

# House leader backs declaration of climate emergency

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PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

THE DECLARATION of a climate emergency in the Philippines would encourage swift action to combat climate change and ease its impacts, the Speaker of the House of Representatives said on Sunday.

The declaration would compel the government, including Congress and other stakeholders to place climate change at the center of their policy and planning decisions, Speaker Lord Allan Q. Velasco said in a statement.

“Declaring a climate emergency means recognizing that the climate crisis is the fight of our lives and that there is an urgent need for a massive-scale mobilization to protect Filipinos and the environment from climate change and its devastating impacts,” Mr. Velasco said after the House adopted a resolution declaring such emergency.

The resolution sought to mobilize government agencies and local governments “to effectively implement environmental, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures” and enforce environmental management laws.

The House committee on disaster resilience has also adopted a separate resolution calling for a nationwide policy response to halt, reduce and reverse the effects of climate change.

Mr. Velasco said the Philippines had been facing a climate emergency for decades, now “with millions of Filipinos left to suffer the catastrophic effects of extreme weather events made stronger and more deadly by climate change.”

He said the devastation caused by recent typhoons — including Typhoon Goni and Typhoon Vamco, locally named Rolly and Ulysses respectively — showed the need to pursue stronger climate-adaptive and -resilient measures.

Vamco killed at least 73 people and caused the worst flooding in Metro Manila and Cagayan Valley in recent years.

“There will be more typhoons that will come our way, and we have to become better at preparations and in handling situations that call for sound judgment to prevent devastating death tolls and economic costs of future calamities,” Mr. Velasco said.

He added that the declaration of a climate emergency would amplify the country’s demand for climate justice from developed nations and help achieve its goals under the landmark Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The declaration would show “the world our resolve to pursue low carbon development, as well as the support we need from developed countries in terms of climate finance, capacity building and technology transfer in the context of climate justice and in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.”

“We need to address gaps in climate action and the implementation of our climate change laws and policies,” he added.

Mr. Velasco, along with Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, Antique Rep. Loren B. Legarda, and Bohol Rep. Edgar M. Chatto earlier represented the Philippines in a virtual conference of lawmakers from the 48-member nation Climate Vulnerable Forum.

Meanwhile, Quezon City Rep. Precious H. Castelo urged the government to start a flood summit.

The summit should involve the Office of the President, Office of Civil Defense and other government agencies, she said in a statement. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

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