

HON. EMMANUEL M. DE GUZMAN¹

Keynote Address
Asia LEDS Forum 2016:
Mobilizing Finance for Implementing Priority Actions

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Honored guests; the men and women behind the 2016 Asia LEDS Forum; ladies and gentlemen; a pleasant morning to you all.

On behalf of Climate Change Commission Secretary Emmanuel M. De Guzman I would like to convey his gratitude for the honor and privilege of addressing you today. Unfortunately, he cannot join us because the Philippines' new President is taking his oath this week, and the Climate Change Commission, just like every other agency in the Philippine Government, is in the midst of preparations for the transition

¹ *To be delivered by Climate Change Commission Deputy Executive Director Romell Cuenca*

into the new administration—preparations that Sec. De Guzman needs to oversee personally.

As an aside, allow me to share that the Philippines' new Chief Executive, President-Elect Rodrigo R. Duterte, was elected on a platform of change, and that one of the more popular phrases used during his campaign was "Change is Coming."

Those of us who work to address the threats posed by climate change probably have a different take on this slogan: *climate change is not coming; climate change is already here.*

It is not just a play for words, but a painful reality the citizens of the world have been forced to confront. It is no longer the subject of debate, nor the theme of dubious denials. Climate change is here, and it is felt not just by the countries that top the Global Climate Risk Index, but even those in parts of the world thought to be at minimal risk.

The world knows, for example, how extreme weather disturbances have brought devastation to parts of Asia like the Philippines, India, and Pakistan; but the most recent victim of this kind of terrifying weather phenomena is not even part of our continent. Just last week, over twenty people in West Virginia lost their lives in flooding caused by a downpour of biblical proportions—one that the United States Weather Service said could only occur once in a millennia.²

We are all aware that this is the new normal, and our respective countries have already begun the arduous task of preparing our nations for the far-reaching effects of climate change. This task is more urgent and more critical in Asia, as we are the ones most affected by climate change. In the latest Climate Risk Index, six of the top ten countries at risk can all be found in Asia: the Philippines, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.³ The top three, including my country, are represented at this Forum.

² <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/24/us/west-virginia-flooding-deaths/>

³ 2015 *Global Climate Risk Index*

Asia, clearly, has the most to lose if the world fails to act. But just as globalization has made it impossible for the people in Asia to ignore financial ripples originating in Europe, it will likewise be impossible for nations at the lower end of the Climate Risk Index to insulate themselves if the nations of Asia suffer the terrible consequences of climate change. Our coastlines may not be contiguous and we may not share the same borders, but we all call this planet home—and caring for it is a responsibility we all share.

We recognize, of course, that individual action in and by itself is not enough, and that only collective action aimed at achieving a singular goal can avert global environmental catastrophe. This is the logic behind Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). To quote my country's submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change:

“INDCs were intended to be a way to clarify how each Party to the UNFCCC could contribute to averting dangerous climate change and demonstrate progress from their current position. INDCs could potentially be a way in which all countries can make concerted efforts to build strong and transparent domestic foundations upon which to pursue a path to decarbonisation and enable them to set higher ambitions, post Paris.”⁴

Unfortunately, most analysts concur that the current offers will not be adequate to keep climate change within 2°C.⁵ This is understandable given where we in Asia are right now, from a development standpoint. The demands of development present a challenge for climate change advocates who are often mistakenly perceived as stumbling blocks to economic growth.

This is a sentiment that is likely common in our part of the world, as governments work overtime to fuel the kind of

⁴ Republic of the Philippines Intended Nationally Determined Contributions Communicated to the UNFCCC on October 2015

⁵ *Id.*

economic growth necessary to feed, clothe, and house billions of citizens, even as climate change advocates and policymakers work to convince governments that the word “sustainable” must always preface the word “development.”

As we stressed in our submission to the UNFCCC: “The challenge is to pursue economic development while simultaneously having to deal with the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.” It is, as we all know, easier said than done—especially since the contributions of many developing countries are linked to the provision of finance and other support.⁶

This is why this conference is a crucial, integral step in our efforts to achieve our respective INDCs and priority actions. Someone, to put it bluntly, has to pay the bill, and we have to find ways to pay the bill.

⁶ *Id.*

We have to find ways because the check is huge. The Fifth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that the costs of adaptation in developing countries could be between US\$70 billion and US\$100 billion per year covering the period between 2010 and 2050.⁷ These estimates are based on global scenario-based sectoral integrated assessment modeling, but the real figure may be much larger, as the IPCC notes that “there is compelling evidence pointing to important omissions and shortcomings in the data and methods.”⁸

Previous LEDS conferences have focused on what can and must be done to address the threats posed of climate change; in short, we know now what must be done, and know how we can do it well. The primary question this Forum seeks to answer know is “how do we fund these?” The more specific questions are: (1) How much do we actually need? (2) Where do we source funding? (3) How do we access financing? (4) How do

⁷ *The 2015 Adaptation Finance Gap Update, United Nations Environment Programme*

⁸ *Id.*

we tap the different sources of financing? (5) How do we properly mobilize these funds?

These are questions we need to address because the costs of adaptation are likely to grow with each passing decade. According to the UNEP, “there is likely to be a major adaptation finance gap, particularly after 2020, unless new and additional finance for adaptation becomes available. This conclusion is confirmed by the preliminary findings of the forthcoming 2016 Adaptation Finance Gap Report, and is supported by the information on adaptation costs and needs provided by countries in the adaptation components of their INDC.”⁹

Furthermore, the UNEP likewise says that national and sector-level studies show that adaptation costs in 2030 are likely to be in the range of US\$140-300 billion per annum—a far cry from the international public finance available for adaptation in

⁹ *Id.*

2014, pegged at around US\$25 billion.¹⁰ By 2050, total costs could be in the US\$280-500 billion range.¹¹

The figures are staggering and only highlight the need for us to begin addressing the financial costs of our cause, and we are hopeful that this Forum's many sessions will address what we believe are the four essential elements of climate change adaptation finance: knowledge, identification, access, and mobilization.

Knowledge pertains to accurately determining the scale of financing our countries require. *Identification* refers to determining the different fund sourcing available, whether it be the public sector, the private sector, or international finance institutions. *Access* refers to how our governments can tap these funds available. *Mobilization*, on the other hand, speaks to the best practices and methods applied in the use of these funds.

¹⁰ *Id.*

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As I said earlier, the financial resources needed by the world to avert a global catastrophe that could make our planet uninhabitable are staggering. But the costs of inadequate action are even greater; they are, in fact, incalculable. Humanity's future hangs in the balance, and it is our collective responsibility to convince our world's leaders that we will have to marshal the whole world's financial resources if we are to tip the scales in favor of the survival of the human race.

Thank you very much.