

On July 28, 1997, President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines delivered an overview of his administration's accomplishments during the previous five years. The following is the text from the first section of President's Ramos' speech on his administration's work on the environment.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES: PURSUED ECONOMIC GROWTH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When we assumed office in 1992, we were faced with the challenge of addressing the serious degradation of our environment and the unbridled exploitation of our natural resources for immediate economic gains. This situation was manifested in the pollution of our environment beyond tolerable levels, increasing number of environmental disasters associated with, among others, improper mine tailings disposal, rapid deforestation of our remaining forest cover and the resultant loss of valuable top soil and massive soil erosion, and salt water intrusion. Many of our wildlife were in the international list of threatened animals. These include 89 birds (including the Philippine eagle), 44 mammals (including the Tamaraw) and 8 reptiles (including the Gray Monitor Lizard).

Recognizing the long-term implications of this situation on our economy and national life as a whole, we set out to ensure that our economic agenda are not pursued at the expense of our environment and natural resources. To this end, we participated and committed to the principles of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which in essence, required the adoption of sustainable development as the country's development policy framework. This is to ensure that environment considerations are placed in the mainstream of national development efforts. In pursuit of this, we formulated the Philippine Agenda 21 which consists of strategies that would integrate sustainable development parameters in our development efforts. To provide a mechanism that will ensure the integration of these strategies in national policies, plans and programs, we created the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (Executive Order 15, 1 September 1992) headed by NEDA.

Using Agenda 21 as our guidepost, we vigorously pursued the implementation of our environmental protection programs and projects. We adopted innovative approaches and mechanisms to deepen public awareness on the causes and costs of environmental degradation. We also streamlined our environmental protection mechanisms and systems towards making them more responsive to present and future requirements.

We focused our efforts on protecting and conserving our natural resources and on rehabilitating our degraded ecosystems. We pursued with greater vigor the implementation of programs aimed at preserving the genetic diversity of our wildlife. To ensure the preservation of their natural habitats and rationalize the exploration and development of our natural resources, we identified and segregated critical areas and put in place institutional mechanisms to coordinate their development and protection.

We also adopted and implemented policies and programs to conserve and protect our forest, mineral and land resources. To augment government resources, we enlisted the support and participation of our communities, local government units, the private sector and other countries and international donor institutions in pursuit of our goals for the sector.

We extended our commitment to the protection and preservation of our natural resources and environment in the international arena by taking an active advocacy role. As chair of the first APEC Meeting on Sustainable Development, we successfully advocated for APEC's commitment to sustainable development and generated an Action Program towards ensuring the operationalization of the concept in APEC member-countries. As chair of the ASEAN Officials for the Environment (ASOEN), we led in finalizing the Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation Project which secured from the European Community a \$10 million grant for its operation. As an

active participant in the Montreal Protocol, we secured a \$16 million funding assistance under its ozone-depleting substances phase-out program for industrial firms.

All these contributed significantly to the attainment of our economic goals within the framework of sustainable development, and thus, ensured the continued sustainability of national efforts towards economic growth. Our success in these endeavors have earned for us the recognition as the World Bank's First Green Tiger and Asia's Emerging Green Tiger by Newsweek Magazine, sterling tributes to our commitment to, and pursuit of, sustainable development. We also received the John Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize in recognition of our outstanding contribution to the conservation of marine turtles as well as our assistance in the establishment of the Turtle Island Heritage Protected Area. We also received the Monsanto Pledge Award for "turning a denuded grassland into a sustainable forest plantation model for the developed world".

1. Protected Our Environment

We promoted and ecologically sound environment and reduced land, sea and air pollution through the implementation of various programs, adoption of innovative schemes and the streamlining of environmental protection systems. We focused our resources on the implementation of programs and projects that directly addresses the causes of pollution, in collaboration with the local government units and the private sectors.

1.1 Implemented Waste Disposal Projects. We launched the Ecological Waste Management Program under which LGUs, communities and the private sector are provided technical assistance to promote and speed up the transfer of information and technology on the proper management and disposal of solid wastes, as well as guidance on the preparation of the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment System. To date, we have entered into Memorandum of Agreement with 134 LGUs, identified 736 potential landfill sites and implemented 32 pilot waste disposal projects on composting and recycling nationwide.

Further, as part of our technical assistance to LGUs and other concerned groups, we formulated and published the following waste management manuals, plans and other relevant documents to serve as guide to users:

- a. Handbook on Solid Waste Management for Local Government
- b. Guidelines for the Preparation of Solid Waste Management Master Plan
- c. Criteria for the Selection of a Potential Sanitary Landfill Site
- d. Manual on Sanitary Landfill
- e. Sanitary Landfill Design and Construction Manual
- f. Leachate Stabilization Ponds Design and Construction.
- g. Internal Criteria for the Initial Evaluation of Solid Waste Management Projects Proposed Under the Built-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Scheme
- h. Scoping Guidelines for the Conduct of EIA for Thermal Conversion/Waste-to-Energy (Incineration) Facility

To complement the effort of the LGUs, we set up waste disposal projects nationwide to ensure that appropriate technologies and procedures in the collection, storage, processing, transport and

disposal of solid waste are widely disseminated and properly observed. We operationalized the San Mateo and Carmona Landfills and the Las Pinas Transfer station to address the waste disposal problem in Metro Manila.

1.2 Intensified Clean Air Campaign. We pursued our drive against smoke belchers and tapped the LGUs to implement the Comprehensive Anti-Smoke Belching Program. In support of the Program, we completed the revision of the IRRs on the Anti-smoke Belching Law (PD 1081) for the law's more effective implementation.

