

PGMA creates task force on climate change

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Alarmed by the report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Administrative Order 171 creating a Presidential Task Force on Climate Change (PTFCC) that seeks to address and mitigate the impact of climate change in the country.

The PTFCC will be composed of Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes as chair, with the secretaries of the Departments of Energy (DOE), Science and Technology, Agriculture and the Interior and Local Government, and two representatives from the private sector/civil society as members.

Foremost of the PTFCC functions is to conduct rapid assessment on the impact of climate change to the Philippine setting, especially on the most vulnerable sectors/areas like water, agriculture, coastal areas, as well as on the terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

It will also ensure strict compliance to air emission standards and act with urgency to combat deforestation and environmental degradation as well as apprehend violators.

The IPCC report on climate change prepared by 2,500 experts from 150 countries revealed that the global temperature will continue to rise towards 2100, and in the short term, will rise by about 1.4-5.8 degrees Centigrade, leading to an increase in the sea level from 18 to 59 centimeters by 2100.

It indicated that the rise in temperatures had been "very likely" with 90 percent caused by human activity and due to increase in the release in the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride.

Being an archipelagic country located in the typhoon rings, the Philippines, according to the report, is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Truth of this are the recent high-intensity or three super typhoons that hit the country in 2006.

Signed by the President last Feb. 20, AO 171 will take effect 15 days after its publication in a national newspaper of general circulation.

The PTFCC's other functions are to :

- * Undertake/initiate strategic approaches and measures to prevent or reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Philippines, including fuel efficiency, energy conservation, use of renewable energy, waste management, etc.
- * Conduct a massive and comprehensive public information and awareness campaign nationwide to educate the public on the climate change situation and its adverse effects, and mobilize multisectoral actions on climate change.
- * Design concrete risk reduction and mitigation measures and adaptation responses, especially to address short-term vulnerabilities, on sectors and areas where climate change will have the greatest impact.
- * Collaborate with international partners at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels to support global effort to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions and institute mitigating and adaptive measures, especially for developing countries; and
- * Cause the integration and mainstreaming of climate risk management into the development policies, plans and programs of government.