

Headline: A matter of survival

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President Duterte has thankfully changed his mind again and said on Monday that the Philippines would ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which went into effect on Nov. 4.

The agreement binds 94 countries that have so far ratified it to cutting carbon emissions and greenhouse gases to keep the rise in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius. Mr. Duterte's welcome stance was announced on the eve of the third anniversary of the calamitous Supertyphoon "Yolanda" that flattened Tacloban City and other areas in Eastern Visayas. Yolanda (international name: "Haiyan") has been described as a consequence of global warming and climate change—the rapid shift in climate variables caused by human activities, among them deforestation and the industrial and domestic emission of toxic gases into the atmosphere, which could cause the rupture of the ozone layer that shields the planet from harmful radiation.

As one of some 200 countries that signed the Paris Agreement in December 2015, the Philippines promised to cut carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 even if it is not a major emitter. Wealthy countries were asked to set aside at least \$100 billion yearly as financial assistance to developing nations to help them explore renewable energy sources starting in 2020. They were also asked to increase financial and technical support to countries and communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Mr. Duterte had earlier rejected the Paris Agreement, saying the Philippines' cutting its carbon emissions at a point when it was on the verge of economic takeoff was unfair because industrialized countries had been major emitters for decades. Should the Philippines ratify the agreement, he said, an assurance of full compliance by all countries was required.

Civil society organizations have called on the government to ratify the Paris Agreement and "stand with Filipinos and other people all over the world, who are suffering the most from extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and other impacts of climate change." An online petition launched by Aksyon Klima Pilipinas and Green Thumb Coalition, in partnership with Oxfam in the Philippines, said that while the Paris Agreement was not perfect, the country could still work with it to ensure global support in its shift toward "a greener, more sustainable, and more resilient economy."

Said the groups in a statement: "By ratifying the agreement, the Philippines will be able to effectively engage in processes that would address the gaps in the treaty, and help ensure support in terms of funding, technology and capacity building to help us lower emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change." These impacts, they warned, include rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions such as supertyphoons and droughts.

The groups also said: "Throughout global climate negotiations, the Philippines has been recognized as a strong voice in calling for climate justice, or demanding that rich countries that are historically responsible for causing climate change provide adequate support to countries that are struggling to adapt to climate change. It is in this spirit that our country should uphold the Paris Agreement."

Indeed, the Philippines, as chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), batted for 1.5 degrees Centigrade as the acceptable rise in global temperature. It stressed that global warming would mean the melting of ice caps and glaciers and a consequent rise in sea levels. For the Philippines and the other countries in the CVF, this could mean the disappearance of islands, of entire

countries, and the loss of millions of lives.

Simply put, for the Philippines the Paris Agreement is a matter of survival. Its ratification is an acknowledgment that we are part of a global community that must look out for one another and pool resources to ward off a common enemy—climate change and global warming—in word and deed.

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