

Headline: The road to Paris and PH's climate pledges

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TWO MONTHS from now, world leaders will gather in Paris for the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

After the failed climate deal in Copenhagen in 2009, much is at stake in this year's COP. Indeed, there is a growing clamor and pressure for world leaders to achieve a fair, ambitious and binding deal in Paris at the end of this year. No less than the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis himself, has issued in June an encyclical titled "Laudato Si" (Praised be) which urges everyone to "stop climate change destruction."

The other week, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action met in what seemed to be one of the last remaining negotiation weeks before Paris (the other one happening in October). They were guided by the following documents: a revised, streamlined, consolidated text; and a working document integrating the outputs of the various facilitation groups on finance, mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage. In Paris, negotiators will find ways to achieve fairness, ambition and transparency, and how these can be explicitly shown in the draft text.

However, Bonn intersession held some two weeks ago proved to be futile. The seemingly slow progress of the negotiations showed that the world is somewhat far from forging a deal soon.

Developing countries and civil society organizations were quite frustrated with the negotiations' snail-paced tempo. They were also frustrated with the way "loss and damage" was talked about in Bonn. Loss and damage became a pressing issue during the COP 19 in Warsaw in 2013, when the Philippines' lead negotiator, Naderev "Yeb" Saño, championed the issue and asked developed countries to clearly define humanitarian aid vis-à-vis climate compensation.

But the Paris climate agreement—whether this will come into fruition or not—will be put into waste if countries will not submit and commit heavily into their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). The UNFCCC has clearly outlined recommendations for the drafting of INDCs or climate action plans of different countries. It says they must be:

"ambitious, leading to transformation in carbon-intensive sectors and industry; transparent, so that stakeholders can track progress and ensure that countries meet their stated goals; and equitable, so that each country does its fair share to address climate change."

The recent controversy on the INDC of the Philippines over the noninclusion of civil society organizations is quite alarming, given the country's pivotal role in the negotiation process during the past few COPs. No less than Philippine Climate Change Commissioner Heherson Alvarez has lamented the fact that the Philippines' INDC is being drafted without proper consultation with relevant stakeholders.

An earlier published think piece I cowrote with Chris Wright, a fellow climate campaigner from Australia who is also with Adopt a Negotiator Project, thoroughly discussed how the Philippines can pave the way for

reform-oriented, accountable and ambitious climate pledges. We discussed how the Philippines can follow in the footsteps of Morocco, Peru and Ethiopia which have submitted their INDCs and have reaped praises at the United Nations last June.

The Philippines' INDC must effectively weave inputs from various stakeholders—private sector, civil society, and the most vulnerable people—in the face of a changing climate. It should bring in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that also ensure inclusive growth, in accord with environmental laws.

Only by direct, participatory and inclusive negotiations and INDCs, will parties be able to work through their differences, find points of convergence and ultimately come up with a transparent, fair and ambitious deal that will lower carbon emissions to 2 degrees Celcius; help vulnerable sectors adapt to climate change impacts; and ensure that financial mechanisms are open and available for this enterprise.

The last five negotiation days in October are crucial if we are to reach a fair and binding climate agreement in Paris this December. A task we failed to accomplish in Copenhagen, in December 2009.

Meanwhile, we continue to experience the worsening impacts of climate change and, needless to say, it is the most vulnerable sectors that are most affected by it. We cannot afford to fail this time. The future of the next generation is at stake.

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