

Keyword: climate-change

Headline: Aquino: Let's climate-proof our path to progress

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Published Date: 11:59 AM June 05, 2014

Section: globalnation

Word Count: 351

Content:

MANILA, Philippines—The devastation of typhoon “Yolanda” (international name: Haiyan) cannot happen again if the Philippines wants to continue its economic development, President Benigno Aquino III asserted on Thursday.

“We are trying to climate-proof our path to progress,” Aquino said at the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management at the Diamond Hotel.

“We refuse to be condemned to a vicious cycle of construction and reconstruction,” he added.

During his speech, the President shared the Philippines’ experiences before, during and after “Yolanda” struck parts of the country.

He said the government made sure the local governments were informed and that supplies were prepositioned.

“Typhoon Haiyan, however, was unlike anything we have ever encountered,” he said.

“The new normal brought about by climate change is not just here to stay, its effects are worsening.

Our nation alone could not do this,” he told officials of various countries and international organizations.

“Let us continue working together,” he said.

On May 29, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that one of the biggest factors in the slower economic growth in the country was the devastation brought by “Yolanda.” The super typhoon severely affected the country’s agriculture industry.

Before Aquino’s speech, Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, told him, “I convey to you huge admiration for the strength (and) resilience of your nation.”

“Yes there are still wounds to be healed...but what you have achieved in these six months is remarkable and it is a lesson for all of us,” she said.

Other officials present during the event were Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert Del Rosario, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, and Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman.

The Asem, an informal dialogue of 29 European and 20 Asian countries, aims to strengthen the relationship of the two regions by addresses political, economic and cultural issues.

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