

Keyword: climate-change

Headline: PH urges nations to slap 'green' taxes on toxic goods

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Published Date: 12:22 AM November 30, 2015

Section: business

Word Count: 528

Content:

THE PHILIPPINES and 19 other countries deemed most vulnerable to the ill effects of climate change are urging nations to slap taxes on goods that are harmful to the environment.

Ahead of the United Nations' conference on climate change (COP21) in Paris, France this week, Philippine Finance Secretary Cesar V. Purisima in a Nov. 12 letter urged developed countries to support the initiatives of the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) group of finance ministers, formed to seek new international partnerships on climate financing.

Besides the Philippines, the V20 members are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Kiribati, Madagascar, Maldives, Nepal, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam. They have a combined population of nearly 700 million, which Purisima claimed are "severely affected by global climate change."

"Nearly half of our people live in extreme forms of poverty, and due to climate change we now face estimated losses of at least 2.5 percent of gross domestic product each year. Even at current global warming of less than 1 degree Celsius, we already suffer increasingly dangerous life-claiming storms, floods, drought and many other climate-related shocks," he said.

He said an increased warming of 2 degrees Celsius or more could already "call into question the very survival of a number of our low-lying island nations."

Purisima, who chairs the V20, said: "With lives at risk and the fate of nations threatened, we are firm in our belief that climate change is the fundamental human rights issue of our time and the defining challenge of the 21st century. As a result, we believe every government is under compulsion to act..."

Purisima pushed for greater support, especially from industrialized countries, for climate financing. He said \$90 trillion in infrastructure investments by 2030 is needed if nations commit to keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius.

"Our vulnerable nations are advocating instead for keeping warming to a minimum and support the more ambitious but still feasible target of below 1.5 degrees Celsius, itself requiring even more aggressive action," he said.

He said developed countries have yet to fully deliver on their earlier commitments to climate financing. "We do appreciate the considerable progress achieved ahead of COP21 as ... developed nations strive to deliver on the joint 2020 mobilization commitment of \$100 billion per year. Although according to a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report 2014 mobilization levels were still \$38-billion short of this figure underscoring just how much remains to be accomplished."

He said the V20 found as "interesting" the fiscal mechanism proposals as well as revenue-generating measures being espoused by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, such as the airline tax, carbon tax, green bonds and jet fuel tax.

Purísima said the V20 is also pushing for the creation of a sovereign climate risk-pooling mechanism that would serve as a “trans-regional public-private mechanism to distribute economic and financial risks, to improve recovery after climate-induced extreme weather events and disasters, and to enhance security of jobs, livelihoods, businesses and for investors.”

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