

DENR chief: Communities, ecosystems should be priority in climate actions

By: Rizal Raoul Reyes, Business Mirror

The Philippines should act against the threats of climate crisis through comprehensive risk management that emphasizes on evidence-informed prevention and disaster risk-recovery planning over emergency response.

This was the message made by Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga at the recent Pilipinas 2022 conference in Makati City organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute and Democracy Watch Philippines.

“Moreover, lessons unlearned from past disasters need to be made part of our survival DNA,” said Loyzaga, also a trustee and program convenor of Stratbase ADR Institute and convenor of Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship.

She said the communities and the country’s ecosystems that support them need to be the priority in terms of investment, in terms of risk communications and impact-based early warning.

Living in a multi-hazard environment in an interconnected world, Loyzaga explained that the risks Filipinos face are complex, dynamic and systemic.

“These compound and cascade across sectors and skills. The interventions we designed to confront this complexity must, therefore, be transdisciplinary, time-sensitive and spatially targeted in order for them to be transformational. In our view, this will involve the following, first, the establishing of a national risk registry,” she added.

Loyzaga urged a multistakeholder formation horizon, scanning exercise to ensure the country must have a shared understanding of risks to climate-related and other hazards. Afterwards, the country must frame and prioritize its investments.

She said the next move by the country is to form a national natural resource geospatial base. She said it will need baseline inventories and valuations of the country that will function as both stock and flow.

“We have started this process internally but we will need your support to populate and validate data,” she said.

Loyzaga said these must be “intersected as the basis for identifying scenario-based challenges to the goals of inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development and prioritizing strategies, laws, policies, and actions to respond to these.”

She said the private sector has played a crucial role in bridging the cost of both energy transition and the just transition of labor toward net zero. Energy transition costs are estimated to be in trillions for some countries and sectors.

Loyzaga said this would mean the private sector adopting climate and disaster resilience into core business value cycles through investment strategies, enterprise risk management, and integrated environmental, social, and governance programs.

“Here, we will support area-based approaches to risk prevention, preparedness, response and recovery that goes beyond company fence lines,” she said,

Loyzaga said the country must accelerate the adoption of nature-based solutions with co-benefits in terms of climate action.

She said the country must also invest in education training and capacity building to create decision support systems for risk governance based on the best available science.

“We need to build geo-strategic awareness of regional and global factors that will reduce our range of adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction functions,” she explained.