

**Plenary III**  
**Innovating a Climate-Friendly World –**  
**The Role of Technology and its Dissemination**

by

**Honorable Angelo T. Reyes**  
Secretary, Department of Energy , Philippines  
and  
Chairman, Presidential Task Force on Climate Change

*(UN High-Level Meeting on Climate Change, 24 September 2007 )*

MR. CHAIRMAN , AS THIS HIGH LEVEL MEETING WILL BE MY FIRST TIME TO SPEAK BEFORE A GATHERING AT THE UNITED NATIONS, ALLOW ME TO THANK OUR UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL, H.E. BAN KI-MOON, FOR PROVIDING THE LEADERSHIP AND INSPIRATION FOR THIS GLOBAL CALL FOR ACTION ON THIS MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

LET ME ALSO STATE THAT MY PRESENCE HERE TODAY NOT ONLY SERVES TO HIGHLIGHT THE PRIORITY THE PHILIPPINES PLACES ON DOMESTIC ACTION TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COMMON CAUSE, BUT ALSO TO BENEFIT FROM THIS SHARING OF THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES, AND HOPEFULLY, CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR A WAY FORWARD WHEN WE MEET AGAIN IN BALI.

**CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW IN THE PHILIPPINES**

WE ARE ALL AWARE OF THE HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS AND MILESTONES IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WITHIN THE UN CONTEXT. THE PHILIPPINES, HAS PLAYED AN ACTIVE PART IN THIS PROCESS, SIGNING ON TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC), AND THE SUBSEQUENT KYOTO PROTOCOL - AND ALTHOUGH THE PHILIPPINES' GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION LEVELS MAY BE INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED TO THOSE OF OTHER COUNTRIES, WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO DOING OUR PART IN HELPING MITIGATE - AND ADAPTING TO -THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

THE PHILIPPINES BEING AN ARCHIPELAGO CHARACTERIZED BY LARGE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN WITH NARROW PLAINS AND INTERIOR VALLEYS , IS HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

BEING ON THE PACIFIC RIM, THE COUNTRY IS NO STRANGER TO NATURAL HAZARDS LIKE TROPICAL CYCLONES, FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS. THE UNDP'S 2004 GLOBAL REPORT ON DISASTERS RANKED THE COUNTRY HIGHEST IN TERMS OF TROPICAL CYCLONE OCCURRENCE AND RESULTANT DEATHS, AND THIRD IN TERMS OF PEOPLE EXPOSED TO SUCH EVENTS ANNUALLY.

FOR OTHER ECOSYSTEMS LIKE THE COUNTRY'S COASTAL AREAS, INITIAL STUDIES INDICATE THAT EXISTING COASTAL PROBLEMS LIKE FLOODING AND INUNDATION MAY INCREASE DUE TO ACCELERATED SEA LEVEL RISE AND INCREASING FREQUENCY OF CYCLONES AND COASTAL STORMS RESULTING FROM CLIMATE CHANGE.

MEANWHILE, OUR WATERSHEDS, WHICH CONTAIN THE COUNTRY'S FORESTS AND A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF ITS BIODIVERSITY ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE. DOWNSTREAM EFFECTS INCLUDE IMPACT ON ABOUT 1.5 MILLION SQ. KMS. OF AGRICULTURAL LAND GETTING IRRIGATION WATER FROM THESE WATERSHEDS. A THIRD OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN THE UPLANDS OF THESE WATERSHEDS AND DEPENDING ON THEM FOR SUSTENANCE, ALSO STAND TO BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED.

THE PHILIPPINES ' WETLANDS COVERING APPROXIMATELY 14,100 SQ. KMS. AND COMPRISING ABOUT 22 LAKES, 8 FRESHWATER SWAMPS AND MARSHES, AND 61 COASTAL WETLANDS WILL ALSO BE AFFECTED.

GIVEN THESE DIRECT AND ADVERSE MANIFESTATIONS, THE PHILIPPINES MUST FIRST EXERT EQUAL EFFORT AND EMPHASIS ON BOTH MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION, AS THESE TWO ACTIONS ARE KEY COMPONENTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY AND HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE THE PHILIPPINES , MITIGATION MAY BE VIEWED AS A LONGER RANGE CHALLENGE, WHILE ADAPTATION IS MORE OF AN IMMEDIATE CONCERN. BOTH AREAS, HOWEVER, REQUIRE WIDESPREAD INFORMATION DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES TO IMPRESS ACROSS ALL SECTORS IN THE COUNTRY THE URGENT AND IMPORTANT NEED TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE.

INVOLVEMENT BY CONCERNED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS, THE ACADEME, PEOPLES' ORGANIZATION, NGOs AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES REACH THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF EVERY FILIPINO AND POSITIVELY CHANGES THEIR WAY OF LIFE.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING CLOSELY, I HAVE PROBABLY DESCRIBED A COMMON EXPERIENCE IN MANY OF YOUR OWN COUNTRIES. IT IS THIS SAME COMMONALITY THAT MUST BIND ALL STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER IN TAKING UNITED AND CONCERTED EFFORTS TO SEEK SOLUTIONS.

