

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR)
SECRETARY MARIA ANTONIA YULO-LOYZAGA
December 14, 2023 [11:37 A.M. – 12:03 P.M.]

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome to our press briefing today, December 14.

At COP28 or the 28th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Dubai, UAE, the Philippines participated in multilateral decision-making forums on climate change. For the first time, there was a Philippine Pavilion where our country hosted bilateral and ministerial meetings, and over 30 panel discussions with topics ranging from just energy transition, climate finance, urbanization, representation of youth and persons with disabilities, health impacts and more.

The Philippine delegation was led by the DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and in keeping with the Marcos administration's thrust of putting climate change considerations in the center of government policies and programs, other Cabinet members also participated in COP28. One of the most significant outcomes of COP28 was the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund which was announced on the first day; it's intended to provide financial assistance to countries coping with loss and damage caused by climate change beyond adaptation and mitigation.

And here to tell us more about the loss and damage fund and other programs is DENR Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga. Good morning, Secretary Loyzaga.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Good morning, Daphne, and good morning po sa inyong lahat. Thank you very much for this opportunity to share what has happened at COP28.

Maybe just to lead-in to the first topic which is the Loss and Damage Fund, the Loss and Damage Fund was really established after a long history of negotiations while the eight years leading up to the establishing is the formal number of years which is used reference for the evolution of this concept. Really in the 1990's, we had small islands already saying that they will be suffering from irrecoverable losses 'no – principally because of the loss of land area because of sea level rise and other types of impacts from climate change.

So, our history, the Philippines... we have been at the forefront of the negotiations for the Loss and Damage Fund all the way back from the time of the first CCC Commissioner Lucille Sering to [Naderev] 'Yeb' Saño, post-Yolanda – this has been a long time coming and it is a recognition by developed countries as well as other developing countries that indeed there are losses that are too great to bear from ordinary types of funding that are being provided for adaptation and mitigation.

So, the Loss and Damage Fund was established on the first day of the COP by a long series of consultations by what they call the Transitory Commission. And that fund was initially expected to raise only an initial about 200 million. We are, as of closing, I understand over 700 million in

terms of pledges to the Loss and Damage Fund. Some of which, of course, come from the developed countries such as Germany, but also the UAE and the UK and other countries as well.

So, that Loss and Damage Fund will hopefully be made operational as soon as possible and we hope that we will be able to access it with some greater efficiency than the other funds that are available.

The other announcement we have to make and to share is through the initiation of our President, President Marcos, in terms of the interest of the Philippines to actually: Number one, have a seat on the board of this fund so that we can continue to actually be the voice of developing countries that are vulnerable to climate change; and secondly, to host the board of the fund which will be in charge of making those decisions about the fund's administration.

We are very fortunate and we are very lucky through the hard work, of course, and the vision of the President, we have garnered a seat on the board of the Loss and Damage Fund. There will be term sharing; however for the three terms, we will have two years – the first year which is inaugural year, 2024 and 2026. In the year 2025, we will have a term share with Pakistan who is the other Asia-Pacific country that is also part of the board. So, out of the three years, the Philippines will be sitting two years as full members and one year as an alternate member.

Our next job, of course, is to work with the rest of the board to see how we can have a proper host for the board itself. And as you may expect, it comes to the point that we would take a vote – the Philippines may have to recuse itself from the vote because we are in fact vying for the hosting of that board.

So, aside from the hosting of the board and the establishing of the fund, there were great strides I think in recognizing the value of science in everything that we need to do in terms of finance and implementation. There are also recognitions that we could not have come to this point without a principle of equity and multilateralism and solidarity with those that are in fact in the same position as ourselves, but also understanding where we are going in terms of limitations, in terms of the finance.

As far as the Philippines is concerned, we are very gratified to have seen the entry of biodiversity, the entry of oceans as well in terms of the topics but we still have to do a lot of work in terms of advancing what they call the principal of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capacities which has to do with the equity in terms of who should bear the responsibility for meeting the needs of developing countries that are vulnerable already to climate change.

So, perhaps I'll leave it at that, Daph, for questions.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: That's great news, certainly worth the wait for this press conference. Any questions from Malacañang Press Corps? Racquel Bayan, Radyo Pilipinas...

