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Headline: At COP28, church leaders push for end to fossil fuels use

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FILE PHOTO: Activists demonstrate with a sign that reads “phase out fossil fuels” at the COP28 United Nations Climate Summit, Tuesday, December 12, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

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BACOLOD CITY — Catholic Church leaders in the country have urged global leaders to put an end to the proliferation of fossil fuels and help avert worse suffering for the poor and vulnerable people most impacted by climate change.

The move was made amid the Conference of Parties (COP) 28 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Dubai from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12, said Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of the Diocese of San Carlos in Negros Occidental.

“Thousands of us came to COP28 with the hope that it will deliver the climate action we all so desperately seek. Our young people and vulnerable communities bravely spoke up too. But the latest Global Stocktake is crushing that hope,” said Alminaza, chair of the National Laudato Si’ Program of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

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He particularly cited the phasing out of fossil fuels in line with the best available climate science.

“Our global leaders have the moral duty to use the remaining hours of this climate conference to deliver action compatible with 1.5°C, and herald a full and equitable phaseout of all fossil fuels,” Alminaza said.

“Now is their chance to make the courageous decision to pursue the global common good above their national interests. Our time is running out,” he added.

Climate advocates said the COP 28 climate summit could be on the cusp of failure after a new draft of the core agreement removed a call to phase out fossil fuels, the main driver of the climate crisis.

READ: COP 28: Sharp disagreements over future of planet-warming fossil fuels

The draft instead used watered-down language on fossil fuels in an apparent concession to oil-producing nations that opposed the measure.

Fr. Edwin Gariguez, a Goldman Prize awardee and lead convenor of the Protect Verde Island Passage (Protect VIP) network in the Philippines, said world leaders must keep the best interests of people and nature in mind in coming up with final decisions.

"The earlier we phase out fossil fuels, the earlier our communities will be free from their deadly impacts, and our waters and seas can recuperate from pollution," he said.

READ: COP28 heads for overtime as draft fossil fuel deal divides nations

Gariguez said a phaseout of all fossil fuels will help ensure that future generations can have a fighting chance and ensure the survival and sustainability of creation.

More than 100 countries came to the Dubai talks and supported the language to phase out fossil fuels.

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The COP conferences are intended for governments to agree on policies to limit global temperature rises and adapt to impacts associated with climate change.