrees Celsius.

Currently, no country has increased its mitigation targets, and a number—like Canada and Japan—have even gone backward. As a result, the world is on course to heat up by almost 4C by the end of the century—to disastrous effect.

President Aquino is to deliver a 4-minute speech at the UN Climate Summit. He is expected to highlight the Philippines' experience with Super Typhoon "Yolanda" (international name: "Haiyan") to highlight the challenges of developing countries in dealing with climate change.

While we lament world leaders' inaction on climate change, the Philippine government must also ensure that the policies for climate mitigation and adaptation are in place and are working. Commitment and action must begin in one's own backyard.

For example, the enactment of the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the subsequent law

(Republic Act No. 10174) creating the People's Survival Fund (PSF) of 2012 made up an advanced step in terms of policy frameworks in the Philippines' own battle against climate change. The PSF that Oxfam, Dakila, and the Institute of Climate and Sustainable Cities, along with other climate

organizations, campaigned for will enable poor municipalities to access the P1-billion fund earmarked for climate change adaptation, thereby increasing community resilience.

However, the President has yet to sign the implementing rules and regulations submitted to his office by the Climate Change Commission as early as February 2013. To think that it has been two years since Congress passed the PSF Law.

Laws and policies on renewable energy have also been enacted. In 2011, during the launch of the National Renewable Energy Program of the Philippines, the President declared that the government planned to nearly triple the country's renewable-energy-based capacity from around 5,400 megawatts in 2010 to 15,300 MW in 2030. In light of the looming energy crisis and the power outages being experienced in some areas in Mindanao, the President must ensure a low-carbon sustainable development for the years to come, with an emphasis on renewable energy. This will not only ensure a healthy and clean environment for Filipinos but also serve as the Philippines' humble contribution to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

The UN Climate Summit is an opportune time for world leaders to build momentum to finally tackle climate change and ensure commitments ahead of the global climate negotiations set in Paris next year.

Progressive business leaders need to "push back against skeptics and entrenched interests," as the UN secretary general put it. They can help achieve this by pressing governments for better regulation, energy efficiency, and investment in renewables. They can also cut their own emissions and set targets to phase out fossil fuel emissions from their own operations.

But voluntary promises by the private sector will not be enough. Only with political leadership and government regulation can we get the global action that both science and a growing number of people worldwide demand.

Civil society, stakeholders and ordinary individuals must take a stand and press the

duty-bearers—government officials and top food companies—for concrete action on climate change. A fair, ambitious and legally binding climate deal in Paris must be sealed by countries next year.

Individual and collective actions can help build a safer and more resilient future where everyone has enough food to eat, especially the poorest and most vulnerable sectors.

Subscribe to our daily newsletter

By providing an email address. I agree to the Terms of Use and acknowledge that I have read the Privacy Policy.

Jed Alegado is Oxfam's media and communications officer. He holds a master's degree in public management from Ateneo School of Government.