

Headline: A grim future with climate change

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Published Date: 06:07 AM July 22, 2017

Section: business

Word Count: 3641

Content:

Last week, a report produced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) cited a few alarming statistics that could spell the world's future.

Entitled "A Region at Risk: The Human Dimensions of Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific," the report painted a grim picture of how the Southeast Asian region, in particular, would fare if governments and the private sector do not address the climate change crisis.

As stated in the report: "unabated climate change would bring devastating consequences to countries in Asia and the Pacific with the temperature increase over the Asian landmass expected to reach 6 degrees Celsius by the end of the century under a business as usual scenario." Here are some of the projections:

10 times: increase in the number of hot days in the fast growing cities in Asia Pacific by the end of the 21st century

\$52 billion: average global flood losses by 2050

\$58 billion: estimated cumulative loss in value of reef related fisheries in Southeast Asia from 2000 to 2050 with unabated climate change

50 percent: by which rice yields in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam could decline without efforts to combat climate change

Real threats

The report further projected that more intense typhoons and tropical cyclones are expected to hit Asia and the Pacific with rising global mean temperatures. Under a business-as-usual scenario, annual precipitation is expected to increase by up to 50 percent over most land areas in the region.

It also noted that coastal and low-lying areas will be at an increased risk of flooding. Nineteen of the 25 cities most exposed to a one-meter sea-level rise are located in the region, seven of which are in the Philippines alone.

The threats are thus real.

And countries like the Philippines—earlier reported to be among the world's top 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events and catastrophes in terms of fatalities and economic losses—should take a more proactive stance in addressing the issue of climate change.

Real estate contribution

Fortunately, many of the country's sectors and industries are already at the forefront of implementing "green" measures aimed at ensuring the sustainability of their respective operations.

In the Philippine real estate industry for instance, there has been a more conscious effort to go green and sustainable in terms of construction, architecture, and design. And it should do so, because the industry can play a significant role in slashing carbon emissions over the next decade.

A report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) last year claimed that the real estate industry is a significant contributor to gas emissions.

The said report pointed out that the real estate industry consumes over 40 percent of global energy annually; about 20 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions originate from buildings; and that buildings use 40 percent of raw materials globally, among others.

Miguel Guerrero, chair of Green Architecture Advocacy Philippines, had cited the pressing need for green architecture given the country's susceptibility to natural disasters.

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"As the Philippines is in a typhoon belt and the ring of fire, the country is susceptible to typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. These are a huge threat to the sustainability in the country... We have an urgent need to design and build more disaster resilient structures and communities and this is critical at the moment," Guerrero had said.