

Headline: Duterte urged to back Paris climate accord

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President Rodrigo Duterte. AP

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With the Paris climate deal set to take effect on Nov. 4, a senior climate change negotiator urged the Philippine government to ratify the accord.

In a media briefing at Ateneo de Manila University on Saturday, former Environment Undersecretary Antonio La Viña said President Duterte's refusal to support the ratification of the agreement forged by world leaders in December 2015 would leave the Philippines out of the climate change conversation.

"We will take ourselves out of global discussions on addressing climate change, telling the world that we can do it on our own. That doesn't make any sense," he said, noting the country was ranked the third most vulnerable country to climate change.

Action in a vacuum

"We cannot do climate action in a vacuum...We have to understand the global action," he added.

Mr. Duterte earlier said he would not honor the Paris agreement, wherein several countries—including the Philippines—expressed its respective measures on curbing the effects of climate change.

"I will not honor that. That was not my signature. It's not mine," the President said in a speech on July 18, referring to the signing done in April.

Mr. Duterte has questioned the country's ability to meet its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, which was pegged at a 70-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. He said this would hinder the country's growth and slammed industrialized countries for their high carbon emissions.

Too high

La Viña also believed that the proposed 70-percent reduction in emissions was too high, and recommended its possible adjustment before ratification.

He, however, noted the 10-point agenda of the Duterte administration aligns with responses to address climate change.

“Duterte’s development and economic agenda cannot be achieved without climate action,” he said.

For instance, the administration’s goal of accelerating infrastructure spending to 5 percent of the gross domestic product can be attained through recommended solutions to address climate change, such as establishing renewable energy sources, decongesting cities and reducing traffic-related carbon emissions.

Climate proofing

La Viña recommended “climate-proofing” the development agenda so that the country can meet its own goals, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals eyed for 2030.

La Viña also called on the government to pass legislation related to energy and the environment, particularly the Renewable Energy Act, and to work on the implementing rules and regulations under Executive Order No. 174, which institutionalizes the Philippines Greenhouse Gas Inventory Management and Reporting System, signed by former President Benigno Aquino III.

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A Philippine delegation will attend the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties in Marrakech, Morocco, in November to once again discuss solutions to climate change.