

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

**PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ WITH DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR)
SECRETARY MARIA ANTONIA YULO-LOYZAGA
OCTOBER 16, 2024 [10:58 A.M. – 11:39 A.M.]**

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang umaga, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, October 16.

Earlier this morning, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. led the 2023 Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards recognizing the private sector's initiative and exceptional performance in the protection of the environment and their contributions to social development.

And, as you know, the government of the Philippines is currently hosting the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction at the PICC. Over five thousand delegates from the Asia-Pacific are participating in discussions on reducing disaster risk in the most disaster prone region in the world. The Philippines stands as a model for its multi-stakeholder approach and its focus on inclusive disaster risk management. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the co-host of the conference, has said numerous times that the choice of the Philippines as host is a testament to its strong commitment to disaster risk reduction at all levels.

We are joined now by Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga to briefly discuss about both topics. Good morning, Secretary Loyzaga.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Good morning, Daph. Well, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to share on these two developments.

I think the most significant one of course, at this point is really the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. As you know, this is the leading global platform for the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to actually ventilate, articulate and advance the needs of the different regions in the world – in particular, the regional office for Asia-Pacific which is based in Bangkok is the partner here of the Philippine government.

I should say that we co-chair this particular conference, myself of course as DENR but really the lead here would be the Department of National Defense because they host the Office of Civil Defense, of course lead in the operation of the NDRRMC. So, we are here to support the work of the OCD and of course, we were asked by the President. Order was issued to the DENR to actually organize APMCDRR after we accepted to host it which was in 2022, formalization of which was around January of 2023.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Any updates on this morning's event in Malacañang, ma'am?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Well, as you know, we are constantly trying to make our mining... minerals resource development industry more responsible to the environment. The PMIEA award actually was established some time ago in 1997 and they have been awarded yearly. We haven't been graced by a president since, I understand, 2015 or at least prior to the previous

administration. So, under the administration of President Aquino was the last time a president actually presided over the awarding ceremony.

The thrust here of the President – and here, we have made this very clear to the mining sector from his first SONA – was those who extract our natural resources must follow the law. So, as you know, the DENR is a small organization compared to some of the larger other departments. We still receive .48 of one percent of the national budget. However, we have tried as much as we can to update the different terms and conditions upon which we will be reviewing all the applications whether they be for the large scale or the small scale mining operations.

Responsible mining has been the main agenda of this DENR and for some of you who may not know, we have inserted into the ECC conditions, the linking of the Social Development Management Program or SDMP which is required of mining companies to actually be linked to the accomplishment of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

Apart from that, we have also looked at the local context to see what is really needed by the different communities. So, for example: If a stable safe water supply is needed, that becomes part of what we call a negotiated resilience commitment from the mining companies.

So, the ones who were recognized today and they were, I understand, 13 of which fall into different categories – exploration, surface mining, mineral processing and research development among others. And, we had some very good candidates, there were about 35 who vied for these awards, only 13 of which actually deserve and actually received the award.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. In the interest of time management because we do have to go back to the conference, let's take some questions. First, about the... I guess the mineral industry Environmental Award and then later on the APMCDRR. Eden Santos, NET25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Good morning po, Secretary. May we know po kung mayroon tayong list noong mga mining companies who are violating the law? And then, ilang percent po iyong naiko-contribute ng mining industry po sa ating GDP growth?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Okay. On the contribution to GDP, we are really at .5 of one percent at this point 'no and we have actually a video that we showed just to show the history 'no. I think we can share that through the office here of Secretary Chavez, just to take a look at how much has really been contributed by the mining sector not only to the economic component but to the social development component as well 'no.

So, at this time, iyon pa lang ang nako-contribute. But at the level of operation of our industry in terms of the actual area na puwede pang i-explore, and of course within the law responsibly derived 'no the minerals therein, we really are at something like less than three percent of what has been identified as potential mineralized areas. So, that's the land area covered 'no.

In terms of the—ano po iyong isang question? Ilan na po ang...

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Ah, list. Kung mayroon na po tayong mga list/names of companies na nagba-violate po ng law?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: We can actually provide you with that. Just for your understanding lang, where there is case buildup, mga detalye po ang hindi puwede namin po i-

share kaagad kasi po that is part of the case that are being buildup against these individual operations 'no. So, we can provide that list also through...

