

300 PH scientists, conservationists call for 'a culture of care for nature'

PRESS RELEASE: 'Make nature a priority,' Philippine leaders told in an open letter from 300 scientists, conservationists ahead of Earth Day 2020

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This is a press release from Masungi Georeserve

In an open letter ahead of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, a group of 300 environmentalists called on present and future leaders to put nature on top of the agenda as Philippine society adjusts to a “new normal” following the COVID-19 crisis.

“The survival of humans depends on nature. When we create an imbalance in natural systems, the ability of nature to repair itself and take care of us is compromised,” the letter said.

“Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the conversion of natural ecosystems such as forests, mangrove forests, wetlands, seagrass beds, and coral reefs have resulted in many calamities. These have heavily impacted the lives of Filipinos through widespread flooding, landslides, destruction of farmlands and fishing grounds, and loss of property and lives. We have experienced water shortages and droughts due to extreme weather events as a result of the changing climate. Destroying wild habitats and wildlife trade also increases “virus spillover risk” from wildlife to humans, giving rise to deadly diseases such as COVID-19,” it explained.

The letter from conservation leaders, scientists, and advocates from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao said that in order to prevent future pandemics and other threats to the survival of the Filipino people, the country’s leaders must address three interconnected emergencies: biodiversity loss, climate change and ecological amnesia.

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They called on government leaders to “aggressively support the protection of remaining natural ecosystems and the restoration of destroyed ones, relentlessly enforce environmental laws and prosecute violators, empower and protect environmental defenders and frontliners, champion the effective management and sufficient funding of our protected, conserved and key biodiversity areas, and harmonize economic development with the sustainable management of our natural resources” and to innovate and collaborate with different sectors in doing so.

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They said that business leaders must “develop a deep understanding of the spaces and communities they operate in, strictly comply with and go beyond the requirements of environmental laws, and enjoin the government in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.” The media and education sector must also contribute by creating “a radical new approach to produce a new generation of environmental stewards guided by science and conscience”.

“Our Earth is our collective home. She provides for our needs and keeps us safe and healthy. But for the Earth to continue taking care of us, we need to take care of her first,” the letter concludes.

The call added that as ordinary citizens “[we] can also do our part by reflecting on our daily habits and consumption of food, water, energy and commodities, realizing that each individual choice can have compound effects on nature and our community. It is also our responsibility to choose our next set of leaders wisely based on the work they put into people and the planet, and not based on personality or popularity.”

View the full letter with full list of signatories [here](#). – **Rappler.com**

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