**Remarks of NFA Administrator Zenen Renan B. Dalisay**

**Panel Discussion on Human Rights and Climate Change**

**1500-1800H, Friday, 6 March 2015, Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to join you in this High-Level Panel on Human Rights and Climate Change to share with you the experiences of the Philippines in addressing its climate change issues and to give a human face, albeit with numbers, to the millions of my countrymen affected by this global threat's tragic impact.

To put everything in context, climate change in Asia and the Pacific means seeing a significant rise in sea-levels and high water temperature affecting our marine ecosystems, extreme heat waves and large areas of land plagued by drought, but followed a few months later by extremely heavy precipitation and tropical cyclones of such increasing intensity and frequency.

*Background on tropical cyclones that have hit the Philippines*

The world witnessed how super Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest ever typhoon to hit land, struck the Philippines in 2013 and decimated cities in its wake. The Filipino people are a resilient lot that contend with 20 to 25 typhoons on a yearly basis; but the ferocity with which typhoons have hit my country in the past five years have simply been staggering.

Haiyan was the international codename for this super typhoon, but my countrymen know it by its more dreadful local designation: Yolanda. Typhoon Yolanda produced a storm surge with winds and waves so violent entire coastal villages were flattened. It washed huge steel ships ashore as if they were made of paper. It left a path of death and destruction rarely seen even in the Philippines, and its impact is felt to this day––by the land it battered, and by the thousands of Filipinos who lost sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, and friends to nature’s unforgiving, unsentimental fury.

Yolanda was just one of the staggeringly powerful storms to pummel my country in recent years. Luzon, the biggest land mass in the north of the country, produces the most number of rice, but saw its ricefields completely inundated by floods when Typhoon Parma, locally known as Pepeng, stayed inland for almost a week in October 2009. On the other hand, Mindanao in the south––highly regarded as our country's food basket as pineapple, banana, and coconut plantations thrive in its stable and typhoon-free weather––saw its major cities ravaged by typhoon Bopha (Pablo) in December 2012.

Our capital has not been spared. Typhoon Ketsana (Ondoy) in Sept 2009 saw the streets of Metro Manila turn into riverswhile Typhoon Rammasun (Glenda) in 2014 uprooted century-old trees in Manila. The threat of these supertyphoons to Filipino lives, on an annual basis, cannot be understated.

*Adverse impact of climate change on States’ efforts to progressively realize* *the right to food* *and related polices, lessons learned and good practices*

The Philippines learned much after Typhoon Haiyan and stepped up efforts in terms of preparing for typhoons. This can be seen from how it dealt with typhoon Rammasun in 2014, which saw a significant decrease in terms of casualties. However, the country's agriculture suffered its worst blow in five years with 33.8 billion pesos in losses.

The figures underscore the sad truth: that poor communities, especially those living in coastal, agricultural and high-risk urban areas, remain most vulnerable given their disproportionate dependency on climate-sensitive resources for their livelihood and food. Every year, these typhoons hamper the Filipino people's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts while government agencies scramble to utilize limited resources for disaster response efforts, creating a vicious cycle that hampers the country's growth and development.

*Visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to the Philippines*

The Philippines has just hosted the first country visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Ms. Hilal Elver, on 20-27 February 2015. In her preliminary findings, Ms. Elver acknowledged that the country, due to its location, climate and topography, has been and will continue to be vulnerable to extreme weather events.

The UNSR's visit has given the Philippine Government an opportunity to discuss and review its existing policies and programs. Ms. Elver's expertise in climate change issues has also highlighted the close relation of the government's efforts to address climate change with the challenges that it continues to encounter for the full realization of the Filipino public's right to food.

*Impact of Climate Change on Philippine Agriculture and Fisheries*

Let me underscore the importance of the Philippine agriculture and fisheries sector. It accounts for 10% of the country’s GDP (2013) and 31% of national labor employment. The effects of climate change and extreme weather events in recent years have exacerbated its traditional hazards and risks, namely: drought and typhoons.

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) report in 2010 observed that if the current climate change trend persists, the yields of irrigated crops will decrease significantly by 14% to 20% by the year 2050, resulting to an increase of 29% to 37% in prices. Likewise, increasing temperatures is expected to cause the high incidence of heat stress on livestock affecting productivity as well as the transmission of diseases due to the faster growth of pathogens, among others.

