Climate Change

A Call to Action: Responding to Climate Change



Climate change is very real and is doing real, irreversible damage, but that doesn't mean that it is a hopeless cause. Dr. Juan Pulhin, Dean of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources of the University of the Philippines-Los Baños, emphasized that people always have a choice: whether to sit and wait until catastrophes and devastating losses happen or "be more aggressive and proactive by promoting social check-and-balance to correct systematic failures" in his address at FPE's National RAC-Partners Meeting held last May 2013.

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In essence, responding to an issue as large in scope and impact as climate change requires, beyond a sense of awareness, a call to action. Now that the issue has been brought to the attention of the scientific community, as well as of the general public at large, there is definitely no reason to just sit back anymore and wait until things get much worse.

Climate change, as with all matters that deal with ecology, is a complex matter. Hence, Dr. Pulhin proposes a dual-aspect response to the situation that applies in the context of national and global-scale initiatives. These aspects are mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation is the approach leaning on measures intended to directly counteract the impacts of the climate change phenomenon (e.g. enhancement of forests as "carbon sinks" and cutting down on reductions). Adaptation, on the other hand, is action in line with the acknowledgement that climate change is already here, working and living around the issues that come as harmfuls effect of the planet-wide changes.

Having established that, Dr. Pulhin enumerated five key approaches to climate change adaptation with the aim of further promoting biodiversity conservation:

- Improve biodiversity risk and vulnerability assessments, including mapping of vulnerable areas and location of threatened species;

- Enhance biodiversity management practices, which includes resource protection as well as improving harvesting technologies;
- Advance the science and practice of climate change adaptation that mainstreams biodiversity and sustainable development in policies, plans, and programs;
- Secure sustainable financing mechanism for environmental services; and
- Ensure sustainable livelihood for forest or biodiversity-dependent communities.

The Answers Lead to More Questions

The whys and wherefores have been clearly established, but still more questions than answers remain and come up anew regarding the response to the climate change phenomenon – questions that deal especially with the hows, whos, whens, and wheres.

How can people push renewable energy sources, for example, to the mainstream over fossil fuels, to which they are already so accustomed? Who should make the big decisions to make it happen? Who is going to respond favorably (and who won't)? When (or how soon) can the change that being sought out going to happen? Where can people start making the change happen?

The above are only a few of the blanks that have yet to be filled. But inasmuch as the climate change situation was a gradual, long-term side effect of human activity, so too should the response be a constant, long-term commitment with the necessary proactive effort to match. A shift in collective attitude towards consumption of resources and energy is essential, one that cuts across social and economic sectors and roles (political, scientific, et al.) and one that will help shape the framework that guides everyone towards more sustainable living in the future.

Further Reading: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

Here are some of FPE's highly recommended resources on the subject of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies:

- Guidebook on Mainstreaming Climate Change in Biodiversity Planning and Management in the Philippines (DENR, USAID, ICRAF, 2013)
- Alternative Pathways to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction: Mainstreaming and Integration in Development Planning and Budgeting of Local Government Units (Aksyon Klima Pilipinas, BDRC Learning Circle, 2012)
- Seeds of Knowledge: Contributing to Climate Change Solutions (UNEP, 2012)
- National Climate Change Action Plan: Executive Summary (Climate Change Commission, 2011)

Reference

- Pulhin J. 2013. Climate Change and Biodiversity. Speech delivered during FPE National RAC-Partners Meeting; May 20, 2013; Quezon City, Philippines.

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