At this moment po, we are monitoring several. I cannot release the names to you at this point but we will give you a list of those that have been clearly now along the way towards cancellation or cease and desist 'no.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Tuesday Niu, DZBB.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Good morning, Secretary. Follow up lang po doon kay Eden. Point 5 kanyo ng GDP iyong contribution ng mining. Hindi po ba maliit iyon kumpara doon sa destruction na ginagawa ng industry as a whole sa environment natin dito sa Pilipinas?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: I think, you have to contextualize that answer 'no. As I said, in terms of the total mineralized identified areas na puwedeng maka-extract po tayo ng minerals natin, you will need to weigh not just, okay, the environmental impact against the economic impact but also the social impact and the scale of the potential resource na mayroon po tayo.

So, the idea po ngayon is to identify two things: Ilan ba talaga ang kailangan natin in order to construct the infrastructure that we are planning and have been under planning for the last administrations? Saan po manggagaling iyan? Cement for example, saan po manggagaling iyan? Mag-i-import ba tayo ng cement or puwede po natin i-produce iyang cement dito po? So, lahat po ng mga infrastructure projects nangangailangan po iyan ng cement, Nangangailangan rin ng steel, nangangailangan pa ng ibang sand and gravel components. Among the mineral resources ng bansa are the metals and the non-metallic. Sa non-metallic po, nanggagaling po diyan ang semento 'no.

So, when you weigh the environmental impacts versus the potential value – socially, economically – dapat po sa tamang konteksto po iyon 'no. So, what we are doing now at the DENR is really two things 'no – we are actually establishing through the national natural resource geospatial database kung saan po ang known mineralized resources natin sa buong bansa.

Then we are super imposing 'no, saan po talaga pong may mga permit, iyong mga expiration permit, mga mineral-ready processing, MPSA, mga FTA. And we are looking at the potential for what we need as a country in order to be on the kind of infrastructure trajectory na kailangan po natin para umunlad 'no – that's the first one.

The second one is we're also looking at what sort of minerals are needed for the transition to renewable energy. The components po ng renewable energy technologies are very heavily demanding on nickel, on copper in particular – marami pa po diyan but I'll just concentrate on those two.

Saan po manggagaling iyong dalawang iyan when we want to establish our wind farms, when we want to build the batteries for our EVs, i-import ba natin iyan o magpo-produce ang Pilipinas kasi mayroon po tayo niyan? So when we look at environmental components, the department follows the mitigation hierarchy, alam ko po na I mentioned this already before. We understand that minerals are needed in development. However, we have established what we call a mitigation hierarchy looking at the potential environmental impact of the extraction and processing of these minerals. What does that mean? The first principle is you should not do any harm. Alam po natin, anything that we do, in terms of altering the landscape whether it's pag-i-extract po ng mga

minerals or pagbi-build po natin ng mga bridges, roads, mga kabahayan, mga buildings, all of that will alter the ecological integrity of our environment. So, we cannot say na we can avoid the harm.

The next principle is you must minimize. Okay. So, when you establish a set of guidelines you must look at the potential for minimization of the impact.

Ang pangatlo po doon is we understand that this will be the impact, you must then reduce, actively reduce. So when we look at what is being applied for, we look for that as well.

Where we cannot do one, two, three, we need to be able to compensate. What does that mean? You disturb a specific ecology, you are bound by law to rehabilitate. So we have a law that actually provides for progressive rehabilitation. Meaning, habang nagmimina po, you cannot go beyond a certain area without rehabilitating first bago po to go on to the next area.

That being said, ecological transition takes time. So these awards na pinamigay this morning actually recognized some of those efforts. So there's an award, for example, to look at the best mining forest restoration. We also look at, again, to go back to the social component, how much do you give back by law and beyond. Mayroon pong mga kumpaniya that are giving beyond what is required by the law, I won't name them here because you might think I'm campaigning for them, but there are those that go beyond the 1.5% annual based on the gross operating expenses that go to social development and management programs.

So ang ginagawa po namin ngayon is this, tinitingnan po namin how close are you to a protected area? How close are you to our historical and cultural important site? How close are you to the water systems that will actually be providing safe water to the communities? Secondly, how much have you given back to the social services that support the development of the community. So these include putting up of the health centers and maintaining them; the school buildings, the erection of the school buildings; the provision of scholarships – and all of that is required by law. Again, there are companies who do go beyond that, and so those are the kinds of companies that we would like in terms of the responsible mining that we are looking to dito in terms of the work in the country.

