

Greenpeace: Clean Production needed to rehabilitate Manila Bay

Manila, PHILIPPINES — Greenpeace is recommending that government pursue Clean Production, and not just tackle the most obvious problems, if it is sincere in its efforts to rehabilitate Manila Bay. Greenpeace reiterated that a large part of issues like solid waste and raw sewage will be addressed if root causes are dealt with.

“Manila Bay is only the end of the whole pipeline of pollution coming from upstream communities, factories, and other contributors. We need to make Clean Production, in both agriculture and in industry, the working framework for production. This means phasing out toxics in products and production systems, finding cleaner, benign substitutes, and establishing individual systems for returning products that have reached their end-of-life,” said Beau Bacongus, Greenpeace Southeast Asia Toxics Campaigner.

Greenpeace issued the statement following President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s announcement for heads of government agencies to comply with a Supreme Court (SC) ruling for a coordinated cleanup, restoration and preservation of Manila Bay. Ten of Arroyo’s cabinet officials face a motion of contempt of court for failing to submit progress reports, even 200 days after the ruling. The SC requires the reports every 90 days. Only the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR) and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) were able to submit their reports, and are thus not part of the 10.

“But the DENR should not be exempt from being made further accountable because pollution issues are a primary part of the DENR's mandate,” Bacongus points out. “What this case does is highlight the pollution of Manila Bay and the need to enforce environmental laws as well as change attitudes and habits when relating to our environment.”

According to a 2006 survey conducted by Greenpeace on Manila Bay discards, 76% of all the wastes were plastics (51% was plastic sando bags, 19% sachets and junkfood packaging, 5% styrofoam, 1% hard plastics). “Obviously, plastic is a major problem and policies should be set in place to ban plastics or make its use prohibitive,” Bacongus points out. The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003), in fact, requires the listing of non-environmentally acceptable packaging, which could have addressed part of this problem. But the DENR has been remiss in its duties, such as meeting the deadline for such provisions in RA 9003, which has come and gone.

Then there are also “invisible pollution sources” -- industrial and agrichemical toxics. “They are also a menace that should be named as they are mostly toxic and can prove to be a longer-lasting threat,” adds Bacongus.

Greenpeace is not discounting government efforts, but points out that more should be done than just identifying the more obvious problems. “Clearer policies on implementation would be more concrete evidence of Arroyo’s ‘commitment’ to the environment,” Bacongus said.

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