Climate change also directly affects rice harvest and production. Temperatures beyond critical thresholds lead to reduced crop growth duration, resulting in lower yield and lesser quality of grain. Floods caused by typhoons destroy harvests and infuse unneeded salinity to the crop.

I cannot overstate how the damage to agriculture and food production caused by climate change negatively impacts food security and the universal human right to food and livelihood in our country. When crops are destroyed, Filipino farmers have nothing to sell. When limited or zero quantities of agricultural produce reaches our markets, consumers have little of nothing to buy, and prices spike. Our government is forced to import and grant more financial assistance and subsidies, thereby depleting needed funds for rehabilitation.

Excellencies, the facts bear me out: climate change diminishes our right to adequate food and nourishment, which is explicitly mentioned in various international human rights conventions. Climate change starves my countrymen. Climate change destroys our land. Climate change takes Filipino lives.

*Ways Forward and best practices to promote and protect human rights in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights*

Given the country's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and experience on extreme weather events, the Philippine Government has taken considerable measures to address the growing threats to humans and adverse effects to the environment of climate change. Policy makers enacted laws and put in place a comprehensive set of policies, programs and institutions to help identify strategies and actions towards mitigation of and adaptation to global climate change.

The Philippine Government enacted the Climate Change Act in 2009, which established the Climate Change Commission (CCC) tasked to coordinate and guide all policies related to climate change. The Philippine Climate Change Commission, through the participation of multi-stake holders, formulated the National Climate Change Action Plan for 2011-2028.

The Plan identifies **capacity building** as one of the strategic priorities to address the issues of climate change. The Plan prioritizes the following strategic directions for the period 2011 to 2028 as a response to the current situation and projected impact of climate change:

1. food security;
2. water sufficiency;
3. ecosystem and environmental stability;
4. human security;
5. climate-smart industries and services;
6. sustainable energy; and
7. capacity development

The Philippines has also embarked on a number of assisted climate change adaptation programmes and projects, comprising of the following:

1. Millennium Development Goals Fund 1656: Strengthening the Philippines Institutional Capacity to Adapt to Climate Change with funding support from the Government of Spain;
2. The Philippine Climate Change Adaptation Project, which aims to develop the resiliency and test adaptation strategies that will, in turn, develop the resiliency of farms and natural resource management to the effects of climate change, with funding support from the Global Environmental Facility(GEF) through the World Bank; and
3. The Adaptation to Climate Change and Conservation of Biodiversity Project and the National Framework Strategy on Climate Change, which are envisioned to develop the adaptation capacity of communities, both with funding support from the GTZ or the German Technological Cooperation Agency.

*Department of Agriculture's Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative (AMIA)*

To address the two core issues of adaptation & mitigation, the Philippines’ Department of Agriculture launched the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) in 2013 to complement the effort to achieve agricultural development, i.e., food security, poverty alleviation, sustainable development and competitiveness.

The AMIA serves as a mechanism that allows all the offices, bureaus, agencies and corporations under the Department of Agriculture to work together to build resilient, productive livelihoods and communities through multi-sector partnerships with national and local governments, private sector, and civil society. It facilitates policy coherence and inter-departmental coordination.

*AMIA involves 7 system-wide Programs, namely:*

1. Mainstreaming AMIA involves the changing of systems, adjusting programs and projects and capacitating people to adequately address climate change. This includes:

* Planning based on Integrated Climate Change risks and hazard maps;
* Adjusting development programs/projects and building capacity of people to adequately address climate change risks in coordination with relevant government agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and technology (DOST), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), National Disaster Risk reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC);
* Conduct of studies to develop more climate change -responsive policies and programs on research & development, extension and regulations;
* Development of new designs and standards for climate change-resilient agriculture and fishery infrastructure;
* Establishment of protocols to better prepare for imminent natural disasters; and
* Facilitating large-scale implementation of adaptation measures.

1. Climate information system is exemplified by better and timely advisories and reliable weather data for the agriculture and fishery sectors to reduce risks from weather based disasters.

The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) completed the installation and updating of 153 Automated Weather Stations (AWS) developed by our Advanced Science and Technology Institute in 2014. This shall deliver timely weather-based advisories, including what and when to plant and what cultural management practices to use. These are situated in key production areas for agriculture. The generated data in this AWS are more specific in agriculture as compared to the data generated by AWS installed in built-up areas (airport, schools, and municipal halls). This will also improve the precision of agricultural data to be analyzed and translated into decision-support tools.

