

Headline: Outrageous, fanatical claims over nuclear energy

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Ms. Moira Gallaga's letter extolling nuclear energy ("Going nuclear: A sensible and practical option for the Philippines," 7/29/22) failed to provide any data to support her unrealistic claims. Nuclear is neither sensible nor practical for any country—even more so for the Philippines.

Nuclear power is not a climate solution. A study in 2021 shows that the contribution of nuclear power to mitigate climate change remains—and is projected to be—very limited. Current nuclear plans would only avoid at most 2-3 percent of global emissions, and this contribution is seen to decrease further by 2040. In contrast, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the world's foremost authority on climate science—says that wind and solar power can potentially deliver over 33 percent of the total emissions reductions necessary by 2030.

Nuclear will not give us energy security and will not provide adequate and reliable power for the Philippines. Nuclear proponents consistently fail to mention the fact that the Philippines does not produce nuclear fuel. We will still be subject to global supply shortages and price fluctuations of nuclear fuel—and at a worse scale than coal, since only four companies in the world manufacture nuclear fuel. Nuclear power's inflexibility has also been cited by experts as incompatible with the Philippines' energy profile, and will be even more incompatible as the country ramps up its renewable energy (RE) portfolio.

Nuclear power will not lower electricity prices for consumers. In fact, it is the most expensive way to produce electricity. Among all types of power plants, it is the most expensive to build and maintain. Slovakia's Mochovce 3 and 4 nuclear power plants, at 470 megawatts each, cost a whopping 5.4 billion euros (or around P288 billion). Meanwhile, the International Energy Association found that in 2020, renewables, particularly solar, were the world's cheapest energy source.

The price of nuclear energy becomes even more unimaginably expensive when you include the costs for radioactive spent fuel storage, as well as nuclear accidents. The cost of clean up for Fukushima is estimated at 21.5 trillion yen (or around P9 trillion). The recent earthquakes in Abra and Ilocos provinces, and the scale of destruction caused, should make nuclear proponents rethink what they are peddling. If those provinces had nuclear plants, imagine how much worse the situation would have been—given the lax regulatory culture in the Philippines where building construction is not adequately monitored, and where we can't even effectively monitor air pollution from coal plants.

Nuclear is a sunset industry and has been in global decline longer than coal. It is unfortunate and outrageous how the industry continues to find willing proponents in the Philippines who would put fanatical claims over fact, at the expense of climate action and human safety. The era of nuclear power is long gone, and RE is answering the call of the times. The Philippine government should disassociate itself from all these false nuclear myths and carve out a safer, better path with renewables.

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