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Headline: Asean 'one community' urged on climate change

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ASEAN TIES President Aquino (right) links arms with his counterparts during the opening of the 24th Asean Summit in Burma (Myanmar). With him are (from left) Laos Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong, Indonesia President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Cambodia Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, Malaysia Prime Minister Najib Razak, Burma President U Thein Sein, Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, Thailand Deputy Prime Minister Phongthepth Ekanjana and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. MALACANANG PHOTO

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NAYPYIDAW, Burma—Given that powerful storms have become the new normal, President Aquino on Sunday urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to deal with climate change as “one community.”

Aquino proposed that the Asean maximize arrangements for joint disaster relief and emergency response operations among individual disaster management agencies.

At the plenary session of the Asean summit hosted by Burma (Myanmar),

Aquino urged the other Southeast Asian leaders to support the work of High-Level Task Force and the Asean Coordinating Council Working Group in keeping the Asean “attuned” to the peoples’ needs.

He said the country’s experience in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) in November last year highlighted the need for even “stronger Asean institutions and mechanisms.”

Balancing priorities

Aquino acknowledged that countries must strike a balance between devoting resources to enhancing the resilience of communities and funding development.

“Confronted with this competition for resources, leaders like ourselves must be ever conscious that a problem not attended to does not disappear; it will only worsen. As such, there must be an imperative for us to address global climate change as one Asean community,” he said.

Aquino urged the Asean to continue pressing developed countries to follow through on their commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

While it would take some time to realize an Asean community, Aquino said the bloc showed solidarity in providing relief and aid for the survivors of Yolanda in the central Philippines.

“Your response in that time of dire need was indeed overwhelming and inspiring,” he said.

Asean aid Aquino specifically expressed gratitude to Asean secretary general Le Luong Minh for leading the delivery of Asean relief items to Tacloban City.

“Typhoon Haiyan displayed the solidarity and clear commitment of the global community and the Asean to help the survivors rise from the rubble and recover from the typhoon’s devastation,” he said.

Aquino said the Asean was also presented with an opportunity to tap into its solidarity “to make our countries more resilient in mitigating and guarding against the effects of climate change, and in building back better communities affected by disaster.”

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“As one of the Asean member states most vulnerable to natural calamities, the Philippines remains steadfast in its advocacy of a disaster-resilient community,” he said.