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PRESIDENT AQUINO'S speech during the Climate Vulnerable Forum in Paris, which the Philippines chaired, was nothing but outright deception. The government's pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent in 2030 is dubious as the country looks to add 28 coal-fired plants in the next three years; another 32 are in the pipeline to be built by 2020.

Coal, a major source of electricity in the Philippines, remains the cheapest yet dirtiest source of energy. Based on a study by the Union of Concerned Scientists, a typical 600-MW coal plant can produce 3.5 million tons of carbon dioxide per year. According to data from the Department of Energy, the total installed capacity of all coal-fired power plants in the country is 5,677 MW; at least 4,000 MW more are to be added in the next three years. This can translate to at least 60 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, which we will add to the mix of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

In his speech, Mr. Aquino highlighted his administration's reforestation efforts through the National Greening Program that aims to plant 1.5 million trees by 2016 as part of its climate mitigation plan. But since it was enacted in 2011, plant scientists as well as environmentalists have bewailed the program's glaring inconsistencies: planting exotic species harmful to local ecosystems; haphazardly planting the wrong seedlings at the wrong locations and/or at the wrong time. This, in addition to the corruption issues hounding the P7-billion program as well as the displacement of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. This reforestation project is a sham; it will not rehabilitate local forests as part of climate mitigation measures, neither will it provide economic support to communities that serve as forest stewards.

Adding to Mr. Aquino's callous doublespeak is its continuing neglect of climate refugees. Two years after Super typhoon "Yolanda" struck the Visayas region, many families continue to struggle in temporary shelters as only 10 percent of the promised permanent housing has been completed. This, despite the P100 billion budget allocated for the government's rehabilitation program.

Taking real action to reduce global warming and greenhouse emissions means revoking contracts for the construction of new coal-fired power plants and disallowing the entry and operation of transnational corporations that destroy our forests, which are valuable carbon sinks and natural barriers to floods and other disasters. A meaningful response to climate change means addressing the root causes of our vulnerability to disasters—which are poverty, landlessness, joblessness and government corruption. A real call for climate justice means putting to task the biggest polluters of the world and making them pay for the disasters they have caused.

With the President engaged in hollow talk and babbling rhetoric, we need to amplify our collective call for a change in the current system of production and consumption, resist the plunder and destruction of our natural resources, and act in unity for social justice amid climate change.

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