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If the world does not start taking care of Mother Nature and paying attention to climate change, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) warned that there will be “devastating effects” that are far worse than the crisis people are dealing with now because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

“The current pandemic is just a preview into how our future will be if governments around the world will not take the climate crisis seriously. More so, it also demonstrates how interconnected the world is, and shows the domino effect when one element in this interconnected system is damaged,” said CHR Spokesperson Atty. Jacqueline Ann de Guia.

April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of International Mother Earth Day, and the celebration this year is “historical” according to de Guia because of the deadly virus.

“While mother nature suffers from devastating effects of climate change, people are dying too due to this ongoing public health crisis,” she said.

The CHR stressed that climate change is one of the biggest threats to sustainable development, and it is aggravated by the unsustainable and excessive practices of mankind. In order to protect Earth and its ecosystems, the CHR said it is the responsibility of individuals and businesses to address the negative impacts of their actions on the environment.

The damaging effects of climate change and COVID-19 only prove how unequal and vulnerable our society and international communities are, said de Guia. This phenomenon has even marginalized and excluded populations, and sadly, the CHR said those living in poverty are mostly placed at risk.

“Whether man-made or natural, these global emergencies also resulted to grave human rights violations that continue to challenge our social protection and justice systems,” said de Guia.

De Guia likewise said that COVID-19 is indeed a direct threat to individual lives right now, but she stressed that climate change remains to be the biggest existential threat to humanity.

“The Commission underscores the need for both systemic and individual changes to deliver climate justice,” she said. “Although we recognize that our nation is currently struggling in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, we should not wait too long and remain unprepared in tackling both existing and impending damage that we currently experience and bound to face.”

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