

Headline: PH at COP21: 'We are the face of vulnerability'

Byline: Kristine Angeli Sabillo

Published Date: 09:57 PM December 09, 2015

Section: globalnation

Word Count: 3313

Content:

PARIS — The Philippine delegation has been making strides, catching the attention of other nations and different groups at the climate change negotiations held in this city.

Known for advocating the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal and the inclusion of human rights provisions in the draft agreement of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21), Philippine officials have given strongly-worded speeches in behalf of countries vulnerable to climate change.

Secretary Manny de Guzman's intervention during the ministerial meeting on Tuesday was no exception.

De Guzman, who heads the Philippine delegation and the Climate Change Commission, talked in behalf of the Philippines and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), which is currently chaired by the country.

"For vulnerable countries, there is a single thing that will measure the ambition of the Paris agreement and it is a number: 1.5," he said in the speech shared on Facebook by delegation spokesperson Dean Tony La Viña.

"We are the face of vulnerability. We've been absorbing the punches and we will continue to receive these punches as the planet continue to warm," De Guzman said. "We all know the vulnerable countries suffer the life-claiming brunt of climate disasters already today."

The CVF and the Philippines have been pushing for more ambitious goals for COP21, including the 1.5 goal or limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (instead of two degrees Celsius) above pre-industrial levels.

De Guzman pointed out that temperature increase has breached the 1 degree Celsius mark "and we only have 0.5 degree left to control it. "

"Paris is our chance, our hope. And we know it can be done as the science informs us. 1.5C of warming will be close to catastrophic for our countries, but we know it's the best we can do if we all act decisively," he said of this year's negotiations, which aims to come up with a legally binding agreement on climate change.

He said the current two degrees Celsius goal "has no validity anymore as a guardrail."

"Limiting global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius would avoid or reduce risks, for example, to food production or to unique and threatened systems such as coral reefs, and to risks of sea-level rise," he explained.

His speech coincided with the Philippine government's submission of a report by the Special Procedures of the United Nations. The report confirms that climate change has a negative impact on fundamental human rights and that "a 2-degrees goal would result in a major adverse impact on human rights globally, including on the right to life, to health and to food, some of the most basic human rights."

"We have an opportunity here to make an historic contribution to upholding human rights and affirm our faith in an international system that functions," De Guzman said. "We are deciding on the fate of the planet here. The parties need to know that on the basis of their decision rests that fate of billions of people alive and unborn."

Subscribe to our daily newsletter

By providing an email address. I agree to the Terms of Use and acknowledge that I have read the Privacy Policy.

The Secretary said the Philippines "cannot in good conscience be party to a decision that constrains our survival and implies mass violations of human rights when there was an option to do otherwise."