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Headline: PMAP takes on climate change and clean air challenge

Byline: Ernie O. Cecilia

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Christmas time in tropical Philippines was always cold. But last December 2015, we experienced hot December days and nights. If you don't know it yet, climate change is here – and now. In the 1900s, global temperatures rose by 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit (0.8 degree centigrade). At the start of the millennium, temperatures already rose by a frightening 10.6 degrees F (5.9 C), or by roughly 750 percent. Scientists estimate that ecosystems can adapt to a temperature change of only 1.8 degrees F over a century.

Facts, not predictions

For decades now, Environmental experts have gathered and analyzed vast amounts of climate and natural resource-related data. They agree that the way people voraciously consume these natural resources and the uncaring manner they treat Nature are largely responsible for climate change and the degradation of the Earth's land, water and air. It is no longer a question of whether there will be a climate change. It is a matter of how soon and how hard it will hit.

Temperature shifts have already resulted in massive drought, floods, blizzards, and cyclones. Scientists believe that by 2099, one-third of the Earth's land will be desert-like. As warmer waters expand, oceans will rise. When the ice in Greenland melts, coastal settlements and croplands will be submerged in many parts of the world. Imagine how worse it could be, if between 1991 and 2000 more than half a million lives were lost due to climate change.

The World Bank predicts that 66 percent of the global population will suffer from lack of access to freshwater by 2025. Carbon dioxide had changed the pH balance of the oceans, already destroying a great number of species. Polar bears and roughly 30 to 40 percent of all species are at risk of extinction, unless global warming is abated. (IPCC, Climate Change, 2007)

Energy dependence

Sadly, it takes energy to make anything and everything. Developed economies continue to burn fuel fossil, natural gas, and coal to heat or cool homes, run factories and power transportation vehicles. As a result, some 30 billion tons of carbon monoxide go to the air we breathe annually. As developing economies transform forests into human settlement and farms, they cut down trees. Trees are the lungs of the Earth that suck carbon out of the air and breathe out life-sustaining oxygen.

Because of climate change and the degradation of our natural resources, life on Earth is at risk. According to the British Meteorological Office, "fifty million additional people will be starving or facing severe food shortages by 2050. Others estimate that, on a hotter planet, hundreds of millions will starve. Particularly in Africa, one of the places most vulnerable to climate change, millions of people will face food and water shortages as early as 2020." (IPCC, Climate Change, 2007)

Adverse effects

As countries move towards the verge of environmental bankruptcy, economies will tend to contract. Fossil fuel, natural gas and coal are non-renewable sources of energy and are not inexhaustible. As demand outstrips supply in the near future, the gap between energy-producing and energy-consuming economies will get bigger. Wealth will be concentrated at the top of the social pyramid. The disparity between the rich and the poor will be immorally large. As economies contract, joblessness and poverty incidence increase. Clearly, lives and careers are at stake.

Green hope

Fortunately, environmentalism is now at its third wave. In the early 1900s, “conservation” of the best of the natural past was the focus. In the late 1960s, the second wave (“regulation”) sought to manage the environmental problems of massive industrialization. Sadly, the need for both conservation and regulation are still felt today, more than ever before.

The third wave is the so-called “investment” wave. Investors and consumers will gravitate towards carbon-cutting solutions – solar power, hybrid technology, biofuels, wind turbines, tidal power, fuel cells, green construction, and energy efficiency. Venture capitalists should be pouring their investments into clean-tech and green-tech companies and projects. I’m sorry if I think that “clean coal” is an oxymoron or a contradiction in terms. I doubt if the technology for a truly clean coal is now available.

Environmental activism is on the rise. When I lately visited the small, five-town province of Guimaras, I was more fascinated not by the mangoes but by the 27 wind turbines serving Iloilo’s needs.

PMAP Summit

On April 12-13, 2016, the People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) led by President Jesse Rebutillo and the PMAP Foundation led by Chairman Orly Peña and President Pilar Nenuca Almira are holding the first PMAP Foundation Summit on Clean Air and Climate Change. With its theme “Clean Air: Our Life, Our Future”, the Summit will be graced by the Keynote Speaker, DENR Secretary Ramon Paje, at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila.

The Summit shall feature:

- PMAP member-companies’ contribution to clean air and climate change, issues, best practices, and future programs

- New trends, innovation, technology and BEST Practices for members to consider or adopt, showcasing an exhibition of users, suppliers, and innovations

- Non-traditional sources of financing for entrepreneurs and small businesses engaged in promoting clean air and climate change International agencies engaged in clean air and climate change

- ISO standards to guide companies, NGOs and communities engaged in clean air and climate change projects

AWARDS to recognize leaders and achievers in clean air and climate change

For the first time in the Philippines, PMAP shall grant the Punong Bayan ng Kalikasan (National Leadership) Award and the Bayan ng Kalikasan Awards for individual, corporate, NGO, and community categories.

For inquiry or registration, please contact pmapfoundation or call 726-1532.

This is PMAP's answer to the global call for action on climate change, where the Philippines is a signatory to the recent Paris agreement on global warming and climate change. Also, this is pursuant to Republic Act 8749, the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, which needs more implementation.

Let's wave the green flag – for our children and their children's children.

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(Ernie is the 2013 Executive Director and 1999 President of the People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP); Chair of the AMCHAM Human Capital Committee; and Co-Chair of ECOP's TWG on Labor and Social Policy Issues. He also chairs the Accreditation Council for the PMAP Society of Fellows in People Management. He is President and CEO of EC Business Solutions and Career Center. Contact him at )