So ganoon po, hindi po siya black or white. You have to contextualize what the country needs in terms of development; how we can mitigate these environmental impacts and how we can deliver the social goods.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: All right. Harley Valbuena, DZME.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Hi! Good morning, Secretary. Still in line po with the mining sector, may we have an update on the discovered illegal mining operations in Paracale, Camarines Norte wherein some Chinese workers were nabbed?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Yes, on the potential criminal charges 'no, I will not go into that because the case build-up is ongoing. What we know is that in fact, this operation has a history. And in 2023, we also know that they had completed their permitting requirements and had been permitted to operate. However, now, they have been found to have been operating also beyond the area where they have been permitted to operate. And, of course, there is the presence of foreign workers.

I'll stop there kasi po kuni-case build-up po namin ngayon, together with other authorities, other agencies 'no. This is a small-scale mining processing operation. So, as you know, in terms of the small-scale operations, there's a heavy local government and local community component.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: Follow-up lang po, ma'am. Are we aware of this matter na napasok na rin po ng foreigners, particularly ng Chinese, pati po iyong illegal mining operations po sa bansa?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Yes.

HARLEY VALBUENA/DZME: So possibly po, mayroon din pong presence ng ibang foreign or Chinese workers sa iba pang illegal mining sites?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: I believe presence of foreigners is a very great possibility, yes. As you know, I think it was last year, we also apprehended, together with authorities, an operation in the border of, I think, it was Cagayan de Oro and Iligan in the upland areas that had foreign workers also conducting, yes, illegal activities.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Secretary, in keeping with what you explained earlier about the balancing act of economic development and, of course, sustainable development and protecting our communities, yesterday, at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, there were some partnerships promoting, of course, biodiversity and nature-based solution. Partnerships by the government with the private sector on addressing disaster risk, very important as well, would you like to share some of that?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Sure. Thanks, Daph. So, one of the increasing calls for disaster risk reduction globally is to really tap into the resources of the private sector. We all know that because of fiscal constraints dito rin po sa Pilipinas, hindi po natin kaya lahat 'no, in terms of the government having to bear the cost.

So we are looking at the broad range of partnerships that have potential to actually bring risks down. So among those and linked to our work, actually, linked din dito pa sa condition sa pagmimina is biodiversity conservation and how that actually leads and can contribute disaster risk reduction.

Sa biodiversity conservation kasi po there are several key elements, one of which is habitat conservation. When we conserve habitats to protect the species, you actually are preserving the ecology, the ecological balance of the place and, therefore, you are ensuring that ecosystem services like water supply, potential flood control, soil management, soil erosion control are also within that particular investment.

So as part of our work on biodiversity conservation and what we are trying to push now at the DENR are three things: Habitat conservation, species specific risk, and thirdly, enforcement. We cannot do this alone. So what we have done at the BMB and at the DENR in general is we have selected conservation partners. In the case of six species actually 'no, in terms of this partnership – the Philippine Eagle, the Palawan Cockatoo/Philippine Cockatoo, mga pangolins, tamaraws, marine turtles, and the dugong – each of these have a conservation partner linked to that: The Philippine Eagle Foundation for the Philippine Eagle; sa Philippine Cockatoo, ang Katala Foundation; World Wild Life Fund is doing the dugong and marine turtles; the pangolin and the tamaraw are being taken care of by the Zoological Society of London. Minerge [merged] po namin ang work program ng Biodiversity Management Bureau at itong mga conservation partners.

How do we then get these funded? So we have species specific funding that we got in the 2024 GAA for each of the five. Iyong pangolin lang ang walang species specific funding pero hinihingi pa namin na puwede sana mayroon. And we said to the five conservation partners, magtulungan po tayo. How are they going to get funding? So, the SM Group has provided a platform, the platform will be through their BDO banking services. Through the ATMs you can actually donate directly po ito sa mga conservation partners; wala pong papasok na pera to the government 'no, it will go straight to the conservation partners in terms of your ATM use 'no you can donate there.