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, what's the importance po ng pagho-host natin o iyong pagiging board natin, ng Pilipinas? Mas magbi-benefit po ba tayo kaysa member lang po tayo?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: The main gain for us in terms of being the host to the board and being on the board itself is to [inaudible] represent the vulnerable countries in the world that are developing and need to have special consideration given to these countries in order for us to, in fact, drive what should be the appropriate financing available for each of us. Each of the countries

have unique needs and therefore, climate vulnerable developing countries especially island and archipelagic countries like our own need to be able to articulate our needs and have an influenced climate policy in this way.

So, being at the forefront and as a member of the board, and also hopefully hosting the board here in our country, we can remain in the spotlight for climate vulnerable countries that are in the developing world that need to have this kind of attention in terms of what they need to meet in terms of adaptation, mitigation; but beyond that, in terms of loss and damage, what needs to be given to these countries in order to thrive and to survive the impacts of climate change.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: And then, ma'am, you mentioned po kanina sa loss and damage, iyong target natin is 200 million originally pero 700 million na po iyong pledge?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: No, clarification lang po 'no. Two hundred million was an expectation of the capitalization of the fund, hindi po natin target iyon 'no. Ang nangyari po is, baka naman mari-reach iyong 200 million – hindi lang po tayo ang nag-expect noon, that was the general 'no. Pero ngayon, what has happened is it went above what was being expected. So ngayon, nasa 726 million na po ang capitalization ng fund. Of course, these are still pledges because there needs to be a receptacle for the funds 'no. So, maybe I should address that now.

As part of the agreement 'no on the establishing of the fund, there had to be an institution that in transition would hold these funds once they are made ready. As part of that agreement, there was a proposal for the World Bank to actually host the fund – separate and distinct from the other funds that the World Bank has given by their members for the different programs that the World Bank has.

So, in other words, tagasalo lang po temporarily iyong World Bank until we can come up with the appropriate structure and organization arrangements for the administration of this fund.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: And then, ma'am, iyong 726 million pledges, is that enough na po?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Very far from enough, very far from enough po 'cause there are countries for example that are already losing their land area, that have already started to look for land in other countries para malipatan na po ng mga populations nila. So as you can see, there many needs that cannot be met by ordinary types of funding. Other considerations, species loss, biodiversity loss that is irrecoverable – these are some of the areas wherein talaga pong loss and damage na talaga po iyon hindi puwedeng adaptation, hindi na puwedeng mitigation.

If I may just add one particular point, Daph, 'no. Miss Daphne mentioned earlier that there was a pavilion, I just want to say that the pavilion became the stage for what we are calling the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach towards our climate change challenges.

So just a random, very quickly, we had the Secretaries of the DOF, the DOH, the DOST, the DILG, we had SAP Anton Lagdameo there as well, we had members of the DFA certainly, we also had members of Congress, the Climate Change Committee in particular, and some of the more vulnerable provinces such as Albay, Governor Lagman was there and of course we had other mayors such as Mayor Coro of Siargao also attending and participating in this events. Other than that we had private sector, we had CSOs holding their events also at the pavilion.

So, this was an opportunity for us to really exemplify what we are calling whole-of-government approach and whole-of-society as well towards our climate change challenges.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Eden Santos, Net 25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Good morning po, Sec.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Good morning po.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Sec, papaano po gagamitin iyong fund na ito at makakatanggap po ba ang Pilipinas out from that fund? Iyon pong sa biodiversity, sabi ninyo nasira na iyong ating area noong mga marine, ano po – papaano po iyon muling bubuhayin, maibabalik o mayroon bang ibang option na puwedeng gawin doon sa lugar na nasira na po na iyon?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Opo. Thank you for that, Eden. So, the rules of the fund – accessibility kung kailan, kung magkano, kung sino po ang magkakaroon ng pagkakataon to actually apply for the fund are going to be established now na mayroon na siyang board. That's why the board is very important. The Philippines' seat on the board will give us an opportunity to influence also this kind of capture 'no, sino ba ang puwedeng talagang mag-apply and how fast we can access this fund.