### **TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR THE WAY FORWARD**

YET MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION MEASURES ARE MERELY DEFENSIVE STEPS IN THIS BATTLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. I FORESEE THAT JUST AS HUMAN ACTIVITY IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF OUR AILING CLIMATE, IT WILL BE HUMAN CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION THAT CAN HELP EASE OUR BURDENS.

WITH ACCESS TO THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN KEY AREAS LIKE ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION, WE CAN CERTAINLY MAKE GREATER STRIDES IN SHARING THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

FOR INSTANCE, THE PHILIPPINES IS ALREADY TAPPING RENEWABLE ENERGY, EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FUELS, DEVELOPING GEOHAZARD MAPS, AND UNDERTAKING AGGRESSIVE REFORESTATION OF DENUDED AREAS. WE ARE ALSO ENHANCING HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITIES IN AREAS LIKE WEATHER FORECASTING, TREATMENT OF TROPICAL DISEASES, AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY, TO NAME A FEW.

IN THE FIELD OF RENEWABLE ENERGY, THE PHILIPPINES REMAINS AMONG THE MOST SIGNIFICANT USERS OF GEOTHERMAL POWER. BUT, AS A TROPICAL ARCHIPELAGO WITH A COMBINED COASTLINE TWICE THAT OF THE UNITED STATES, OUR NATION HAS BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE IN TERMS OF HARNESSING THE TREMENDOUS ENERGY POTENTIAL OF SOLAR HEAT, OCEAN WAVES AND MONSOON WINDS.

IN ALL THESE INSTANCES, THE GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE OF MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED COUNTRIES, AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, ACCESS TO FINANCING TO UNDERTAKE THESE 'GREEN' ALTERNATIVES, REQUIRES GREATER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

THE PHILIPPINES IS COMMITTED TO PURSUING ITS CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM CONSISTENT WITH THE GLOBAL PRINCIPLE THAT RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO PROVIDE FOR AN EXPANDED, EFFECTIVE AND FULLY FUNCTIONING MARKET MECHANISM FOR CARBON TRADING GIVEN DIVERSE APPROACHES ON DOMESTIC ACTIONS ADOPTED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBER COUNTRIES IN ACCORDANCE TO THE UNFCCC PRINCIPLE OF "**COMMON BUT DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSIBILITIES.**"

### **SHARING THE TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

WE SHOULD ALSO STRESS THAT IN THIS AREA OF TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE, THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITIES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR MUST BE TAPPED BY OUR GOVERNMENTS.

THE IDEAL SCENARIO FOR THE ENERGY SECTOR WOULD BE FOR A REPLICATION OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION THAT CHANGED THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE AROUND THE WORLD.

IN A SPAN OF LESS THAN 20 YEARS, WITH TECHNOLOGY VENDORS INVESTING IN SUSTAINED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D), A CONVERGENCE OF INNOVATIONS IN WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND FIBER OPTICS HAS SWEEPED AWAY OLD TELECOM MONOPOLIES, SENT INTERNATIONAL PHONE RATES CRASHING, AND MADE ALL OF US ACCESSIBLE VIRTUALLY ANYWHERE ON THE PLANET. THE MARKET CONTINUES TO GROW EXPONENTIALLY AND HAS ALLOWED THE INDUSTRY TO QUICKLY ACHIEVE ECONOMIES OF SCALE.

TODAY, MANY OF US WOULD PROBABLY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RECONSTRUCT WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE WITHOUT MOBILE PHONES. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW MUCH RICHER OUR QUALITY OF LIFE WOULD BE IF CLEANER, MORE AFFORDABLE ENERGY CAN BE JUST AS ACCESSIBLE?

SIMILARLY, RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES ARE NOT YET AS COST-EFFICIENT AS TRADITIONAL POWER PLANTS. BUT, IN TIME, ONE VENDOR WILL MAKE A BREAKTHROUGH THAT WOULD OPEN THE FLOODGATES TO A RAFT OF FRESH INNOVATIONS BUILDING ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER.

THE URGENCY OF COBBLING A GLOBAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE GIVES US OPTIMISM THAT R&D IN ENERGY AND RELATED FIELDS SHOULD TAKE ON A MORE COLLABORATIVE—AND LESS PROPRIETARY—CHARACTER. AFTER ALL, THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR EACH OF US TO THINK AS COMPETING STATES BUT AS CO-STEWARDS OF A SHARED AND ENDANGERED PLANET.

WHETHER WE REPRESENT DEVELOPED OR DEVELOPING NATIONS, WE ALL BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF IMPARTING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGY TO MOVE FURTHER ALONG THE PATH OF HUMAN PROGRESS, WHILE MITIGATING—OR PERHAPS EVEN REVERSING—CLIMATE CHANGE.

FINALLY, MR. CHAIRMAN , IN THE INTEREST OF LEARNING AS MUCH AS WE CAN FROM EACH OTHER, LET ME END MY INTERVENTION HERE AND INFORM YOU THAT A MORE COMPLETE VERSION OF MY STATEMENT HAS BEEN CIRCULATED. MAY I REQUEST THAT THIS SUBMISSION BE THE DOCUMENT OF RECORD IN ORDER TO PRESENT A CLEARER PICTURE OF HOW THE PHILIPPINES IS RESPONDING TO THIS CALL FOR ACTION.

THANK YOU