

**A REPORT ON THE TRI-CONTINENTAL INTER-CUTURAL SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE  
ON DEFYING DISASTERS**

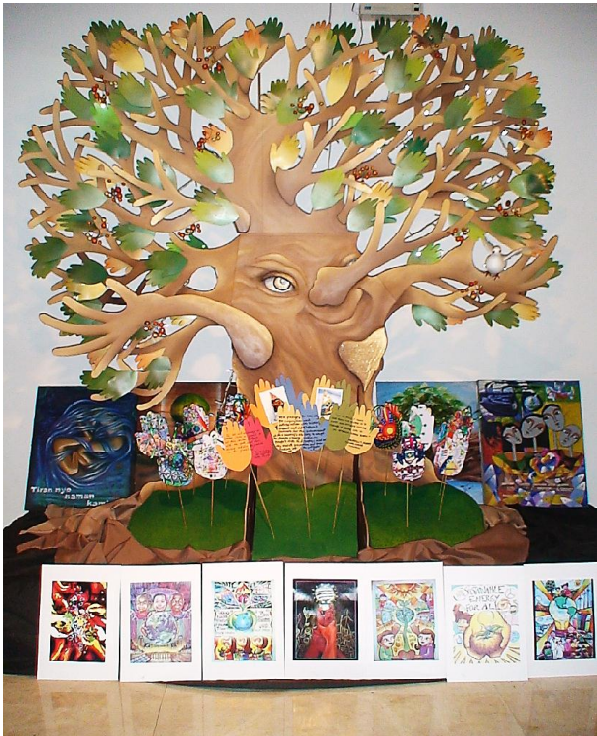
A Side-Event at the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Convened by **Philippines, Kenya and Colombia** under the patronage of **UNESCO**

with an integral performance-arts installation of the  
**TREE OF ACTION TO CONFRONT CLIMATE CHANGE**  
Through Sustainable Development

The ***Tree of Action*** on December 3-7, 2012 was meant to promote culture as a dynamic tool for bio-cultural diversity protection, the popularization of scientific information through multi-media arts information and demonstrations of inter-cultural initiatives to support social transformation necessary for facing the difficult challenges of our time-defying disasters caused by climate change. The *Tree of Action* included illustrated pledges by children and youth to confront climate change through sustainable energy that comprise the *Tree of Action* selected from nationwide competition conceptualized by the ITI-CIDC/ Earthsavers UNESCO DREAM Center sponsored by UNIC-Manila and UNIDO to have a harvest of acknowledgement of citizen’s responsibility to triumph in confronting climate change.

Delegates were invited to plant their pledges. It was led by UNESCO Assistant Director-General ***Wendy Watson-Wright***, Executive Secretary of Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission and representing UNESCO Director-General ***Dr. Irina Bokova*** with convening partners led by Climate Change Commissioner ***Heherson Alvarez***, Phil. Ambassador to Qatar ***Cresente Relacion***, Climate Institute Director, ***Nasir Khattak*** and other foreign delegates.



**TREE OF ACTION**



**WENDY WATSON-WRIGHT**



**PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR CRESENTE RELACION**

**PLANTED PLEDGES**



**Panel Discussion/ Audience Dialogue:**

The side-event presented on-going priority climate change best practices in a panel forum to provide a vivid panorama of converging and synergized concerns in 3 continents through their focal studies and experience in responding to climate change disasters with mitigation and adaptation. Three countries are all working towards the same common, focused and steady goal. A partnership to build a database was initiated for collecting projects being implemented across regions and categorizing them by type of hazard. The tropical zone country or continental swath and their respective national/ regional hydrogeological characteristics determine whether drought or floods will threaten them. In terms of disasters, many countries focus on emergencies and not on preventions, because economic interest push everybody in that direction and it is also politically “more attractive” although prevention is crucially important to save lives and livelihood and guarantee the integrity of the habitat, health, food security, infrastructure and heritage sites of the population.



**CHAIRMAN AND PANELISTS**



**UNESCO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL WITH OTHER FOREIGN DELEGATES WITH THEIR LEAF PLEDGES**

**CHARIMAN' OPENING REMARKS:**



Former Senator, now Climate Change Commissioner of the Philippines **Heherson Alvarez** welcomed the panellists from Kenya, Colombia and the Philippines led by UNESCO Assistant Director-General Wendy Watson-Wright. He provided the background of the side-event project that begun in Rio formally launched with the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for Defying Disasters: Devising and Implementing actions to respond and reduce climate related disasters signed by the partners witnessed by UNESCO, UNISDR, UNDP, Climate Institute, the Office of the President of the Philippines, and the House Committee on Ecology.

As evident in the typhoon “Pablo” devastating Mindanao, the costs of disasters, especially in material damages, grow exponentially every year. Developing countries, across Africa, Asia-Pacific, South America and the Caribbean have much in common in terms of vulnerability to climate change impacts. In addition to the lack of economic resources, dealing with heavy rainfall, typhoons, floods, landslides, drought, dry spells, accelerated sea-level rise, and storm surges is made more difficult by internal conflicts such as those in Colombia, the Philippines and the external conflicts spilling into the national territory of Kenya.