As I said earlier, may mga ecosystems that are already degraded, those that can be assessed for recovery can of course be made part even of the adaptation fund – so, iba pa iyong fund na puwede doon 'no. But those for example that already shows sea level rise that is related to land loss – marami pong ganiyan 'no; like small island developing states – these are countries like Palau, possibly Maldives 'no – kapag nawala po iyong land area nila ay wala na pong pupuntahan iyong mga tao, 'di ba? So, these are some of the more acute examples kung sino po ang magiging accessible, kung kanino po magiging accessible iyong fund na iyon.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Pia Gutierrez, ABS-CBN.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Ma'am, natanong na rin po ni Eden iyong concern ko pero sa Philippines po, ano iyong mga priorities na ipu-push po natin in the board pagdating po doon sa utilization ng funds?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: So, sa atin po and again we are representatives here of the climate vulnerable 'no po. So, we need to understand their particular situations, again – loss of land area, total destruction of biodiversity and of course the ecosystems that support them; these are species loss, for example threat of extinction – these are areas wherein the Philippines is also particularly vulnerable and therefore we will be pushing for this type of sensitivities to be reflected in the guidelines of the board. For us po at this point, we are very conscious about migration and how some countries are needing in fact to manage to retreat away from the sea but also to retreat to other countries wherein they might have to find new places to live. So, these are areas which are among our priorities for the Philippines.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: May I add? There was a question about, is 700 million enough for the fund and the Secretary said, not. But just to give you some background here – the COP UN has other funds as well – for energy, it's 6.8 billion; financing, 61.8 billion; lives and livelihood, 8.7 billion; green cities fund is 3.5 billion. So, for loss and damage which is just a new fund, they are at 792 million. Just for context.

Again, you have the mic. Go ahead, Pia.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Follow up lang po, what about doon sa compensation naman po doon sa mga members of sectors or sectors of population affected by climate change – is that something that the Philippines will be pushing for as well as far as the utilization of the fund is concerned?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Yes po. So, the Loss and Damage Fund is a fund that can be tapped beyond adaptation – kasasabi lang ni Miss Daphne ‘no. There are other funds that are available. So, for those sectors that need to adapt to climate change there is an adaptation fund for energy that has to transition away from fossil fuels; there are funds for mitigation, energy transition in particular. So, there are different streams na puwede pong i-avail ng different countries depending on their particular needs.

There are already funding mechanisms established, iyong Green Climate Fund. The Green Climate fund is already delivering funds to the Philippines for certain projects – one example, PAGASA’s impact-based early warning system – they have received funding from the Green Climate Fund. Here in the Philippines you can avail directly through the DBP and the LandBank – so, mayroong pag-release ng fund. Those types of funds have already a structure at which you can avail and release, can be made through those funding particular institutions.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Nestor Corrales, PDI.

NESTOR CORRALES/PDI: Secretary, good morning.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Good morning.

NESTOR CORRALES/PDI: So, how soon will the Philippines and other nations affected by the impact of climate change be able to access these funds?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: You’re talking about loss and damage?

NESTOR CORRALES/PDI: Yes.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: So, as soon as the board is organized we are waiting and hopefully that will be done in very short order. Kaa-announce lang po, so it’s officially on the website. When the board organizes, there will be a period wherein the guidelines and the particular operationalization will take place. Hopefully, we will know whether the World Bank will accept their role kasi po may conditions nga po iyan, they cannot for example apply their own rules to the fund – it has to be the rules that will be based on the UNFCCC’s end-agreements of the board.

So, we hope within 2024 there will be some progress in terms of the organization and the guidelines that will be made available to those that need to access the fund. The idea is there must be urgency, there must country-driven requirements met, hindi po lang iyong nakikita po ng iba. Each country should be able to identify what its specific needs are and avail of those resources according to their needs.

NESTOR CORRALES/PDI: Just a follow up, Secretary. There were concerns from environment groups that the contribution or fund raising mechanism for the Loss and Damage Fund must be mandatory and not voluntary. What is the Philippines take on this?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Well, we have to work with what is on the table. So, what was put on the agenda was the word ‘voluntary’, there were of course these concerns. So, what is called for now and I believe this is something that is not just the Philippines’ role but all the countries that are climate vulnerable is they must continue the pressure, we must continue the pressure to articulate. Again, this has to do with equity. This has to do with what we’re calling the common but differentiated responsibility and respective capacities. So, these are principles that we continued to articulate even until our final statement.

