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Headline: PH to lead vulnerable countries in climate change fight – French envoy

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Philippe Zeller, French Ambassador at Large for Climate Negotiations for Asia and Oceania.
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Philippe Zeller, French Ambassador at Large for Climate Negotiations for Asia and Oceania.
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France is looking at the Philippines to lead and encourage other vulnerable countries to actively participate in negotiations for a legally-binding agreement on climate change.

Philippe Zeller, French Ambassador at Large for Climate Negotiations for Asia and Oceania, said it is the reason why the French government chose to launch the Manila Call to Action on Climate Change.

The said declaration, which aims to engage the global community to efficiently and equitably address climate change, was jointly launched by French President Francois Hollande and Philippine President Benigno Aquino III in Malacañang three months ago.

"We consider the government of Philippines as really involved not only in the preparation of the COP (Convention of Parties to be held in Paris) but in providing new ideas of interpreting this famous concept of "Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR)," which is at the core of the United Nations Framework Convention in Climate Change," Zeller told media on Wednesday.

CBDR means that while issues like climate change are a common concern of the global community, responsibilities should be differentiated because various countries are affected by it in differing degrees. Industrialized countries, for example, are seen to have contributed more to climate change because of higher greenhouse gas emissions.

The envoy said the Philippines, which has found itself at the forefront of the fight against climate change after experiencing natural disasters such as Supertyphoon "Yolanda" (Haiyan), is able to see past the debate on climate finance.

"The Philippines is among the countries, specifically among the emerging countries, not dividing the world into a group of people having to pay for what happens concerning to climate disruption and people having to receive money," he said.

Zeller clarified that while determining financial flows is important, it "is only one part of the problem."

He pointed out that the Philippines is leading the Climate Vulnerable Forum, which is a venue for countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The Philippines will chair the forum, currently composed of 20 countries, from 2015 to 2016.

On the other hand, France will be hosting the 21st COP or the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in December.

“The role of excellent cooperation between Philippines and France is really at the core of the preparation of the COP because we need partners that are able to explain [the climate disruptions we are experiencing] but also being able to build on the proposals for addressing climate change,” Zeller said.

“Also, the Philippines acts as itself but has the power to [reach out to] the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries,” he added, explaining that Asean countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

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The 21st COP aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to cap the global temperature increase to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.