

Expert questions Paris Agreement

The Standard, posted April 09, 2017 at 12:01 am by **Alena Mae S. Flores**

THE Philippines is facing an economic setback because of the recently signed commitment to the Paris Agreement to lower the country's emission reduction by 70 percent, according to an environment expert.

"The commitment to rollback the emission to 2010 level means that all power plants, factories, and economic activities that were in place by 2010 are operating beyond the commitment and must be closed or the operators will have to purchase carbon dioxide credits to offset its emissions," Ely Anthony Ouano said.

Ouano, a former assistant secretary of the Environment department, said that in terms of emissions, the Philippines accounts for only 0.3 percent of the world total.

He said the Philippines' contribution to lower its emissions "will not have a significant impact on the greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere."

"Even if the Filipinos adopt the most primitive lifestyle, that is a lifestyle lower than a caveman so that the GHG emissions are now zero, the Philippines will still suffer the same impacts from climate change," he said.

Ouano said the Philippines is vulnerable to climate change because it is "a natural fence to the Asian mainland absorbing the full wrath of typhoons and storm surges."

He said the Philippines should build typhoon shelters, artificial and natural barriers to absorb storm surges, build stronger roads, build bigger dams, improve hospital facilities, upgrade food storage, among many others that will cost billions of pesos.

He said the Philippines will need \$5.2 billion per annum to meet its commitment under the Paris Agreement but the country may only be able to get about \$1 billion per annum from the green fund.

The international community has programmed a green fund of \$100 billion to be divided among 160 developing countries.

"It would be an optimistic estimate if the Philippines were to receive one percent of the green fund or \$1 billion per year and some \$4 billion lower than the cost it will incur to meet its commitment," he said.

The Senate recently ratified the Paris Agreement and the documents will be sent to the executive branch.

The President will then sign it for the Foreign Affairs department to transmit those documents to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention and to the United Nations Depository.

Ouano said that while the Senate, which recently ratified the Paris Agreement, said that the Philippines' nationally determined contribution (NDC) is "voluntary," it is not simple getting out of its commitment.

"What the Senate missed is that the previous administration has already volunteered, in terms of the INDC [intended nationally determined contribution] that could become the first NDC," he said.

"When the Philippines submits its instrument of ratification, it should exercise this option 'it decides otherwise' and submit a new INDC or its first NDC in line with the INDC's or NDC submitted by other developing countries. We have additional reasons because we have a new administration," he said.

Ouano said the Philippines should follow the lead of India and reduce its energy intensity by 35 percent in 2030 subject to it receiving financial and technical assistance currently estimated at \$250 billion.”

India, however, sought for assistance amounting to \$2.5 trillion.

Ouano said that the Philippines has a higher commitment to reduce its carbon emissions compared to other Asean countries with Indonesia at 29 percent. Malaysia at 45 percent, Thailand at 20 percent and Vietnam at 8 percent.

He said Filipino decision makers on climate change should stop acting like they are from a developed country like the member countries of the European Union.

Ouano added that due to the high cost of energy, the Philippines is undergoing premature de-industrialization which meant that with the high energy cost the industries that are energy intensive are moving out of the country.

He said the Philippine economy has been growing in the past few years but the high energy cost is expanding the divide between the rich and the poor.

“The impact is not just in industrial competitiveness but also in potential social timebomb. It is for this reason I called the Philippine INDC anti-poor and anti-economic development. Since social stability and economic development are two of the pillars of sustainable development then it follows the third pillar which is environmental protection will be compromised as well,” he said.