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Headline: Envoy says calamities can erase PH gains

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PARIS—The Philippines is vulnerable to climate change and whatever economic gains it has achieved could “easily be wiped out” by natural calamities and put the nation in a “never-ending cycle of rebuilding,” the country’s ambassador to France said.

This is the reason the presence of President Aquino at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) is important to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Ambassador Ma. Theresa Lazaro told Radio-TV Malacañang.

“This is a multilateral negotiations where countries must know how they will really be suffering if they do not stop the usual environmental degradation,” Lazaro said in the interview released in Paris on Saturday.

Today, Mr. Aquino joins 150 leaders, including US President Barack Obama, Chinese President Xi Jinping, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron, in the COP21 Leaders’ Event. He will also take part in the high-level meeting of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, comprised of most climate vulnerable countries. The Philippines is this year’s chair of the forum.

To redeem failure

With their three-minute speeches, the leaders are expected to redeem the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen convention, in which governments failed to reach a legally binding agreement despite commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The leaders gather in Paris amid threats from Islamic extremists that killed 129 people in the French capital only two weeks ago. Security is tight in Paris, with a lock-down in several parts of the city that began Sunday.

Mr. Aquino will join the opening ceremony of the COP21 Leaders’ Event at the convention center today. The leaders will start to deliver their statements at noon (7 p.m. in Manila) that will be viewed as guidelines to their delegations for the hard negotiations expected during the 10-day climate change summit.

Governments are expected to hammer out an agreement on carbon emissions that would keep global temperature from rising to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

Catastrophic impact

Scientists have warned that if the earth’s temperature continues to rise at this level by the end of the century, it would have a catastrophic impact on the planet.

Assistant Secretary Joyceline Goco of the Climate Change Commission said that in any climate change initiative, finance is important “because that will be the enabler.”

“Even if there will be agreements on the different issues like adaptation, mitigation, what is needed is financing.” Goco said.

Poor countries want the more developed nations to help them invest in the technology that would cut their greenhouse gas emissions, among other things.

While the rich countries—the bigger sources of carbon emissions—made a \$30-billion pledge in the Copenhagen conference six years ago for financial assistance, the poor countries want an assurance in any Paris agreement that this promise will be kept.

Help needed

The Philippines has committed to reduce its carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030, which is then projected to reach 219 million tons, showing a steady increase.

To achieve this target, the Philippines acknowledged that it needs the help of the global community, especially “sufficient financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity building.”

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The Philippines became the poster boy of the impact of climate change after Supertyphoon “Yolanda” (international name: Haiyan), the strongest typhoon to hit land with winds of 315 kilometers per hour, left more than 6,000 people dead and obliterated towns two years ago. More than 1,000 people remain missing.