

The Philippines has been particularly exposed to climate change impacts, with recurrent typhoons and natural disasters. What are the implications for jobs, livelihoods and development in general? What should be appropriate responses and what national policies and measures are you taking? What else would be needed?

At the outset, allow me to thank the ILO and the Geneva Environment Network for inviting me to this Forum. I will begin by acknowledging what we here already know about the Philippines: it is a country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. According to Germanwatch, a non-governmental organization, the Philippines ranked fifth in its long-term Climate Risk Index¹ for the period of 1994 to 2014.

However, I will echo the words of Secretary Lucille Sering of the Climate Change Commission, who expressed a common sentiment among Filipinos when she said, during her visit to Geneva in February this year, that the Philippines did not want to be remembered for the disasters that struck it. Instead, we want to be remembered for our resilience in rising above these challenges.

And we do need resilience – lots of it. Climate change cuts across all sectors. It has affected our approach to disaster risk management and environmental planning. It has forced us to reflect upon our relations with industry players and engagements with the international community, guided in part by the conclusion of the 102nd Session of the International Labor Conference in 2013, which tackled sustainable development, decent work and green jobs.² Climate change has certainly changed the way we think.

For instance, rising sea levels may lead not just to the physical loss of land but, equally threatening, to the loss of available **arable** land. One can imagine the impact of salt water seeping inland on an archipelagic state like the Philippines that remains heavily reliant on rice and other crop production.

Increasing temperatures can translate to dwindling fisheries resources and to changing thermal conditions in the workplace. Especially for sectors that require workers to stay outside for a number of hours – such as construction, agriculture and even public services – productivity can be affected. Incidentally, these are the same sectors that developing economies tend to be engaged in.

¹ According to Germanwatch, the Global Climate Risk Index 2015 analyses to what extent countries have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.). The risk is measured in terms of damage, e.g., in equivalent monetary terms, and deaths.

² The 102nd session of the ILC adopted a global framework on Just Transition, which identified nine policy areas as follows: (1) Policy coherence and institutional arrangements for a just transition for all; (2) Social dialogue for a just transition; (3) Macroeconomic and growth policies; (4) Industrial and sectoral policies; (5) Enterprise policies; (6) Skills policies; (7) Occupational safety and health policies; (8) Social protection policies; and (9) Labour market policies. The guidelines aim to enable ILO constituents to leverage the process of structural change towards a greener and low-carbon economy for the large-scale creation of quality employment opportunities.

The development of green industries coincides with the introduction of new technologies and processes. Future and current employees need to catch up in order to remain relevant; reskilling is crucial towards this end. Educational systems and social safety nets must therefore correspondingly adjust.

The shift from low-cost fuels to greener but possibly more expensive alternatives will be a major decision-making point for businesses, where the attractiveness of carbon fuels very easily obfuscates the bigger picture of a warming planet. At a side event during the 29th session of the Human Rights Council in June this year, I emphasized that company action on climate change went beyond corporate social responsibility. Given that climate change negatively affects the full enjoyment of human rights, I submit that a forward-looking and conscientious mindset among businesses is, in fact, corporate moral duty.

Incidentally, the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment is part of the interagency team that developed our Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, in which we look at a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of about 70% by 2030, among other contributions.

As it is, the Department of Labor and Employment is already implementing the “Integrated Livelihood Assistance and Emergency Employment Program,” which seeks to help displaced, disadvantaged and unemployed workers. It is part of a larger social protection system that links disaster and climate risk management with social security and active labor market policies. The program provides social insurance and short-term wage employment, while assisting people affected by natural calamities and economic shocks with opportunities for entrepreneurship.

I am also pleased to report that the Philippine legislature is now studying a Green Jobs Bill. The two versions in the Senate and the House of Representatives both seek to promote work that produces goods and services that, in turn, benefit and preserve the environment. The bill introduces fiscal incentives, such as duty-free importation of capital equipment and other tax perks, to encourage individuals and enterprises to participate in the creation of green jobs and technology.

As expected, however, the link between climate change and other sectors is very complex. According to recent news reports, for example, the World Bank has warned about a possible “carbon bubble,” whereby a future shift from carbon use can pose financial risks, as finance ministers and central bank governors try to implement the transition without destabilizing economies. If financial systems are affected, other forms of employment will be affected as well.

These complexities are why individual national efforts are not enough. Concerted global action is the only recourse. As a developing country that is vulnerable to climate change, the Philippines has taken on the Presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, an organization of 20 countries that aims to raise awareness about climate change and share expertise on adaptation and mitigation efforts. We have recently launched the V20 process only a few days ago on 8 October 2015 in Lima. The V20 is a venue for finance ministers to address the challenge of climate financing often encountered by developing countries.

And if finance ministers can band together to address climate change, I see no reason why the same cannot be done in the ILO. The tripartite nature of the ILO and the social dialogue provide excellent platforms in this regard.

Allow me thus to end by joining the call for increased collaboration on the nexus between labor and climate change. Policies related to climate change need to be coherent and mainstreamed in the work program of all relevant sectors. The Philippines strongly endorses the *draft policy guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*, which will help all of us – governments, workers and employers – to better implement the outcomes of the upcoming 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Paris.

Thank you.