

## Poor countries demand action at UN climate talks (Update)

December 6 2012, by Michael Casey

---



A child stands near his family's damaged house Wednesday Dec. 5, 2012, a day after powerful Typhoon Bopha hit Montevista township Compostela Valley in southern Philippines. Typhoon Bopha, one of the strongest typhoons to hit the Philippines this year, barreled across the country's south on Tuesday, killing scores of people while triggering landslides, flooding and cutting off power in two entire provinces. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

(AP)—As disputes intensify at the already-bogged down United Nations

climate negotiations, the Philippines on Thursday called for urgent action to halt global warming, citing its own experience with a deadly typhoon as a nightmare scenario countries may face more frequently if climate change is left unchecked.

The appeal from Philippine envoy Naderev Sano came as activists and other ministers at the talks in Doha, Qatar, are increasingly alarmed that nothing significant will come out of the conference, which ends Friday. Rich and poor countries are feuding over how much aid should help the poorest cope with climate change, and to what extent rich countries should cut emissions in the coming years.

"As we vacillate and procrastinate here, we are suffering. There is massive and widespread devastation back home," Sano said of the aftermath of Typhoon Bopha, which left hundreds dead. "Heartbreaking tragedies like this are not unique to the Philippines."

Sano's appeal was the bluntest since the talks began nearly two weeks ago, and the latest to connect increasing and deadlier storms such as Hurricane Sandy to climate change. Climate scientists say it's difficult to link a single weather event to global warming but some say the damage caused by Sandy and other tropical storms was worse because of rising sea levels.

"Open your eyes to the stark reality we face," Sano said. "It's about what is demanded by 7 billion people. No more delays. No more excuses. Let Doha be remembered as the place where we found the political will to turn things around."

Nations have struggled for two decades to come to agreement that would keep global temperatures from rising more than 2 C (3.6 F), compared to preindustrial times. Temperatures have already risen about 0.8 C (1.4 F), according to the latest report by the U.N.'s top climate body.

A recent projection by the World Bank showed temperatures are expected to increase by up to 4 C (7.2 F) by the year 2100.



A resident looks at the devastation brought about by the flash flood that hit the village of Andap, New Bataan township, Compostela Valley in southern Philippines Wednesday Dec. 5, 2012. Typhoon Bopha, one of the strongest typhoons to hit the Philippines this year, barreled across the country's south on Tuesday, killing scores of people while triggering landslides, flooding and cutting off power in two entire provinces. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

A deal was never expected at the Qatar meeting but even the minimal goals appear now to be in doubt. Participants are supposed to agree to extend the Kyoto Protocol, which will expire this year.

But so far Japan, Canada, Russia and New Zealand have opted out of the

deal leaving the 27-member European Union, Australia and several small countries representing only 15 percent of global emitters.

A work plan is also set to be approved to help prepare for what is expected to be a deal in 2015 that would cover all countries and go into effect by 2020.

"Time is running out. I'm getting concerned that ministers are not stepping up to the mark and providing solutions that we need at this stage of the game," Gregory Barkey, Britain's Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, told The Associated Press.

"We need increased flexibility on all sides and a higher sense of urgency," he said. "Developed countries also need to demonstrate a clear ambition across the board in terms of climate goals."

Much of the frustration on Thursday was around the Kyoto extension, with delegates still wrangling over issues like the length of the second commitment and what countries who signed onto the new pact would do to tackle global warming.

"We are at a make-or-break point. Kyoto is the key to unlocking the deal," said Nauru's Foreign Minister Kieren Keke, chairperson of the Alliance of Small Island States, which includes scores of countries under threat from rising seas. "The second commitment period must have true environmental integrity and raise ambition now."

Poor nations want the rich to offer up a roadmap on climate financing through 2020, when they are supposed to begin donating \$100 billion-a-year. Several European countries have offered billions of dollars in new climate aid but so far neither the United States nor Japan have offered new money for 2013 and beyond. The oil-rich countries of the Gulf have also failed to offer any new pledges.

"These commitments show precisely the leadership and goodwill we need," said Andrew Steer, president of the Washington, D.C.-think tank World Resources Institute. "Developing countries clearly need more support to shift to a low-carbon economy and cope with the mounting impacts of climate change. These commitments should inspire other donor countries to pledge more funds."

With less than two days left to reach an agreement, activists said it was time for Qatar and other Arab countries to do their part to push for a deal. This is the first time that the talks have been held in the Middle East and Qatar is under pressure to show that the controversial decision to allow an OPEC member to host the conference was not a mistake.

Two activists who briefly held up a banner "Qatar why host, not lead" were briefly detained, according to the UK Climate Youth Coalition, which posted a video of the incident on its website.

"Despite expectations from the new civil society movement around climate change in the region, Arab political leadership has so far failed to materialize," said Wael Hmaidan, director of Climate Action Network-International.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Poor countries demand action at UN climate talks (Update) (2012, December 6) retrieved 10 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-poor-countries-demand-action-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.