Intercultural, interdisciplinary processes need to be initiated so that resources may be utilized for building resilience through sustainable development initiatives for long-term effective reduction of response and recovery expenses.

He then called on Assistant Director-General Wendy Watson-Wright to deliver the UN Family messages.



***Director-General Irina Bokova’s** message with an affirmation of UNESCO patronage and support for the initiative of the Philippines and Co-convenors from Rio to Doha. ADG Wendy Wright further stressed IOC kinship with climate change concerns & support for those with disabilities.*



**3 DEC 2012**

Dear **Mr. Alvarez**,

It is with great pleasure that I grant UNESCO’s patronage to this event “Defying Disasters” Intercultural Forum (side-event and exhibit) that will take place in Doha, Qatar on the occasion of the UN conference ‘COP18’ as well as the performance “Tree of Action to Confront Climate Change” through which young citizens will have the opportunity to commit themselves “to act and to save their future.” It is fully in line with UNESCO’s principles and objectives.

I warmly support this initiative, as I did the wonderful side-event you organized in Rio last June at which Wendy Watson-Wright, Executive Secretary and Assistant Director-General of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission represented me. Watson-Wright, who is leading the UNESCO Delegation to COP 18, will participate on my behalf in the event you are organizing. Ms. Watson-Wright, as well as my colleague Cynthia Guttman, Executive Officer in my office, has been in contact with Mrs. Cecile Alvarez since they met in Paris last October, and our UNESCO Office in Jakarta is actively involved in different activities around this initiative.

In ending, allow me once again to thank you for your initiative, as well as your support to UNESCO’s activities aiming to accomplish our common objectives for the benefit of society.

With my best wishes, I remain,

Respectfully,  
Yours sincerely,

**Irina Bokova**

*Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's message for a productive meeting of the “Tri-Continental Intercultural South-South Dialogue on Defying Disasters”*



I am pleased to send greetings to this important dialogue in the context of the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

More frequent and intense extreme weather events associated with climate change are making our vulnerability to disasters greater. Scientists have been sounding the alarm for years, and now the evidence is plan to see. The extraordinary is the new normal. No country or community is immune.

Floods threaten lives and livelihoods in low-lying coastal areas and flood plains in all regions. Droughts and wildfires are destroying crops, driving up food prices, and expanding the number of people at risk from hunger and malnutrition, especially children. The trend will only increase until swift and decisive action is taken.

Thankfully, effective remedies exist--proven, cost-effective early warning and disaster risk reduction measures that increase resilience and protect lives, homes, income and economies. It is essential that countries-- individual and together--incorporate such solutions into policy and planning to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and provide opportunities for improved well-being for all people beyond 2015. South-South cooperation can play an important role, and many of the countries hardest hit by climate change can provide important lessons for all.

Developing countries will need significantly scaled-up resources and technology to adapt to climate change, and all countries will need to work together for more sustainable growth based on reduced greenhouse gas emissions. My Sustainable Energy for All initiative is mobilizing commitments from a broad range of actors towards three objectives by 2030: universal energy access, doubling energy efficiency, and doubling the shares of renewable energy. At least one billion people stand to benefit from increased access to modern energy services, with more being added as further .partnerships form.

Sustainable development must also be underpinned by governments keeping to the timetable to reach a global and legally binding climate agreement by 2015. This conference of Parties has an essential role to play in accelerating the momentum.

I wish you a productive meeting.

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*Message from H.E Benigno Aquino III was read by Foreign Affairs Assistant-Secretary **Eduardo Meñez**, Director of the United Nations International Organization.(UNIO) He likewise provided an update of the latest report of casualties and damage of typhoon “Pablo” raging in the Philippines.*



“My warmest greetings to the **Public-Private Partnership for Defying Disasters**, as you hold the **Tri-Continental South-south Dialogue in support of the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change**.

The complexity of global environmental challenges has brought about a paradigm shift in environmental protection and disaster risk management. The effects of climate change transcend borders and politics, and it is only through sustained and meaningful dialogue that we can secure the integrity of our shared resources for future generations.

Time and again, the Philippines have recovered from devastation of natural disasters, due in part to the resilience of our people and the establishment of new measures that strengthen our communities against the effects of these calamities. But there is much that we can learn from countries faced with similar challenges. May this gathering serve as a venue for the critical exchange of key trends and best practices that address climate change vulnerabilities and set forth innovative solutions that advance sustainable development in our respective countries.” United with the global community, let us take greater responsibility for the protection of our environment and strengthen the foundations of humanity’s future.

**BENIGNO S. AQUINO III**

## I. KENYA

The panel members included **Dr Charles Mutai**, National Climate Change Secretariat (representing **Mr. Ali Mohamed**, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources) who expressed his country's sympathy for victims of typhoon *Bopha (Pablo)* and expressed for support for disaster relief and rehabilitation, **Ms. Sarah Standley**, Technical advisor on climate change to the Office of the Permanent Secretary in MEMR; **Susy Wandera** (Kenya climate change working group), **Kennedy Mbeva** (Kenya Youth Climate Network).

