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Headline: France's Hollande starts two-day visit

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French President Francois Hollande FILE PHOTO

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MANILA, Philippines—French President François Hollande begins on Thursday his two-day state visit, bringing along a delegation that includes British actor Jeremy Irons, French actress Marion Cotillard, and other celebrities known for their staunch support for the environment and advocacy for action on climate change.

Hollande's visit, the first by a French president since the Philippines and France established diplomatic ties in 1947, reciprocates President Benigno Aquino III's visit to Paris in September last year.

Details from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the French Embassy in Manila showed that Hollande will fly from Paris with a delegation of more than 100 members and land at 11 a.m. Thursday at the Villamor air base in Pasay City.

Hollande's schedule includes a state dinner hosted by President Aquino, a wreath-laying ceremony at the Rizal monument at 11:30 a.m. Thursday and a speech at a business luncheon and forum organized by the Makati Business Club on the topic "Philippines and France: Climate change and Inclusive growth."

The official and his party will also attend a climate change forum at the National Museum in Manila titled "Climate Change: Cop 21: Civil Society mobilized for the Climate."

France will host in December this year a Conference of Parties or COP 21, which seeks to wage war against global warming.

Hollande and Mr. Aquino will meet for bilateral talks and the official launch of the "Manila Call to Action for Climate Change," where they are expected to make a joint call for the world to act together in reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

"They will also exchange views on pressing and regional issues, including terrorism, [as] recently manifested in France in the Charlie Hebdo killing spree that claimed the lives of 20 people in the heart of Paris," the DFA said of the Jan. 7 terror attack on a French satirical magazine known to put out cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

Hollande's party includes France's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius, Minister for Development and Francophonie Annick Girardin, Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy Ségolène Royal, French actress Melanie Laurent, Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Orthodox Church, and two French school children who won in a climate change-themed contest.

Hollande is scheduled to make a two-hour visit and meet with fisherfolk in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, where Supertyphoon Yolanda first struck in November 2013, before heading back to Manila and onward to Paris.

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