There will also be the use of the retail platforms in terms of merchandising, in terms of donation boxes na malalagay po in terms of the mall operations. So, both the banking and retail platforms, we're just starting po with this main corporate partner pero we have already queries who else can join, and this funding will go directly to WWF, to Philippine Eagle Foundations, et cetera. But what's important is we establish how via biodiversity conservation can actually do greater potential for nature-based solutions not just to climate change adaptation and mitigation but to disaster risk reduction by their control of the ecology not just land but also our oceans 'no.

And iyon po, nag-signing po kami kahapon to formalize that partnership. So, all the NGOs were there as well as the representation from the SM Group to then work on shared goals in terms of conservation, climate change adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. Sorry, mahaba iyong explanation.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: That's very nice. Okay, let's move to Sam Medenilla, all the way in the back. BusinessMirror.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESSMIRROR: Good morning, ma'am. Balik lang po ako, ma'am, regarding doon sa na-mention ninyong parang magko-conduct ng inventory iyong DENR ng mga existing na areas kung saan may high mineralization at saka iyong mga existing na mining firms operation. Kailan po natin expected ma-complete iyong inventory and will this include iyong na-mention po kanina na parang presence ng illegal mining at saka iyong mga foreign workers na hindi naman allowed dito magtrabaho? Thank you.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: So, two things po iyan 'no. In terms of establishing kasi iyong geospatial information tungkol doon sa natural resources natin 'no. So, as you know, mayroon po tayong ini-establish na tinatawag na national natural resource geospatial database. Ano po iyong kaibahan nito sa mapa? In terms of a map, you're looking at a specific location; in terms of geospatial database, you're looking at a specific location in relation to something else. So, it gives you the next step, the next level in terms of the analysis kung ano po iyong nangyayari doon but the first requirement is to finish the geospatial database.

So, ngayon po, the known resources ng bansa are already on a preliminary database – so, mayroon na po tayo. What we're doing now is we're overlaying all the different permits whether they are local, national. So, siguro po matatapos iyan by the end of this year. Performance will then be next. So, the observation and monitoring system will then follow. So, kasi tina-target po namin iyan.

Again, I'll go back to the budget na ng DENR. So, ini-expect po natin na ang DENR ay everything, everywhere, all at once. Sa .48 ng one percent ng buong budget, hindi po mangyayari iyan, okay.

So, ang ginagamit po namin ngayon ay satellite imagery in order to establish these locations and also measure and value what is there. This is also important kasi may PENCAS na po tayo ngayon 'no in terms of the natural capital accounting ng Pilipinas.

So, once the observation monitoring system is in place, targeted po iyan, that's when we can also establish locationally kung saan po ang mga violations na nangyayari or kung saan po ang observation surveillance na kailangang gawin ang puwedeng mangyari.

So, this is not an overnight system, hindi po namin...kasi sa mapa magdo-drawing ka lang ng points ganoon; hindi po iyon iyong ginagawa po namin. Niri-relate po namin doon sa ano ba iyong technical description ng mining processing permit mo – so, minamapa iyan talaga in terms of the national natural resource geospatial database.

The total number of hectares na medyo known mineralized sa buong bansa is about nine million hectares, okay. So, kung iisipin ninyo, medyo malaking area iyan – almost one third ng buong Pilipinas ay mayroong some kind of mineral na puwede pong magamit for development 'no.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESSMIRROR: Ma'am, on another topic. Mag-ask lang din po ako ng update doon sa operationalization ng Loss and Damage Fund, kailan po kaya natin expected itong maging fully operational?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Okay. Sa Loss and Damage Fund, there are two things 'no, iyong host country agreement tinatapos po namin ngayon and that will be signed between the UNFCCC and ourselves as the host country for the fund board. So, kapag na-in place na iyan there will be now the first board meeting after that will be dito po sa Pilipinas. So, in December there will be a meeting here of the Loss and Damage Fund Board – tayo po ang host niyan and we hope that there will be certain agreements reached one is, who will be actually funding the Loss and Damage Fund Board. Ngayon po, iyong pumapasok lang ay countries 'no. The whole idea of the board and the fund is actually so that there can be funding sources from other than countries specifically.

Then the next question will be 'who will be able to avail?' Siyempre po liyamado ang climate vulnerable countries in terms of who will be able to avail. I have to say, small island development states and Africa, medyo nangunguna po sila rather than sa Pilipinas, okay. Alam naman po natin gaano katindi ang problema nila, 'no.

