

Keyword: climate-change

Headline: Natural disasters cost PH \$1.9B in 2015

Byline: Ronnel W. Domingo

Published Date: 12:30 AM February 13, 2016

Section: business

Word Count: 340

Content:

The Philippines was among the 10 countries that suffered the most from natural disasters in 2015, according to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

The UNISDR said in a report released yesterday that the Philippines ranked sixth worldwide in terms of the number of people—estimated at 3.83 million—affected by natural hazards, which were linked mainly to the weather and climate.

The agency said that in 2015, which also saw the hottest temperatures on record, the archipelago sustained \$1.9 billion or about P90 billion in economic damage.

With 15 disasters hitting the country last year, the Philippines ranked fourth among the most frequently hit. China fared worst with 19; followed by the United States, 22; India, 19; and Indonesia, 11.

“We have come through the hottest year on record (when) 98.6 million people were affected by disasters, and climate often aided by a strong El Niño was a factor in 92 percent of those events,” UNISDR chief Robert Glasser said in a statement.

Glasser, who was appointed special representative of the UN secretary general for disaster risk reduction last December, said national disaster management agencies in Asia—including those in the Philippines—were doing a good work in reducing death tolls from storms through early warnings and timely evacuations.

The UNISDR observed that Asia and the Pacific bore the brunt of the 90 storms reported last year, including 48 that were classified as cyclones or typhoons and which were “attributable to rising sea levels and sea surface temperatures.”

“The main message is that reducing greenhouse gases and adapting to climate change is vital for countries seeking to reduce disaster risk now and in the future,” he added.

The report also showed that, since 1980, the most number of disasters in a given year—439 in all—was counted in 2005. This was when strong hurricanes including Katrina inflicted damage totalling \$219 billion in the United States.

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