

Keyword: global-warming

Headline: Sellout in Paris

Byline: Leody de Guzman

Published Date: 12:49 AM January 02, 2016

Section: opinion

Word Count: 1095

Content:

As expected, the world's elite-dominated governments just passed a strong international agreement that condemns millions of us Filipinos and other peoples, as well as other living beings, to suffer from climate chaos.

Instead of passing a strict, legally binding agreement that compels governments—especially those most responsible—to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and compensate those least responsible by providing finance and technology, they passed a strong, voluntary agreement that basically leaves to each government the decision whether and how much it wants to reduce its emissions and whether and how much it wants to compensate others.

Instead of passing an agreement that compels all to bring down the level of global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, they passed an agreement that has countries pledging to increase warming by at least 3 degrees C—a level of warming that will cause untold suffering in the planet.

Instead of passing an agreement that forces all of the world's dominant classes from all countries—they who own the oil corporations, the coal power plants, the agri-chemical companies, the airlines, and all the other corporations responsible for emitting much of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change—to keep the oil in the ground, the coal in the hole, and the gas under the grass, they passed another agreement that allows, and even encourages, these classes to continue burning oil, coal and gas that will fry the planet for decades to come.

Instead of approving an agreement that forces all of the world's dominant classes from all countries—they who have profited massively from exploiting working peoples and nature—to return the wealth they have plundered from us working peoples, ourselves part of nature, so as to enable us to cope with the impacts of climate chaos or restore and regenerate ourselves, they have passed another agreement that allows these groups to continue to profit from our labor and from the planet's riches.

Instead of passing an agreement that really changes the system that is at the root of the climate crisis, they passed one that essentially keeps it unchanged.

Their agreement is not a “weak” agreement that merely fails to “do enough” to solve the problem; it is a very strong agreement that does too much to defend the interests of a powerful global elite at the expense of the majority.

Much of the condemnation here should definitely be reserved for the developed-country governments, especially the United States and the European Union, which again resorted to vicious, Machiavellian tactics to bully and bribe developing-country governments so as to defeat even just the limited reforms and concessions that they are pushing.

But this does not mean we should spare elite-dominated, developing-country governments like the Philippines' from blame because, while constrained by unequal international relations, they are not exactly just helpless victims here.

They could have chosen to send only the more principled negotiators who were unstinting in standing up to rich countries, such as Yeb Saño, Bernarditas Muller, and others; instead, they bowed to the bullying and bribery of the powerful countries (and their local allies in our governments) who hated these people's guts and replaced them with Filipino negotiators who advocate appeasing the powerful.

They could have chosen to use weapons of the weak—to collectively threaten economic and political sanctions on the United States and the European Union, to limit the access of US and European corporations to our market, to withhold our country's political support for them on other international issues, or to explore and use other means of leverage available to the disadvantaged—unless they concede to our demands, but they chose not to do so because while these options could advance the real, national interests of our people, they also threaten our elites' own narrow and vested interests.

They could have chosen to go beyond just pushing for mere reforms and concessions toward addressing the ultimate causes of the problem: the system of capitalist, private property relations that forces corporations and governments everywhere to prioritize profitmaking over the wellbeing of peoples and the planet. Instead, they chose to hold back from antagonizing their fellow elites from the United States and the European Union to perpetuate this eco-cidal system.

In short: They could have chosen to side with us, the people they claim to represent on the world stage, but they chose in the end to side with their fellow oppressors from other countries.

They, too, are therefore ultimately as much to blame as the developed-country governments for burning the planet and condemning humankind. They, too, are shackled by the system, and they, too, have refused to remove those shackles.

This is why, today, the only way by which we can save ourselves and those we love from all those who are sentencing us to death is not by counting on these so-called leaders from developing countries and back them in their fight against the developed countries or the so-called "principal enemies."

For they, too, are no less dangerous enemies, unwilling to really fight for our interests against the rich of other countries, constantly selling us down the river and looking only after themselves in the face of disaster.

And we can only make them do the right thing, not by lobbying them to "take action, please" or by counting on the power of our arguments to make them change their minds. We will not be able to move them by lobbying harder or shouting our slogans louder.

We can only make them do the right thing by organizing ourselves and uniting with others, by bringing together otherwise dispersed and isolated peoples into a global movement really capable of depriving our enemies of what they ultimately need to keep ruling: our labor, our consent.

This is not an unrealistic dream: Our friends and comrades in Paris have shown us the way by actively defying the state of emergency imposed by the French government. Despite the threat of state violence, they marched and danced on the streets, engaged in inspiring acts of civil disobedience against the genocidal climate change agreement that governments—including the Philippines'—just passed, and resolved to continue the fight for real system-change in so many localities and so many countries across the world in the coming years.

We join them and all those who are with them in saying again: Don't mourn, organize!

Subscribe to our daily newsletter

By providing an email address. I agree to the Terms of Use and acknowledge that I have read the Privacy Policy.

Leody de Guzman is the president of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, a national labor center of workers and trade unions.