

‘PHL should tap \$100-B climate-change fund’

By *Jovee Marie de la Cruz*
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In Photo: El Niño dried up farmlands in the Philippines.

Following the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, a vice chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations on Sunday said the Philippines can access the proposed \$100-billion global fund to help developing economies that are vulnerable to climate change.

Nacionalista Party Rep. Luis Raymund F. Villafuerte Jr. of Camarines Sur said the additional funds would help farmers cope with the ill effects of climate change, and make Philippine infrastructure more “climate-resilient.”

“In the future, the Philippines can access this additional financing to build climate risk-resilient infrastructure; improve our management of irrigation water for our farmers; and teach our farmers new climate-change-adaptive technologies to protect our communities from the adverse effects of the now erratic weather patterns,” Villafuerte said.

President Duterte has signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on March 1.

According to Villafuerte, the Senate ratification of the agreement is “timely and significant”, as this would mean the process on the Philippines’s accession to the climate-change treaty would likely be completed before Earth Day on April 22.

He recalled the Philippines and other countries most vulnerable to climate change have sought \$100 billion in additional financing from global institutions to help protect themselves from the destructive effects of global warming, such as droughts, rising sea levels, devastating storms and other extreme weather events.

“Coming from a province and region that is highly vulnerable to climate change, the President’s signing of the Paris Agreement and the Senate’s ratification of this accord are certainly welcome. Once we complete the ratification process, we would now have a full seat in the conference of parties that will tackle the treaty’s implementation,” he said.

“We would now have a say in the conference, and we can lobby for more funding on behalf of emerging economies, such as the Philippines, that are most vulnerable to climate change,” Villafuerte added.

The lawmaker is referring to the next round of meetings of the parties to the Paris Agreement scheduled this November in Bonn, Germany.

He said Camarines Sur, one of the six provinces of Bicol, has been most vulnerable to the changing weather patterns triggered by global warming. Six of the average 20 typhoons that enter the country each year pummel Bicol.

Under the Paris Agreement, the Philippines pledged a 70-percent cut in emissions by 2030, on condition that it would receive assistance from developed countries in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Climate tax

Villafuerte said the House of Representatives should do its part by approving his proposal imposing “climate” tax on carbon-dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

“Would-be proceeds from this proposed tax are to be used solely for programs designed to help, especially the most vulnerable Philippine communities, better adapt to unpredictable weather cycles and other disastrous effects of global warming,” he said.

Villafuerte is the author of House Bill (HB) 4939, or the Piso Para sa Kalikasan Act, which seeks to impose a climate or carbon tax on electricity—equivalent to P1 per 1 kilogram of CO₂ emission—on the monthly electricity bills of residential or household consumers.

The bill said consumers will be exempted from paying this proposed climate tax if their monthly consumption do not exceed 60 kilowatt- hours (kWh) each, or if the electricity they consume are generated from renewable energy sources.

He added CO₂ emissions from electricity and heat production have doubled in the Philippines from 25.83 percent of total fuel combustion in 1972 to 49.74 percent in 2013.

Villafuerte said HB 4939 is both a “revenue-generating measure and a tool to protect and preserve the environment.”

The lawmaker said its swift congressional approval will send a loud and clear signal to the global community of “the country’s strong commitment to international climate policy, and the Congress’s affirmation of the people’s right to a balanced and healthy ecology, as well as the State’s paramount duty to safeguard such right for the present and future generations.”

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