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Headline: PH 'conditional' commitment: Reduce carbon emissions by 70% in 2030

Byline: Kristine Angeli Sabillo

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The Philippine government has submitted to the United Nations the country's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, barely beating the Oct. 1 deadline of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Through the Climate Change Commission (CCC), the Philippines submitted on Thursday its "initial" Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), which identified both mitigation and adaptation measures.

The INDC was approved on Thursday by President Benigno Aquino III, chair of the CCC.

The country is committing to reduce its carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 while maintaining a "business as usual scenario" from 2000 to 2030. The carbon dioxide reductions will come from the sectors of energy, transport, waste, forestry, and industry.

"Since this is an initial submission, we are looking at updating our INDC as more data becomes available," Climate Change Commission Secretary Lucille Sering said in a statement.

Sering clarified that the commitments were conditional, meaning they could only be pursued if the climate change negotiations in Paris (21st Conference of Parties or COP21) during the end of the year would lead to financial resources and the facilitation of technology transfer.

The secretary said the premise was a result of a consultation held by the commission with stakeholders.

"These initial commitments are anchored on our policy declaration under the Climate Change Law of 2009, as amended in 2012, that the state shall cooperate with the global community in the resolution of climate change issues," Sering said in a statement.

Climate change advocates and world leaders are hoping for a legally binding agreement in Paris, which will help limit the global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Parties to the UNFCCC are expected to submit INDCs by Oct. 1, which will be compiled for the UNFCCC secretariat to determine if the country pledges are enough to cover the convention's climate goals.

The Philippine government's 6-page INDC submission states that it is based on the "philosophy of pursuing climate change mitigation as a function of adaptation."

"As a country highly vulnerable to climate and disaster risks, mitigation measures as presented in the INDC will be pursued in line with sustainable development and a low-emission development that promotes inclusive growth," it said.

The document added that the country “recognizes its responsibility to contribute its fair share in global climate action” by avoiding “dangerous anthropogenic (human-caused) interference” with the climate system.”

To come up with the 70 percent reduction target, the CCC used average annual population growth of 1.85 percent, historical gross domestic product rates from 2010 to 2014 and a projected annual average of 6.5 percent for 2015 to 2010.

Among the important aspects identified in the INDC was for the Philippines to strengthen its “adaptive capacity” and over-all resilience.

The CCC also emphasized the importance of mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Among the measures to be implemented are institutional and system strengthening for downscaling climate change models, climate scenario-building, climate monitoring and observation; and rolling-out of science-based climate/disaster risk and vulnerability assessment process as the basis for mainstreaming climate and disaster risks reduction in development plans, programs and projects.

“Technical inputs and assistance are critical for certain sectors such as grid efficiency improvement, standard development for energy and water efficiency, cost-effective renewable energy, and alternative or high-efficiency technology for conventional power generation, among others,” the INDC document said.

Since being devastated by Supertyphoon “Yolanda” (international name: Haiyan), the Philippines has been the epitome of countries vulnerable to climate change.

Under the Climate Risk Index of Germanwatch, the Philippines ranked fifth within the period of 1994 to 2014.

The CCC, in its statement, said the government is “poised to make an influential statement to both Annex I and non-Annex I parties during the negotiations.”

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Aquino was invited to attend the Paris climate negotiations but had yet to confirm his attendance.
Kristine Angeli Sabillo/RC