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Headline: The risks PH faces due to climate change

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MANILA, Philippines—The Philippines could face more food and water shortages, more poverty, and more droughts and floods if climate change persists.

The Philippines is ranked sixth in the 2011 Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI) released by global risks advisory firm Maplecroft and is considered as among those facing “extreme risk.”

“We have abundant evidence that we are changing our climate. The atmosphere and oceans have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea level has risen,” Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the IPCC, said in his opening statement at the United Nations (UN) Climate Summit.

“The longer we wait the higher the risk of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts such as food and water shortages, increased poverty, forced migrations that could increase the risk of violent conflict, extreme droughts and floods, the collapse of ice sheets that flood our coastal cities, and a steady rise in our death toll, especially among the world’s poorest,” Pachauri said.

IPCC recently released their Fifth Assessment Report on Climate Change written by scientists from all over the world which found clear and compelling evidence that human activity is the root cause of global warming due to rising greenhouse gas emissions.

President Benigno Aquino III spoke during the summit saying that the Philippines will be greatly affected by climate change despite being among the lowest greenhouse gas emitters in the world.

“It would not be an exaggeration to say that Filipinos bear a disproportionate amount of the burden when it comes to climate change,” Aquino said.

Supertyphoon “Yolanda” (international name: Haiyan), which devastated several provinces in the Visayas region, has repeatedly been cited as among the signs of climate change after it broke the record as the strongest typhoon to make landfall in history.

“There is growing evidence climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of climatic events,” Anna Moss, Environmental Analyst at Maplecroft, said in their 2011 CCVI statement.

“Very minor changes to temperature can have major impacts on the human environment, including changes to water availability and crop productivity, the loss of land due to sea level rise and the spread of disease,” she said.

The attendees at the UN Climate Summit were urged to institute reforms in energy as soon as possible no matter the cost in order to slow down climate change.

“We already have the means to build a better, more sustainable world. The solutions are many and allow for continued economic development. While some technologies need additional development, many are already available,” Pachauri said.

“We also have tremendous opportunities to improve energy efficiency. And we can further reduce emissions by stopping deforestation. We are told that limiting climate change will be too expensive. It will not. But wait until you get the bill for inaction. There are costs of taking action—but they are nothing compared to the cost of inaction,” he said.

Pachauri said that climate change has to be stopped in order to ensure a future for the coming generations as well as for the human race.

“How on Earth can we leave our children with a world like this? I’m not sure I could stand before you if the threats of climate change had no solutions. But they do.

“It comes down to a matter of choice. We can continue along our existing path and face dire consequences. Or we can listen to the voice of science, and resolve to act before it’s too late. That’s our choice,” he said.

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