

GMA, Loren to take part in Copenhagen Climate Change Summit

President Arroyo and Sen. Loren Legarda will take part in the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in Denmark on Dec. 7 to help the Philippines and other developing countries reduce the impact of climate change and seek compensation

from the United States and China for their respective greenhouse gas emissions.

Speaking at the Manila Overseas Press Club forum at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Makati Thursday night, Legarda said she will lead the Senate delegation to the conference and Mrs. Arroyo will head the Philippine delegation.

"I believe that the Copenhagen summit is very important because all the preparation towards Copenhagen, especially the Bali Action Plan, will have to be committed to by all developed and developing nations," she said.

"There are demands for bigger cuts in greenhouse gas

(GHG) emissions and the roles of the two biggest nations, who are the biggest polluters, China and the United States."

Legarda, the UN champion for disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region, said China is one of the biggest emitters of GHG at 21.5 percent of total gas emissions while the US emits more than 20 percent of global GHG.

"Together they pollute almost half the world," she said.

Legarda said the US accounts for five times more than China in terms of per capita data of GHG emissions.

"The commitment of the United States under the leadership of President Barack Obama is so essential," she said.

"It is unfortunate that a vulnerable country like the Philippines – and we are a developing

nation with hardly any resources to combat climate change – suffered the brunt of the pollution caused by bigger countries."

British Ambassador Stephen Lillis said his government will push for a clear timetable to a legally binding treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol during the Copenhagen conference.

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement that sets binding targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community for reducing GHG emissions.

Commitment period for industrialized countries set in the Protocol expires in 2012.

Lillis made the statement during his opening remarks at a forum organized by the UP School of Economics in collaboration with the British Embassy, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Program in Development Economics.

Entitled "48 Degrees to Degradation: The Economics of Climate Change and Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia," the forum held at UP Diliman was part of a series in celebration of Climate Change Commission's first book.

Dr. Jiahong Zhuang, Asian Development Bank assistant chief economist, and Alan Blaylock, Carbon Finance Solutions managing director, provided the forum.

"We are determined to reach a comprehensive politically binding agreement at Copenhagen which covers all the major emitters including most importantly binding economy-wide emissions reductions from developed countries, significant action from developing countries to slow their emissions growth, and finance," Lillis said.

"And we need to see agreement on a clear timetable towards a legally binding treaty to kick in the political agreement we want to reach in Denmark."

Failure at Copenhagen is not an option. But it will take real political leadership to make certain that we get a deal. At the moment, there are 60 heads of state or government that have pledged to attend the conference and we hope that this political momentum continues.

In answer to doubts on the veracity of scientific reports of global warming, Zhuang said that even in the face of uncertainty, it is the status of climate change agreements cannot take the risk of inaction.

"If action is not taken now, it would be too late."

The highlights of an ADB report released this year showed the effects of global warming in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, Zhuang said.

Temperatures in the four countries are projected to rise 4.8 degrees Celsius by 2100 and the global mean sea level is projected to rise by 70 cm during that same period.

The report warned that if the world continues its "business as usual" approach, the mean cost of climate change for the four countries could be equivalent to losing 6.7 percent of combined GDP each year by 2100 – more than twice the global average loss – if market and non-market impacts and catastrophic risks are considered.

Zhuang stressed the importance of climate-proofing societies through adaptation measures, including better water management and flood defenses, better health surveillance and disease prevention, and safeguarding forests.

Mitigation through the use of renewable energy sources and raising energy efficiency must also be implemented. In addition, Christina Mendez, Mayen Joymalin, Pia Lee-Buags