So kung sino po dapat ang mag bigay, dapat po silang magbigay. That’s our position.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Eden.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Sec., nabanggit po ninyo kanina na kabilang doon sa hinihintay nating guidelines ay iyong “migration, retreat away from the sea or retreat to other country”, ibig po bang sabihin noon, ang Pilipinas ay magiging open sa mga gustong mag-migrate dito kung sila ay naapektuhan nga nitong mga nabanggit ninyo o kunwari nawala na iyong land nila, naging tubig na, puwede po silang magpunta dito sa Pilipinas to migrate?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Eden, medyo beyond my pay grade po iyan, medyo foreign policy po iyan and of course ang national policy—but maybe just to say that the Philippines has historically been, of course in support of those in need in terms of human mobility and migration during crisis. So, alam naman po ninyo, we have had a history of that. So, I am not able to comment on that directly, pero medyo open naman tayo sa ganiyan in terms of our own history.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: So, ibig sabihin po if in case na okay naman po doon sa ating policy from DFA, puwede po nating i-apply doon sa—saan ba, sa Loss and Damage Fund para ma-accommodate natin iyong mga magma-migrate dito?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Hindi po tayo ang mag-a-apply, iyong nangangailangan po ang kailangang mag-apply. But let me just also cite and thank you to Miss Daphne for this reminder. During the COP, we were called to the global climate mobility pavilion. Ito po ay isang pavilion together with the International Office for Migration (IOM) recognizes achievements in terms of migration and how we are handling human mobility as a whole. So, si President Marcos actually received an award for his role in climate mobility, in human mobility in particular together po sila ng president of Sudan. So, we were together with the Minister of Environment of Sudan as well to receive these awards. So, dala-dala po namin iyong award for the President.

MAYRINA/GMA7: Secretary, as the environment secretary, will you be representing the Philippines on the board?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: No.

MAYRINA/GMA7: Or will we nominate somebody else?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: We have nominated someone and that name has already been submitted and that is former Undersecretary Mark Joven of the DoF—formerly po with DoF.

MAYRINA/GMA7: And when you say host the board, please tell us how that works.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: So, the hosting of the board will actually include the granting of certain privileges and immunities similar to what we have granted to the ADB for example or the WHO regional office and other UN offices here. So that involves the legal process of actually gratifying their status and then affording them with those privileges and immunities.

CAHILES/CNN: Good morning, Ma'am, just also a clarification. How many countries will sit on the board?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: As of now, we have 23. I will have to verify whether it will be 26 finally, equally divided more or less among the developed and developing countries. So, the Philippines' seat was part of the group of nominees for the Asia-Pacific Group of the G-77.

CAHILES/CNN: Will there be a chairman for this board? Are you going to elect it?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Organizationally, these will all happen now po, so we will know the details in a very short order po.

CAHILES/CNN: Potentially, we could be the chair of the board if we are..?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Potentially, everyone could be the chair of the board. Thank you.

HALILI/TV5: Just a quick clarification. You mentioned that there will be term-sharing between the Philippines and Pakistan. Why is that, ma'am?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Yes, because we had three seats afforded to the Asia-Pacific group. But there were actually more than three that applied. So in this case, there are several full alternates and there are several that are full members. So, nagpapalitan lang po in terms of the seats. So for us, we will have a full membership on 2024 and a full membership on 2026, so magpapalitan po with Pakistan. The other countries in the Asia-Pacific group na kasali po and those names that were submitted were KSA, UAE, Iran, Kazakhstan and of course, Pakistan and ourselves.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: May I take this time to veer away from the Loss and Damage Fund? I think we have covered that enough and congratulations again, of course, Secretary Loyzaga. But let's clarify some news from last week about Canada giving the Philippines 5.2 billion dollars – that is wrong. Actually in 2021, Canada increased its climate financing globally from 2.6 billion dollars to 5.3 billion Canadian dollars. That is to fund their global climate financing program of which the Philippines has a program under DoF, Canada and UNDP. So, I just want to clarify that the fund is not all for the Philippines, it's a global fund. Thank you.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Perhaps, if I can just add to that, Daph. So, hindi lang po ang Canada of course that are giving globally. For us, in the Philippines we have had traditionally, aside from Canada, we have had funding bilaterally, of course from the US, from Japan, from the UK and Australia now, and there are other countries as well that are working with us in order to meet shared goals po in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, well thank you very much. Thank you so much, Malacañang Press Corps and thank you again, Secretary Loyzaga. Magandang tanghali sa inyo lahat. Thank you.

##