1. Philippine Adaptation and Mitigation Knowledge Toolbox inventories, generates and disseminates adaptive tools, technologies and practices, which can be readily used through the extension services of the country to promote climate change resiliency. Examples of established adaptation technologies comprise of:

* Green Super Rice (GSR) & other varieties tolerant to unfavorable conditions like drought, excessive, prolonged or untimely flooding, salinity;
* resilient strain of chicken;
* water harvesting/management systems;
* soil conservation systems;
* Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority (FPA)- registered inoculants;
* alternate wet and drying in rice; and
* 30-day BPI monggo (mung bean) variety.

1. Climate-resilient agriculture infrastructure.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways and with Local Government Units (LGUs), will adopt hazard/risk- specific standards and specifications for agriculture infrastructure and facilities to withstand all weather conditions. The DA has started the construction of farm- to- market roads that are permanently surfaced and with proper drainage that are of better quality, such that these would withstand all weather conditions and will last much longer, and will not require road graveling.

1. Financing and risk transfer instruments on climate change.

Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation’s (PCIC) government premium subsidy covered 1,096,285 marginal farmers and fisherfolk listed in the Registry System for Basic Sector in Agriculture. Insurance coverage include palay, corn, high value crops, livestock, non-crop insurance, and fisheries.

1. Climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries regulation means an improved regulatory system to foster adaptation and climate change resiliency among stakeholders and implementers. New designs and standards for farm-to-market roads and irrigation systems will be developed in consultation with the DPWH and LGUs.
2. Climate-resilient agriculture extension system that will translate to improved timeliness, content and manner of delivery of agricultural information for better messaging.

The DA's Agriculture Training Institute (ATI), in partnership with other affiliate units or national government agencies such as the DAR, DENR, DOST, along with LGUs, State Colleges and Universities (SCUs), non-governmental organizations, and the private sector will provide climate change-resilient extension, education and training services, including:

* Training of Trainors on Climate Change
* Enhanced Climate Farmer Field Schools (ECFFS),
* Training on Greening Cities (Urban Gardening),
* Training on Waste Management and Water Conservation,
* Climate Change Preparedness and Adaptation Trainings,
* Disaster Risk Reduction Trainings, and Tree for Life, Food for Life Project.

These are but some of the initiatives taken by the Philippines Government to address the issue of climate change. Central in all of our efforts is aligning our climate change policies with a human rights dimension consistent not just with our international human rights commitments, but as a commitment to our people, especially the most vulnerable sectors, who have suffered the most from the impact of this global threat.

*Conclusion*

More than a year after Yolanda, we are still rebuilding because weather disturbances continue to make the repair and rehabilitation of affected areas challenging endeavors. We are encouraged, however, by the gestures of friends who have decided to act on the threats posed by climate change. Just last week, French President Francois Hollande visited the Philippines, and he went to some of the typhoon-struck areas and saw remnants of Yolanda’s heartbreaking level of destruction. Mr. Hollande has passionately argued about the message of environmental responsibility, and to this end he and President Benigno Aquino, Jr. signed the Manila Call to Action on Climate Change.

At the signing of the said document, President Aquino stressed this undeniable truth - when you fight Mother Nature, you cannot win. He said, to address climate change, we must not just deal with its after-effects, “but with its primordial causes.”

He added: “No longer can we be paralyzed by debates over the obligations of individual countries; all of us must do everything we can, in the quickest and most impactful way possible. The choice before us is clear. We can either overcome this problem together, or together reap the consequences of apathy.”

Excellencies, we are all victims of climate change. Climate change affects the human rights of all our nations’ constituents, regardless of color or status. We must be partners. We must work together. We must act on our own national and international obligations and responsibilities. Sympathy for the plight of the affected peoples and empathy for the struggle of nations that must contend with the effects of climate change must be accompanied by a serious commitment to act on the causes of this global threat and to implement State’s obligations based on historical responsibilities.

When Typhoon Haiyan struck, the international community rallied to the aid of the Filipino people. Our people felt your generosity and truly, you have helped save and rebuild the lives of many of my countrymen. Today, we ask you again to stand with us as we work to save our children and our children’s children from the devastation and loss of life wrought by the terrible consequences of a phenomenon that we all know we are capable of preventing.

Excellencies, we remember the victims of Typhoon Yolanda by speaking here. Now let us honor them by our collective decision to act as one community of nations. Friends, the time to act is now; the instruments we have are here. Real action must begin where rhetoric ends, and our roles must not end in five minute-speeches or whole day gatherings. Years from now, let future generations proclaim that our commitment to battle climate change and protect human rights was steadfast and true, and as high and clear as the towering Le Jet d’Eau.

