

EU launches plastic management program in Southeast Asia

[Helen Flores](#) (The Philippine Star) - October 18, 2018 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The European Union will launch next year a program that aims to help countries in East and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, implement better plastic waste management.

“(There are) two central problems we are facing in the Philippines, two problems linked to each other although in a not very obvious way: the problem of climate change and the problem of plastic waste,” EU Ambassador Franz Jessen said at a climate change forum in Makati City on Friday.

The program aims to strengthen cooperation with selected countries in East and Southeast Asia to jointly implement actions that will address sustainable consumption and production of plastic and prevention of plastic waste entering into the marine environment.

It is expected to enhance policy dialogue, exchange shared knowledge and lessons learned from European countries, capacity enhancement, technology transfer and piloting of solutions for better plastic waste management in the Asian region.

Jessen said the proliferation of plastic waste and its leakage into the environment is a major issue of concern.

“The proliferation of plastic waste, which is particularly severe in the Philippines, places additional pressure on marine ecosystems as large amounts of plastic reach coastal waters every day,” Jessen said.

“These, under the action of the sun, wind and waves, transform into microplastic particles, which are transported over very large distances. They are eaten by fish and enter the food chain with negative impacts not only for local fisheries and marine biodiversity but also for human health,” he said.

“The problem is very widespread to the extent that it is highly likely that when we eat fish without realizing we also ingest a certain amount of microscopic plastic particles,” the envoy said.

Jessen urged those in the plastic industry to shift away from producing wasteful and harmful single-use plastic and place more efforts on using recyclable forms.

“If individuals take a sensible approach on plastic usage, they help transition away from fossil fuels and support a shift toward renewable energy and healthier climate,” Jessen said.

The European Union delegation to the Philippines is closely working with the Philippine government on the development of a national strategy for improving plastic waste management and reducing leakages of plastic waste in the marine environment.

USAID, DENR complete P1.35-B biodiversity project

Meanwhile, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have completed their P1.35-billion project aimed at strengthening the country’s efforts at conserving its forests and biodiversity.

Since 2012, the USAID has been partnering with the DENR, local governments, the private sector and civil society to safeguard this important natural resource through its biodiversity project.

The partnership's key milestones include the DENR's implementation of the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System in 16 out of 17 regions of the country.

Developed by DENR and USAID, this technology equips forest patrollers and managers with the tools to monitor forest conditions and make evidence-based decisions for protecting the country's forests and biodiversity.

According to the USAID, these initiatives helped improve the management of over 90 percent of forests in the Philippines, benefitting nearly 30,000 people who depend on forests for their livelihood.

Reforestation and forest conservation work contributed to reducing about 10 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in six years, the equivalent of nearly two million cars off the streets, it said.

About one in three Filipinos depends on natural resources, including forests, for their livelihoods. Forests also provide energy, protect communities from floods, and enhance air quality.

"We are honored to work with all of you as friends and partners in safeguarding our environment and pursuing a more prosperous Philippines," US Ambassador Sung Kim said in his keynote address at the project's completion ceremony late last week, which was attended by over 300 participants, including partners from the private sector, indigenous communities and youth.

USAID and DENR also awarded plaques of recognition to individuals and groups who contributed to the success of the forest and biodiversity conservation partnership.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/business/science-and-environment/2018/10/18/1860857/eu-launches-plastic-management-program-southeast-asia#JFfQKI7RJOzdGUFD.99>