

OPENING STATEMENT
OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE NATIONAL EST STRATEGY-PHILIPPINES
20 MAY 2011, MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES

by CRC Mohanty, Environment Coordinator, UNCRD

Hon. Secy of DOTC-Philippines, Mr. Jose P. De. Jesus,
Hon. Secy of DENR, Mr. Ramon J.P Paje,
Hon. Presidential Assistant on Limate Change, Ms. Elisea Bebet G. Gozun,
Senior Government Representatives and Officials,
Distinguished Representative from the Government of Japan,
Invited Panellists from World Bank, ADB, JICA, Ladies and Gentleman,

First of all, on behalf of UNCRD and UN DESA, I would like to convey our sincere appreciation to both the Departments - DOTC and DENR - for successfully developing the National EST Strategy for Philippines in close collaboration with UP NCTS, the designated national CC. We are also very much thankful to the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, for their financial support in carrying out this meaningful national activity under the Asian EST Initiative. CAI-Asia, our one of the important partners in implementing the Asian EST Initiative, also played very important and substantive role in developing this National EST Strategy. UNCRD also recognizes the financial contribution of ADB through the Sustainable Urban Mobility (SUMA) project towards this strategy formulation.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Although the transport sector has played a significant role in contributing to Asia's remarkable economic growth, there are a number of pressing issues associated with the transport sector that need to be addressed. They include: energy security, air pollution, GHG emissions, traffic congestion, injuries and fatalities due to traffic accidents, freight inefficiencies, greater rural-to-urban migration, and loss in economic productivity due to congestion.

Climate change issues have emerged as one of the biggest threats to the survival of human beings due to their affects on food security and the water cycle. Over the past decade, the level of understanding of both global climate change and sustainable transport has advanced greatly. It is now recognized that urban transport represents one of the fastest-growing sources of GHG emissions.

It is estimated that transport-related carbon dioxide emissions are expected to increase 57 per cent worldwide during the period 2005-2030. Any serious effort to mitigate GHG emissions will have to include major reform of existing transport systems and, in particular, it will be necessary to take measures to reduce the increase in private motorized vehicles as the region undergoes rapid urbanization. Currently, 1.6 billion people, or 40 per cent, of Asians live in urban areas and by 2030, the majority (more than 60%) will live in cities and towns.

There is a need to promote environmentally sustainable transport (EST) which offers an alternative to uncontrolled motorization and its related problems; which offers an integrated package of public transport, high quality footpaths and cycle-ways, vehicle restriction measures, clean fuels, and road safety programmes along with a set of technologies and practices that encompasses world best practices in accessibility, mobility, affordability, and safety.

In this regard, it is considered a very opportune time that the Government of Philippines has come up with the National EST Strategy prepared through a highly participatory and consultative process involving key transport stakeholders at the local and national levels, following the Administrative Order (No. 254) by the then Hon. President of the Philippines dated 30 January 2009, which mandated the Department of Transport and Communications (DOTC) to lead the formulation of such an EST strategy. The draft Strategies were also undergone a series of provincial consultations.

At the same time, Asian countries are committed to achieving the goals set forth in the Bangkok 2020 Declaration, which were agreed on at the Fifth Regional EST Forum in Asia held in August 2010. It is the first joint declaration by Asian governments and other stakeholders in the Asian region with a clear time frame (2010-2020), a comprehensive set of goals on EST for this timeframe, and a set of indicators to assess progress in the implementation of the Declaration.

We believe the Philippines National EST Strategy will not only complement the sustainable transport goals of such regional agreements, but also provide an important basis and framework to develop and realize EST activities as nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) to take full benefit of the international support available in addressing the climate issue. Asian countries are yet to exploit NAMAs in order to get a number of benefits - a) international visibility and recognition of their work in EST; b) access international financing through carbon credits; c) reap a number of co-benefits in environment, energy security, economic and social/health sectors.

Finally, we believe Philippines's efforts to promote environmentally sustainable transport will result not only in the improvement of public health through the reduction of urban air pollution but will also have important complimentary benefits, including the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the reduction of deaths and injuries from road accidents, the reduction of harmful noise levels, the reduction of traffic congestion levels and associated economic loss.

I would also like to share with you all that the Government of India will be hosting the 6th Regional EST Forum in Asia, which will be held in New Delhi from 4 to 6 Dec 2011. We hope some of the EST achievements and best practices in Philippines could be shared with other Asian countries.

Thank you.