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Headline: PH to battle it out for climate goals

Byline: Kristine Angeli Sabillo

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The Philippine delegation to the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris, France, is hard at work as the climate talks enter the final stretch. Picture fifth and sixth from left are Secretary Manny de Guzman and Dean Tony La Viña, head and spokesperson of the country's delegation, respectively. PHOTO BY KRISTINE SABILLO/INQUIRER.NET

The Philippine delegation to the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris, France, is hard at work as the climate talks enter the final stretch. Picture fifth and sixth from left are Secretary Manny de Guzman and Dean Tony La Viña, head and spokesperson of the country's delegation, respectively. PHOTO BY KRISTINE SABILLO/INQUIRER.NET

PARIS — Negotiations remain tense as the deadline for a legally binding agreement on climate change looms but the Philippines is not backing down.

The Philippine delegation on Thursday said it will continue to "fight for priorities" in the climate talks, which has entered the final phase of negotiations.

"Philippines vowed on Thursday to pull all stops to make sure that human rights, ecosystems integrity, loss and damage, adaptation finance and the ambitious emissions reductions goal to achieve below 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming will be part of the Paris deal," it said in a statement.

On Wednesday evening, Secretary Emmanuel "Manny" de Guzman gave a strongly-worded intervention on the need to include the said topics in the draft agreement of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21).

Reiterating his earlier speech, the Secretary criticized the lack of clear provisions on finance and capacity building. He again called for quantitative goals for adaptation finance and the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

De Guzman told COP21 president Laurent Fabius and other parties that the Philippines and the other countries cannot allow "mass violation of human rights" to happen "when there is an option to do otherwise."

The vice chair of the Climate Change Commission complained about the bracketed provision on human rights. Phrases and words bracketed in the draft text can be revised or removed from the final agreement.

The Philippines has been taking on a leadership role throughout the negotiations, as chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF). The CVF is not a negotiation bloc at the COP but it has been advocating the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal in behalf of countries vulnerable to climate change.

"We have now reached 1 degree, we only have 0.5 left to control, and so we need to act with great urgency. Paris is our chance," De Guzman said.

De Guzman also argued for “good and strong language on ecosystems integrity,” as well as the inclusion of the Warsaw international mechanism on loss and damage (WIM), which was adopted during COP19 in Poland.

The Philippines proposed WIM-PLUS as De Guzman emphasized the importance of a loss and damage mechanism.

Accountability and the issue of loss and damage remain a sticky issue in the negotiations, which have further exposed the differing opinions of developed and developing countries on climate finance.

De Guzman and the Philippines’ negotiators have been at the negotiating table until the wee hours of the morning.

“The delegation is practically sleepless in the past few days, but we can work on this and we can do this,” delegation spokesperson Tony La Viña said.

“From 12 a.m. of December 10 onwards, we will push for our priorities in two simultaneous meetings – one where the discussion is facilitated by Fabius himself and another set of consultations chaired by Peruvian environment minister and COP20 president Manuel Pulgar-Vidal,” he added.

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He said among the issues that will be discussed are ambition, differentiation, means of implementation, preamble, forests, loss and damage and cooperative mechanisms.