We complemented the Anti-Smoke Belching Program with the promotion of the use of lead-free gasoline which significantly contributed to the reduction of noxious gases in the air. A total of 953 gasoline stations nationwide are now selling unleaded gasoline.

We also continuously monitored air quality and upgraded our monitoring stations to get a more accurate and up-to-date information. We acquired two (2) units of mobile air laboratory van to augment the existing stations.

1.3 Rehabilitated and Protected Major Bodies of Water. We intensified the protection and rehabilitation of heavily polluted major bodies of water.

a. Pasig River. We created the Presidential Task Force on Pasig River Rehabilitation under Administrative Order No. 74 dated 29 July 1993 to speed up the rehabilitation of the Pasig River and to upgrade its water quality by the year 2005. Toward this, we enlisted the support of our local communities, NGOs and private sector in the implementation of the Waste Minimization Program and resettled 3,583 families living on stilts along the Pasig River. The Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) load was reduced from 330 metric tons per day (MTPD) in 1990 to 283 MTPD in 1996. These resulted in significant improvement in the ability of the river to sustain marine life.

b. Laguna Lake and Tributaries. We also pursued the implementation of the Sagip Ilog/River Rehabilitation Program, a multi-sectoral approach to clean and rehabilitate the biologically dead and polluted rivers in the nine (9) priority river systems in the Laguna Lake basin.

c. Boac River. We rehabilitated the Boac River which was damaged by Marcopper's mine tailings, in partnership with the private sector as well as the concerned LGUs and communities. Expenses for the rehabilitation activities were drawn from the Environmental Guarantee Fund established by Marcopper Company.

d. Pasak River. We removed and blasted illegal fishpond dikes and structures causing the siltation of the Pasak River and the flooding of San Fernando, Pampanga area and surrounding barangays. As a result, we reduced flooding in said areas.

e. Pansipit River. We dismantled about 2,951 (out of 3,440) illegal fishcages, fishpens, fishtraps and other aquaculture in Pansipit River to prevent the lake from further pollution due to excessive feeding of cultured fishes, and to save its endemic species such as Maliputo and Tawilis.

1.4 Implemented Clean and Green Program. We implemented the Clean and Green Program to instill in the minds of our local communities and LGUs the need for a clean and green environment. As part of the Program, we distributed a total of 75.5 million seedlings and saplings to the LGUs for planting in their localities. We also established 457 mini-parks nationwide. We conducted our annual search (starting 1993) for the cleanest and greenest (and dirtiest) LGUs and bodies of water. We recognized and elevated to the Hall of Fame, the Cities of Baguio and Puerto Princesa, for winning the cleanest and greenest local government unit award for three (3) consecutive years.

1.5 Strengthened Environmental Impact Statement System. We revised the implementing rules and regulations on the Environmental Impact Statement System to make it a more responsive instrument in addressing the increasing pressures on the environment. We simplified its requirements and mandated the conduct of the EIA simultaneous to that of the pre-feasibility study for environmentally-critical projects. This resulted in the reduction of processing time in the issuance of Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECC) to only 90 days. As insurance against possible harm to the environment and communities arising from the implementation of high-risk projects, we required firms to put up an Environment Guarantee Fund prior to the start of the project, and an Environment Monitoring fund to ensure that projects are monitored, in terms of their impact on the environment, from start to completion. In the same vein, we required social acceptability as one of the major criterion for the release of the ECC.

1.6 Closed Down Establishments Violating Pollution Control Laws. We waged an all-out war against industrial polluters identified to be sources of pollution through the issuance of 286 Cease and Desist Orders (CDO) to industrial establishments operating without the required waste treatment facilities and discharging toxic chemicals and wastes into the air, water, as well as those operating open dumpsites.

1.7 Developed the Smokey Mountain. We closed the 20-hectare Smokey Mountain open dumpsite and disposed about 5 million cubic meters of garbage to develop it into a port-related, commercial and industrial area with housing units for its resident. We constructed at least 33 temporary housing building in the Smokey Mountain which is now occupied by 2,700 Smokey Mountain households. We drew up a development plan for the area, a component of which is the development of a 79 hectare reclaimed for the purpose. This is to induce economic growth and provide employment opportunities to the residents of Smokey Mountain. We also provided basic services and alternative Mountain. We also provided basic services and alternative livelihood to the scavenger families displaced by the closure of the dumpsite.

1.8 Adopted New Concepts and Measures to Protect the Environment. We adopted innovative programs and market-based instruments aimed at influencing industrial firms and local government units to take deliberate efforts to protect the environment and to pursue more environmental friendly ways in their operations.

a. Imposed Emission and Effluent Charges. We started charging pollution fees to industrial firms releasing polluting substances into the environment, based on the "Polluters Pay Principle" to put pressure on them to put in place waste minimization or waste treatment facilities. The concept is currently being piloted in the Laguna Lake region.

b. Adopted Color-coding for Industrial Firms. Under the project, industrial firms are color-coded based on their environmental responsiveness, for disclosure to the public. "Gold" denotes excellent performance; "blue", sufficient compliance; "red", insufficient compliance; and "black", non-compliance. The system is slated to be piloted in NCR and Laguna Lake region and will initially focus on the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) concentration of a firm's effluent.

c. Comprehensive Ecological Labeling Project. Under the Project, LGUs were rated and ranked according to their performance in enforcing development and environmental functions such as compliance to environmental standards like water supply, sewerage treatment facilities, and solid waste management.

d. Banned the Entry of Toxic Wastes. A signatory to the Basel Convention, we banned the importation, storage or transport of toxic or nuclear wastes into or through our country. To further regulate the movement of hazardous waste, we

also prohibit the importation of recyclable materials containing hazardous substances (DENR Administrative Order No. 28, S, 199--).