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Headline: PH NGOs join climate change talks walkout

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MANILA, Philippines—Frustrated by the lack of progress in the negotiations, civil society groups—including Filipino nongovernment organizations—followed delegates to the climate change talks in Warsaw and also walked out the day before the talks were to end.

“Volveremos (We will be back),” read shirts worn by some activists as they left the Warsaw National Stadium in Poland Thursday afternoon (9:30 p.m. in Manila), referring to next year’s United Nations climate conference to be held in Lima, Peru.

“We asked for sympathy and solidarity in the aftermath of Supertyphoon “Yolanda,” mainly through the delivery of climate finance, the setting up of an institutional arrangement for loss and damage, and the commitment of developed countries to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions,” said Voltaire Alferez, national coordinator of Aksyon Klima Pilipinas.

Mockery of talks

“What we got instead was a mockery of the climate negotiations as the countries mostly responsible for climate change continue to block concerted efforts towards action,” he said.

The groups signed a joint statement expressing their frustration over the unyielding position of developed countries that refuse to accept responsibility for extreme weather events arising from climate change, like Yolanda.

“The Warsaw climate conference, which should have been an important step in the just transition to a sustainable future, is on track to deliver virtually nothing,” the statement said.

The groups said they were voluntarily withdrawing from the climate negotiations to focus on pushing governments to climate action.

“Coming out of the Warsaw climate conference, it is clear that without such pressure our governments cannot be trusted to do what the world needs,” they said.

We will return

“We will return with the voice of the people in Lima to hold our governments accountable to the vision of a sustainable and just future,” they added.

Aksyon Klima and the Peoples’ Movement on Climate Change represented Philippine civil society groups in the statement.

Other signatories were ActionAid, Bolivian Platform on Climate Change, Construyendo Puentes (Latin America), Friends of the Earth (Europe), Greenpeace, Ibon International, International Trade

Union Confederation, LDC Watch, Oxfam International, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance and World Wide Fund For Nature.

"We join the other civil society organizations which return their focus on their national governments and ensure that their domestic climate policies address what is demanded of us by science and by the climate convention," Alferez said.

"The supertyphoon has been another painful reminder of our country's need to mobilize its own climate funds and to start the shift away from coal to renewable energy," he added.

The negotiations entered their penultimate day in a stalemate over how to curb dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and channel aid to poor, climate-vulnerable states.

Global coal summit

The groups pointed the finger at Poland for its "endorsement" of a global coal summit held in the same city, and at the same time at Japan for slashing its carbon emissions goal and Australia's decision to scrap a carbon tax on high emitters.

NGOs attended the talks as observers and advisers. Their presence endorsed the role of civil society in the important but hugely complex negotiations. Decision-making, however, was reserved for UN member states.

"Talks like these amount to nothing if countries refuse to ... negotiate in good faith, or worse, try to drag the process backwards," said WWF's Samantha Smith, who was quoted by Agence France-Presse.

On Wednesday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged nations to "much bolder" action to stave off an existential peril for the earth. With an AFP report

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