So, the small island development states particularly in the Pacific. Nandito po sila lahat in this Asia-Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction Conference, and if I can just go back to the conference and how they're needing to avail precisely from this fund, marami po sa kanila ang nawawalan na ng coastal areas 'no. May ilan diyan na talagang they're already organizing migration 'no from their areas to other countries under special agreements – kasi po, that's how difficult their situation is already.

Countries like Kiribati, Vanuatu – their conditions are far more extreme than dito po sa atin 'no. Siyempre po, we don't diminish kung ano ang nangyayari dito sa atin ngayon in terms of baha pero sa kanila po, wala pong kasanggang bundok or whatever sa kanila 'no – they are exposed, they are vulnerable, their cultures are also being threatened because their cultures really revolve around their seafaring life 'no, civilization. So, kanila po existential siya on many levels – economic, environmental, cultural. So, these are the ones that will probably be the first ones in line kapag kino-consider na.

Right now, the funding of the board still is at around less than 700 million dollars. Most of that will actually be used in setting up the operations of the fund. Lyon po iyong sinasabi po sa amin na we are not managing the fund themselves. Alam ninyo naman, the arrangement has been that for the meantime the World Bank will be the repository of the fund. However, the rules and the guidelines for the availments will be the board 'no that will decide.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESSMIRROR: Thank you.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Kyle Atienza, BusinessWorld.

KYLE ATIENZA/BUSINESSWORLD: Good afternoon, ma'am. Ma'am you mentioned earlier today that the DTI as well as the DENR are eyeing to incentivize mineral processing as Marcos government boost the country's transition to renewables I mean, the green transition in general. May we know the details of this plan and what raw materials or critical materials are expected to be covered by this intended policy?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Well, there is no formal policy body yet 'no and instrument however, we are in full collaboration with the DTI in their promoting the investments in processing and so nickel of course is one of those areas na talagang tinitingnan and of course we are looking at copper as well.

So these are two areas, and I should say na marami pong interesado dito sa minerals natin. And I wanted to point out, we always talk about critical minerals, it's important that we identify what is critical for form. So, again, I go back to the issue. Well, our issue in a way, we must first look at what our needs are, in terms of our energy transition and the other needs in terms of our own infrastructure development to establish what our critical minerals are. Ang buong mundo po, of course are looking at copper, nickel, cobalt, some of the rarest kasi kinakailangan po talaga iyan in terms of construction, electronics, digitalization. Digitalization alone actually will be really driving the demand for process.

So, dito po, DTI is leading the way. We are not a department that can give incentives. As I said, earlier, ang ginagawa po namin ngayon is streamlining our permitting process while not losing the comprehensive analysis that needs to be done when we take a look at what is being permitted in terms of extraction.

ATIENZA/BUSINESS WORLD: Last question, ma'am. The President, also during the event earlier today, urged the Congress to pass the bill seeking to impose margin-based royalties and windfall profit tax on mining companies or the proposed rationalization of the mining fiscal regime. Are there any programs or policies that the DENR is pushing to be integrated into this field?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: We fully support the DOFs position, and so we don't differ from anything that they have already put forward in terms of the fiscal policy.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. Last question, we don't have much time. Cleizl Pardilla, PTV4.

PARDILLA/PTV 4: Follow-up lang po sa question ni Harley. Para lang po mas maintindihan nila, in what ways foreign workers in the mining industry a cause for concern? And considered close na po ba iyong sa Camarines, Iligan and Cagayan?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: First of all, it's illegal to have foreign workers by law in your operation, unless there are specific highly-technical positions na kinakailangan talaga iyong

advise na ganoon, iyong technical capacity na ganoon. It is certainly a concern and so we work very closely with the other partners, not just the—I would say, the local authorities but certainly with our partners in the Department of National Defense. And of course, the DTI and DOLE would like to have closer cooperation to see whether may pumapasok ba talaga na may dokumento na tama. And so, I'll just leave it at that, there is a lot of cooperation that is ongoing between the different agencies. So, maybe I can just say—what is the other question?

