

Opening Message of Senator Loren Legarda

Summit of Conscience for the Climate

9 October 2015 | Senate of the Philippines

I welcome all our guests today in this Summit of Conscience for the Climate. I am very thankful for your presence, which is already a manifestation that you care.

“Why do I care?” This was the question asked of me and my fellow delegates and speakers at the first Summit of Consciences for the Climate in Paris, France in July this year which was convened by French President Francois Hollande in the run-up to the climate change negotiations in December, also in Paris.

Why do I care? How do I show that I care?

These are questions that need personal reflection in order to be answered sincerely. With the current state of our planet – we are already in a state of emergency, our planet is already under the intensive care unit – we seriously need to look at how we can personally contribute to saving our planet.

The Philippines, as well as more than a hundred other nations, has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We aim to cut 70% of our greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2030, but that would depend on the international assistance we receive. I would have wanted our INDC to be non-conditional, but maybe we are just being realistic.

The INDCs will be part of the climate negotiations in December, in the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21), which will be held in Paris where we aim to forge a legally-binding and ambitious climate deal.

But as leaders, ministers and representatives of UN member states prepare to debate, argue or agree at the climate negotiations, we need to take time to reflect on why we need a strong climate deal in the first place and what

can we do to make it successful and how can we personally contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

It is clear that we need to act now, because if we go business as usual, our own children and grandchildren will already suffer from the impacts of a scorching earth. If they are enough reason for us to care, then urgent climate action is a must.

The Philippines is a minor emitter of greenhouse gas emissions but we are among the top three nations most vulnerable to climate change impacts. This is another reason why we should care.

We must decrease our dependence on fossil fuels, especially coal, and shift to renewable energy; we must veer away from the throwaway culture and aim for zero waste economy; we must turn our back on extractive and consumptive practices and adopt the concept of sustainable development and low-carbon lifestyle.

We can all do this together, but we have to embrace the concept of a simple, sustainable, healthy and resilient lifestyle. We go back to the basics of a quality life.

Towards the end of this Summit, we will encourage everyone to sign the Call to Conscience for the Climate, which was also the document we signed in the Paris Summit. We will present this to state leaders and heads of delegation to the COP 21 and urge them to make personal reflection over the question "Why do I care?" and we hope that they attend the climate conference as conscious and conscientious human beings not just as representatives of government or agency.

We only have one Mother Earth, which has generously shared its abundance to us. It is about time we show our gratitude by caring for our surroundings, our flora and fauna, our oceans, rivers and seas, our land resources, our fellow human beings. We should care for the only planet that nurtures us, the only planet we call home.