

Headline: UN body names Legarda Global Champion for Resilience

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Sen. Loren Legarda CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Senator Loren Legarda has been named the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's (UNISDR) Global Champion for Resilience.

Legarda's appointment was announced by Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, on November 30 at the Climate Vulnerable Forum High Level Meeting at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference or COP21.

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"The UNISDR recognized the Philippine senator's unrelenting and vigorous support in advancing disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation nationally and internationally through legislation, policy leadership, and advocacy at all levels," said a statement from the senator's office on Tuesday.

Legarda was a UNISDR Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Asia-Pacific since 2008 before the Global Champion for Resilience award was conferred on her.

In a message, Legarda thanked Wahlstrom and the UNISDR for their recognition of her advocacy.

"I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, who has been most supportive in our initiatives to strengthen resilience of the various institutions in my country," she said.

"You have ably led the UNISDR in empowering nations, business, individuals and the whole of society to build safer communities. I thank you for the trust given to me as Global Champion for Resilience," she added.

In 2000, the World Economic Forum held in Davos named Legarda as one of the Global Leaders for Tomorrow. The United Nations Environment Programme also included her in the Global 500 Roll of Honor.

An environment advocate, Legarda is also the principal author and sponsor of the Climate Change Act of 2009 that created the Climate Change Commission, the lead Philippine agency that negotiates in the yearly climate talks, including COP21.

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The senator was also responsible for the enactment of many other Philippine laws on environmental governance like the Clean Air Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy Act, Environmental Awareness and Education Act, People's Survival Fund Law, and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act.

As incumbent chair of the Senate committee on finance, Leagrda encouraged and ensured the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the annual budgets of government agencies, an approach she has been advocating for since 2010.

The senator, through her advocacy as UNISDR regional champion, has also conveyed to world leaders the need to rethink approaches to development in the context of our fast changing global environment and the increasingly warming planet.

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She also spearheaded a behavior-changing education campaign on understanding risk and strengthening disaster and climate resilience. IDL