

DENR backs tax on single-use plastics

By: By Bella Cariaso, Manila Bulletin

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Wednesday backed a proposal to tax the consumption of single-use plastics to curb plastic pollution in the country.

"Imposing tax on single-use plastics is a positive development for the environment in several ways. It can promote use of reusable packaging, reduce single-use plastic wastes, and extend the life of sanitary landfills," Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Director William Cuñado said in reaction to the proposal of Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

He said that the DENR pushed for a similar tax measure to combat plastic pollution during the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Cuñado said that the proposal "can potentially replace the 'throw-away culture' and address the longstanding problem of plastic wastes ending up in our oceans and waterways." Single-use plastics are among the primary wastes collected during the DENR's coastal cleanup campaigns.

Cuñado acknowledged that implementing the tax measure may need careful deliberation with other government agencies, as "imposing an additional expense on stakeholders need to be reasonable and beneficial."

He said that the country should institutionalize a circular economy that aims to reuse, re-manufacture or recycle waste.

Republic Act 11898 or the "Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022," which lapsed into law on July 23, 2022, aims to institutionalize the Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR system in RA 9003 or the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000."

Under the EPR scheme, manufacturers will be responsible for the treatment, disposal or recycling of their post-consumer products.

"As long as there is an abundant supply of disposable plastics produced, consumers will always use these out of convenience. But, if these will be taxed, it may serve as motivation for the public to opt for reusable or recyclable products, which can result in a waste-free behavior for the betterment of the environment," Cuñado said.