

GMA supports moves to reduce carbon emissions

By MARICHU VILLANUEVA

President Arroyo wants the Philippines to lead in the global campaign to help bring down greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 80 percent by the year 2050, without endangering the country's economic growth.

Mrs. Arroyo relayed her intention in a letter of instruction to Presidential Adviser on Global Warming and Climate Change Secretary Heherson Alvarez who is now in Poznan, Poland attending the 14th Session of the Conference of Parties on Climate Change.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita relayed Mrs. Arroyo's instruction to Alvarez by e-mail.

"The goal of reducing carbon and greenhouse gases by 50 percent may be too conservative in view of the latest findings by climatologists that climate change conditions are deteriorating faster than originally estimated. For this reason, the Philippine position should help galvanize the policy of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) toward an 80 percent cut," the President told Alvarez.

Alvarez heads the Philippine delegation to the ongoing UN-sponsored Framework on Climate Change Convention in Poland.

More than 180 world leaders, top scientists and environmental advocates converge for this meeting where participants get updates on compliance to the Kyoto Protocol.

As a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, which the Philippine Senate ratified in 2003, the country is committed to 50 percent reduction in carbon emission by 2050, subject to ratification by all member nations.

At present, the Kyoto Protocol only mandates five percent reduction by 2012. On the other hand, scientists from the IPCC are calling for a 50-percent to 80 percent reduction.

In a statement, Alvarez disclosed that Mrs. Arroyo has instructed his delegation to secure food security and help the Philippines adapt to severe calamities related to climate change as negotiations begin for a new "carbon-cutting treaty" ahead of the expiration of the Kyoto Protocol by 2012.

"Seek assistance on climate programs that will ensure, and security from flooding and other climate risks by developing local strategies relevant to highly vulnerable archipelagic and island countries like the Philippines," Mrs. Arroyo stated in the same letter to Alvarez's delegation.

The President made this pitch even as she declared before international participants in the Clinton Global Initiatives (CGI) Asia Meeting held last Dec. 1 in Hong Kong that the Philippines is "not a major contributor to climate change" resulting from heavy carbon emissions.

"We contribute less than one percent. But we do our part (in carbon-cutting)," she pointed out.

At the CGI Asia Meeting organized by former US President Bill Clinton in Hong Kong, Mrs. Arroyo was one of five panelists in the discussions about the need to balance economic growth while at the same time protecting the environment from carbon emissions and other industrial wastes.

Speaking about the Philippine experience, the President pointed out that while the country has no significant role in climate change, the carbon credit mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol is "very useful" as a source of financing programs to reduce industrial wastes and transform them into economic products.

"And if we talk about financing, because our needs are small compared to India, China, US, we find a carbon credit mechanism very useful and I hope it can be extended beyond the period of the Kyoto Protocol," Mrs. Arroyo explained.

For his part, Mr. Clinton noted that while there are about 170 countries that signed that Kyoto Protocol, only about six of them would likely meet their target carbon reduction by 2012.