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Senate President Franklin Drilon has called for key changes and long-term reforms in the country's disaster response strategy—including the possibility of completely restructuring the country's current disaster protection agency, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Drilon said that legislative actions are imperative, after expressing his concerns that a natural disaster with a similar capacity for destruction to the Super Typhoon Yolanda (Hai-yan) could hit the country again.

"The Senate would look at more climate change adaptation measures, as the recent spate of strong typhoons could be a sign of shifting patterns in global climate, which makes national preparation to extreme natural events more necessary. It is possible that Super Typhoon Yolanda is the harbinger of more destructive typhoons," Drilon said in a statement.

"We have to prepare for the worse. We should have a comprehensive disaster risk reduction and management program that will anticipate future occurrences arising from climate change and global warming," he emphasized.

Drilon said that for the country to be able to effectively deal with the threat of natural disasters, it may have to overhaul the NDRRMC, which is currently under the Department of National Defense, and expand its functions and capacities, including the hiring of more specialists into the agency.

"We can also explore the idea of transforming the existing NDRRMC from being a coordinating body to a more permanent structure, with full-time staff and experts in various fields," he said.

"We need to come up with geohazard maps of all areas in the country to determine which areas are at risk from typhoons, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. We cannot afford to be reactive when it comes to disasters," Drilon added.

The senator, however, acknowledged that the effective implementation of any reforms to the country's national disaster strategy will not be a stand-alone effort confided to a single agency; instead these should deeply involved local government units and other agencies of the government involving the environment, land use and various social services.

"To ensure that our development initiatives are sustainable, we must incorporate disaster risk reduction in our development policies and in every part of our society. It is a tall order, I must admit, because it involves not just decreasing our people's vulnerability to adverse weather conditions, but also ensuring the judicious management of land and environment. Good governance is essential to disaster risk reduction," Drilon said.

To show the necessity of the reforms proposed, Drilon called attention to the ongoing relief efforts in the Visayan region, where government agencies experienced difficulties in providing aid to the victims.

"Thousands died and thousands more are missing. It is heartbreaking to see the suffering in the faces of the survivors, most of them are now homeless," he said.

Meanwhile, Drilon advised the nation to remain hopeful, and to be united in their actions to help those afflicted by the calamities: "During these tough and trying times in our nation's life, we have to be united in the pursuit of our development goals. We have to transcend political differences because the work ahead is enormous. Let us not allow the daunting challenges of rehabilitating communities and rebuilding lives rob us of our optimism, resilience and empathy."