

# Ratification of Paris pact gives PHL access to \$200-million global green fund

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*Business Mirror*, March 19, 2017



*(Photo: Daniel Pfund/flickr/cc with overlay)*

Following the Senate's ratification of the Paris Agreement, where the Philippines committed to reduce its greenhouse-gas (GHG) emission by 70 percent, the Duterte administration is eyeing to access a whopping \$200 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

Environment Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Marlo D. Mendoza said the DENR will start planning the next step and buckle down to work to reduce GHG, particularly carbon, and enhance the country's carbon-absorption capacity by expanding forest covers.

He said that, with the Paris Agreement ratified, the Philippines's chances of accessing the multibillion-dollar GCF is enhanced, adding the government is looking at GCF's financing of major "greening" programs, ranging from \$100 million to \$200 million this year alone.

The Paris Agreement, signed in December 2015 at the United Nations headquarters in New York, aims to limit global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees.

## **Target sector**

While not a major emitter, the Philippines, through its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution submission in October 2015, made a promise to reduce its GHG, on the condition that it will get support from developing countries.

“We [are] ready to make an operational...framework plan [on] how [we could] comply. We have proactive projects to reduce our greenhouse-gas emission. We are looking at reducing greenhouse gas by sector,” Mendoza said.

The potential of reducing GHG in the transport sector, he pointed out, is huge, noting that it is a major source of pollution and emission.

“We are looking at it by sector. We will look into the possible GHG reduction in transportation, energy and agriculture. These sectors are contributors. The other side, which is capture, will require massive tree-planting,” he said.

Mendoza, a forester, said the DENR will come up with a more refined framework plan for mitigation. “When you said mitigation, it means reduction of greenhouse gas. The other side is carbon capture. One of the concerns is prevention of forest fires,” he added.

Policy and actual on-ground operations, he said, will be enhanced.

“Prevention of forest fire, *kaingin*, which causes forest fires, will have to be reduced,” Mendoza said.

### **Defense enhancement**

The DENR chairs the Cabinet cluster on climate change and works closely with the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

“We are already making [a] proposal to access the GCF. We are making a proposal for mangrove and bamboo plantation establishments. The secretary wants at least a million hectares of bamboo and mangroves,” he said, adding that it will also enhance the country’s natural defense against climate-change impacts, like storm surges and tsunamis.

This was confirmed by Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez.

Lopez, sought for comment, expressed elation over the Senate’s ratification of the Paris Agreement. Among the members of the Cabinet, Lopez was instrumental in convincing President Duterte to approve of the country’s support to the Paris Agreement.

She said access to the GCF will enable the Philippines to boost climate-change mitigation and adaptation capacity.

Lopez, who is currently on a retreat abroad, said it is going to happen within the year.

“Oh, we are accessing funds to plant 380,000 hectares of mangroves this year...to protect our country against climate change... and we want to plant 1 million hectares of bamboo in three years...for climate-change mitigation,” Lopez said in a text message to the BusinessMirror.

According to Lopez, the DENR will start with its own budget prior to accessing more funds from the GCF kitty.

“Both endeavors will kick-start the local economy. It’s exciting,” Lopez said.

Lopez said bamboo absorbs carbon 400 times more than ordinary trees. By planting more bamboos, she said the country will enhance its carbon-absorption capacity enormously. Mangroves, she added, absorb a lot of carbon, too.

“We are going [on a] massive tree plantation [for] a massive green economy.

### **Smoke belchers**

“The key is people should benefit, otherwise the strategy will fail. Then we have to address the vehicular emissions. That’s together with the DOTr,” Lopez said, referring to the Department of Transportation.

Lopez, in a news statement, commended and thanked members of the Senate, led by Sen. Loren Legarda as chairman of the subcommittee on the Paris Agreement and Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano as chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, for its expeditious concurrence to the accession of the Paris Agreement.

“This reflects the sense of global urgency needed to hold the increase in the global average temperature to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels agreed under the Paris Agreement, which the Philippines strongly advocated for,” the statement read.

According to the CCC, the concurrence of the Senate follows the signing of the instrument of accession by Duterte upon the endorsement of 33 government agencies that are members of the CCC Advisory Board.

With its accession to the agreement, the Philippines confirms its commitment toward global climate action and affirms its leadership in pushing developed countries to undertake more ambitious action and to provide more support to developing countries.

The instrument of accession will be deposited to the United Nations in time for the climate negotiations in May. Meanwhile, the commission shall work on finalizing, and later mainstreaming, the country’s obligations under the agreement into national policies, plans and programs.

Lopez, who ordered the controversial closure and suspension of 28 mining operations and canceled 75 mineral production sharing agreements to protect the country’s watersheds and prevent further environmental degradation, has been deemed bypassed by the powerful Commission on Appointments.

Duterte, however, maintained his support behind Lopez, and said he is willing to let go of the P70-billion revenue from mining.

Lopez also enjoys overwhelming support from environmental groups, who credited Lopez’s political will in ordering the mine closures.

Environmental groups also backed the Senate’s ratification of the Paris Agreement.