Thank you very much.

TABLE I: Tropical Cyclones which hit the Philippines from 2009-2014

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Ketsana/**  **Ondoy (floods in Manila)**  **Sept 2009****[1](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1" \l "14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote1sym" \t "_blank)** | **Parma/**  **Pepeng**  **(Pangasinan)**  **Oct 2009**[**2**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote2sym) | **Washi/**  **Sendong 2011**[**3**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote3sym) | **Bopha/**  **Pablo**[**4**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote4sym)  **(Mindanao)**  **2012** | **Haiyan/**  **Yolanda**[**5**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote5sym)  **Nov 2013** | **Rammasun/**  **Glenda**[**6**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote6sym)  **2014** | **Hagupit/**  **Ruby**[**7**](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?pli=1#14bd43801b33a96e_sdfootnote7sym)  **Dec 2014** |
| **Dead** | 464 | 465 | 1,268 | 1,067 | 6,318 | 106 | 18 |
| **Injured** | 529 | 207 | 6,071 | 2,666 | 28,689 | 1250 | 916 |
| **Missing** | 37 | 47 | 181 | 834 | 1,061 | 5 | 0 |
| **Affected Population** | 993,224 families/  4,901,234 pax | 3,258 families/  14,892 pax | 131,618 families/ 698,882 persons | 711,682 families/  6,243,998 pax | 3,424,593 families/  16,078,181 pax | 1,024,251 families/ 4,653,716 individuals | 944,249 families/  4,149,484 pax |
| Displaced | 15,798 families/  70,124 pax | 3,258 families/  14,892 pax | 108,800 families/  575,533 pax | 226,497 families/  973,207 pax | 890,895 families/  4,095,280 pax | 661,805 families/ 2,994,054 pax. | 18,938 families/  100,264 pax |
| **Damages** | 11billion | 27.297B | 2,068,365,789 or 2.068B | 36.95B | 39,821,497,852.17 or 39.82 B |  | 5,090,265,426 or 5.090B |
| Infrastructure | 4.299B | 6.799B | 1,366,346, 647. | 7,565,044,810 | 19,559,379,136 | 4,260,041,506 | 1,435,804,523 |
| Schools | 1382 buildings damaged | 1,531 buildings |  |  |  | 305,471,169.  117 school divisions affected &  187 used as evacuation centers |  |
| Agriculture | 6.669B (203,477  has.) | **20.495B (428,034 has. flooded)** | 309,101,330 | **26,526,663,474** | **21,833,622,975** | **33,803,690,268** | **3,654,460,903** |
| Private Properties |  | .003B | 392,918,812 | 2,857,522,703 | Cross-Sectoral: 3,069,023,613.41 | 247,407,472.00 |  |
| Houses | 185,004 (930,082 total damage/  154,922 partial damage) | 61,869  (6,807 total damage/55,062 partial damage) | 51,144 (13,585 totally damaged and 37,559 partially damaged) | 216,817 (127,151 partialy damaged and 89,666 totally damaged) | 1,084,762 houses damaged (595,149 partially damaged and 489,613 totally damaged) | 633,680 (112,067 totally damaged and 521,613 partialy damaged) | 290,670 (42,466 totally damaged and 248,204 partially damaged) |
| **Total Cost of Assistance** | 161,265,502 | 209,567,818 | 182,738,154 | 258,832,-78. | 1,259,629,429 | 69,165,032.93 worth of relief goods and medicines | 248,608,782. |
| NDRRMC | 22,493,125 (24,750 rice sacks) | 21,170,000  (23,200 rice sacks | 4,480,000 | 3505706.93 | No data. | 11,420,000.00 |  |
| DSWD | 95,862,360 | 59,218,045 | 75,313,689. | 130,514,314 | 867,049,198 | 25,616,547.65 | 210,693,626. |
| DOH | No data | No data | 61,902,623 | 35573666.95 | 218,756,203 | 6,246,095.83 |  |
| LGUs | 25,169,867 | 71,370,735 | 7,919,702 | 68,893,088 |  | 21,295,299.40 | 33,472,988.86 |
| NGOs | 17,740,150 | 57,809,036 | 33,122,139 | 20,345,302 | 56,928,449 | 4,587,090.05 | 4,442,166.5 |