Yeah, so there is a process 'no. Iyong sa Camarines Norte, there already CDOed (Cease and Desist Order) and so, the process requires them to show cause why they should not be canceled. So, may proseso iyan, there is a time element but certainly, looking at the situation, it's not looking good for them. Secondly, maybe I can just add a little about APMCDRR? So, just for information, so the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction has the main themes that it's actually pursuing: Disaster risk pronouncing that's innovative, kasi po, we know that regular development funding and financing cannot really fit the needs of the specific vulnerable and exposed countries. So, disaster risk pronouncing is calling for more innovative instruments, perhaps some bonds, perhaps the participation of the private sector as well in really trying to support the decrease in exposure and vulnerability of different communities and sectors, may agriculture diyan, manufacturing is also affected and of course, others like telecoms and water systems are all affected.

So, disaster risk pronounces really to bring down the risk and risk transfer, so iyong design ng mga insurance products natin dapat angkop doon sa nangangailangan. So, we are looking at better insurance for MSMEs for example, that are part of the supply chains of the big ones and those that are independent as well.

The second one is inclusion. So, there is a big push towards what they call iyong intersectionality, iyong paghahawa ng vulnerability ng different groups. For example, gender-related to poverty, related to disability, for example, our age. So, hindi po simple iyong ideya ng vulnerability ng isang tao, it's attached to their identity and particularly the gender issue is important.

The third one is localization. Kailangan po talaga, these responses have to deal with the context, iyong local context talaga, local government are the frontliners here and local communities as well. So, localization is a big issue. To give you some idea of the numbers, we had expected around 3,500. The last conference in Australia had about 2,500 individuals. Ang total natin ngayon, in terms of those registered and needing badges is actually about 7,000. Of course that includes our security and our technical. But if you were to do only a delegate count, delegate count, and DICT is the one who is maintaining this database for us, is at 5,000. So, as some of you would have seen yesterday, medyo puno ang plenary hall natin and I have to say that the President's keynote was very well received by the United Nations and by many of the delegates na talagang they came up and they said that they were so impressed by the President's grasp dito po sa Disaster Risk Reduction on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.

So, I just want to share that we are so far, considering this in a very positive note, in terms of the response of the call of the United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction and the Philippines to attend. Personally, I am very grateful for the attendance of the Pacific Islands, marami pa tayong puwedeng matutunan dito sa resilience ng mga Pacific Islanders and there is a lot of traditional knowledge that we actually can share and they can share with us. We are the bridge, as the President said, between the Pacific Islands and the rest of Asia. And so we are uniquely positioned to actually host this conference, I think, at this point in time.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Yeah, I was about to ask for a closing remark about it. We are halfway through the conference, it's two more days. And, any last minute or any wishes that you are thinking about as the conference ends?

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Medyo bias po ako. I am looking at the Science and Technology component to see how impact we can learn from what other countries are doing. There are a number of developed countries of course, offering their technologies and their knowledge but again, I am biased towards learning from the Pacific Islanders. They have a way and a culture that has actually led them to survive all this time. So, the theme that I posted in my messages again, you have a region that has faced so many perils, but you have a region that also has a lot of promise. So, it's really a triumph of the promise over the perils that we faced and these islands, the Pacific Islands have really shown the way in terms of that particular triumphs. So, marami po tayong matutunan in this regard.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Ang sabi naman ng ibang delegates na nakausap ko doon, Secretary, marami rin silang natutunan sa Pilipinas, most especially iyong focus natin sa community-based with disaster risk reduction at saka iyong focus ng national government for the people talaga.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: Yes, I think that is one of the key points also of the President. And the special representative of the UN Secretary-General really has really made this a point. I don't know if you saw that, it was highlighted in his statement that he's calling the Philippines a lighthouse.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Yes.

DENR SEC. YULO-LOYZAGA: And one of the areas as well apart from the community-based was the way the different departments are working together. So, it's not lost on them, na in terms of the preparation for this, lahat po, talagang tumulong – everybody, including of course, PCO for the media and communications. But, DSWD, DOTr, DOST, DILG, lahat po tumulong talaga to make this a successful conference. But in reality, in terms of operation, at the OCD and the NDRRMC, there is some real substantive collaboration going on in improving systems and addressing disaster risk globally.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you so much, Secretary Loyzaga. I think this concludes our press briefing, lots of topics today. Thank you so much, Malacañang Press Corps.

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