

PH joins biodiversity workshop in Kazakhstan

*Manila Bulletin, Published April 23, 2017, 10:00 PM
by Charissa Luci*

The Philippines is among the 51 countries that will participate in the third Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Regional Workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan from April 25 to April 27.

Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Ramirez Sato, a member of the House Committee on Ecology is expected to deliver the keynote address wherein she will outline the country's initiatives to protect and conserve its rich biodiversity against various threats.

"It is a privilege and opportunity to be part of this workshop. The Philippines, being one of the mega-diverse countries in the world, has everything to gain in conserving our rich biodiversity," she said in a statement.

Sato noted that the Philippines is one of the 17 mega-diverse countries in the world and has more than 52,000 known species with more than 50 percent of plants and animals classified as endemic or species that can be found only in the Philippines.

The three-day BIOFIN workshop is part of the effort of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to advance its work under the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Global Framework.

Sato said the UNDP launched the BIOFIN, a new global partnership seeking to address the biodiversity finance challenge in a comprehensive manner, in 2012.

It aims to build a sound business case for increased investment in the management of ecosystems and biodiversity, with a particular focus on the needs and transformational opportunities at the national level, she said.

"The workshop hopes to provide a venue for discussion on the application of the 2016 BIOFIN workbook in countries, support the development of inventories of subsidies harmful to biodiversity, and share the experience of BIOFIN progress," Sato, a former governor of Occidental Mindoro, said.

She expressed full support for the plan to localize the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (PBSAP) 2015-2028, as well as effort to close the biodiversity financing gap in the Philippines.

The PBSAP is the country's blueprint to protect and conserve its rich biodiversity being a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

"Implementing the PBSAP will cost the government R24 billion/year from 2017/2028. Current spending of the Philippines for biodiversity conservation stands at R5 billion/year, leaving a financing gap of R19B/year," Sato said.

BIOFIN is testing finance mechanism such as budget realignment, private sector engagement and accessing earmarked funds.