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Headline: 'Sandy' is proof skeptics need

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WINTER STARTED early and Hurricane "Sandy" came late and without mercy. And it was no ordinary hurricane; it was dubbed "Frankenstorm" because of the monstrous destruction it threatened to wreak on the entire eastern seaboard of the United States.

Sandy came at a time pre-destined by the heavens and nature—just a week before the presidential elections in the United States, the most powerful country in the world yet so meek before the wrath of nature.

One would think that after a series of "unusual" natural calamities over the years, the issue of global warming and climate change would be fully accepted by now and the need to mitigate atmospheric carbon dioxide tackled and solved. But skeptics remain, insisting that global warming and climate change are either a hoax or a paranoid doom merchant's commodity.

What more proof do the skeptics want? Are superstorms and unusual global weather patterns not enough?

The Financial Times warned that the issue of climate change, if not addressed with urgency, can bring temperatures to rise to over 6 degrees Centigrade.

According to Jeremy Leggett, a convenor of the United Kingdom's Task Force on Peak Oil and Energy Security, "a third of Xstrata's revenues come from coal. Atmospheric research centers are telling governments that unless greenhouse gas emissions from coal, oil and gas are slashed, we are heading for a 6-degree Centigrade rise in global temperatures. That would be economically and environmentally catastrophic."

Imagine the polar ice melting and finally gone. Imagine the monster storms and devastating droughts. Imagine an increase of temperature to over 6 percent. Imagine the billions of people who already are affected by poverty.

We don't want to sound like the dreaded prophets of doom. Yet, that seems to be the scenario unless we mitigate and win the war against global warming.

It is alarming to learn that the Philippines is one of the countries to be most impacted by global warming. We cannot just sit still. We need to shout out loud and lead the way toward climate change negotiations. We need to take action both here and abroad.

We need to adapt and mitigate in our own way global warming and climate change through continuous reforestation programs and by raising a buffer of healthy forests on our mountains.

We need to protect our coastlines and seas with mangrove forests and wetlands, since the seas are the last "bastion" of food supply for our people.

We must protect and enhance our habitats and ecosystems.

The present development model must be changed! As they say, “de-progress” and educate our children so that they may help and understand the causes and effects of global warming and climate change which now threaten their future.

An adage puts it simply: “Deciding and doing are two different things.” We must decide now and do something now. This is the only way we can all win the looming war for survival.

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—ANTONIO M. CLAPAROLS, president, Ecological Society of the Philippines