- A. Kenya's new project '**Green Champions to Green Actions**' launched in Kenya will contribute to the vision of the Defying Disasters South-South Dialogue. The project enhances partnerships for acting on climate change: Partnerships between schools, between schools and communities and eventually between climate vulnerable schools in different developing countries. The project implements an educational programme across a country-wide network of schools and teachers in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Education's Green Schools Programme which seeks to green schools through tree planting and nursing. This time, the Green Schools will incorporate disaster risk reduction components, thereby helping children to identify and respond to disasters and especially those linked to climate. A television production company which produces popular educational children's Television programmes in East Africa will send film crews to document video evidence of successful climate change and disaster risk reduction actions implemented through the new school and youth partnerships. This will be incorporated into children's TV programmes and posted on the internet to share best practice on climate change and sustainable development actions with national and international audiences including those in the Philippines.

Kenya's project has a vision in line with the Defying Disasters dialogue through twinning some schools in Kenya, Colombia and Philippines.

What will be essential to this project is the engagement of existing civil society networks, since a lot is already being done in Kenya to address climate change. This is why, during the side-event at COP18, the Ministry of Environment was accompanied by representatives from the **Kenya Climate Change Working Group (KCCWG)** and the Kenya Youth Climate Network (KYCN).

### B. "Ending Drought Emergencies"

Progress of initiatives were reported from Rio to Doha by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in designing and undertaking capacity building and institutional strengthening education and technology assistance for building resilience of environmental and human systems to drought as manifested vividly in the re-greening efforts championed by Nobel Laureate, **Wangari Mathai**. The project feeds into the **Kenyan Climate Change Action Plan (KCCAP)** with support from the UNDP-funded African Adaptation Program, to undertake a baseline study to further understand how climate related disasters are impacting Kenya particularly food security, health and infrastructure.

## II. COLOMBIA

A. **Viktor Sebek**, Director of **Inter-American Center for Peace and Security** coordinated the presentation for:

1. **The City of Medellin:** Early Warning System (SIATA, System de Alerta Temprana). The Director of the Disaster Risk Management Office, **Carlos Alberto Gil- Valencia** with **Jaime Enrique Gomez Zapata** of the Knowledge and Risk Reduction who affirmed their intention to become a member of the triangulated program of Philippines-Kenya-Colombia in a letter.

Since Medellin suffered extensive damage following torrential rains and floods in 2008, the City Government began developing a comprehensive set of measures to forecast disasters and minimize impact of damage. As a result of the new measures, it is now globally considered as one of the leaders in the world on early Warning system through its program called SIATA (System of Early Warning) operated through Medellin's administrative department on risk management, DAGRED, of the City Government of Medellin. It extends to the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Aburra constituting one of the principal strategies of risk management in different municipalities of the region. The main objective is to alert communities of the probability of occurrence of the extreme hydro-meteorological events which could generate emergency situation and thus reduce the impact of such phenomena during implementation of measures to respond to an imminent threat. SIATA is concerned in the monitoring of basins and hydrographical micro-basins in real time, and hydrological and meteorological regional modelling, generating vital information for environmental and risk management.

Through constant and reliable monitoring of atmospheric variables, basins of the region through the Pluviometric Network, Meteorological Network, Network of Level sensors, network of soil humidity, acelrographic network and hydro-meteorological radar, accurate warnings are transmitted to the community. Stations which form part of the network are distributed throughout the Valle of Aburra and operate under strict process of calibration, corrective and preventive maintenance which guarantees its permanent functioning. The City of Medellin wishes to share its experiences with local authorities in Africa and Asia, especially Kenya and Philippines with a view to replicating its success story. (*powerpoint presentation submitted*)

2. **The province of San Andres and Providencia:** The government led initiatives to reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts. **Ms. Emiliana Bernard** of the Department of Interior with parallel outreach to other Caribbean states sent a brief panorama of its components.
  - Community education in protection of beaches from climate change impacts like erosion due to rising sea levels and storm surges
  - Local technical studies to analyse threats, assess vulnerability to rise of sea level, coastal erosion and water shortage, and production of integrated maps
  - Measures to deal with water shortages due to climate change
  - Measures for the relocation of human settlements from coastal areas of high vulnerability considering the ethos of linguistic cultural characteristics of populations singled-out for relocation of human settlement of human settlement, the construction of homes with bioclimatic criteria and recovery of ancestral practices of the island's territory to prevent further repopulation of abandoned settlement areas.
3. **Gregory Byrd**, Assistant Secretary-General of the Global Coalition for Efficient Logistics explained through a video presentation about the GCEL Network, its capacity & potential. He stressed the value of logistics in community and transportation that can fast-track delivery of relief and rehabilitation services (*a full video was shown*)

### III. PHILIPPINES

Climate Change Commissioner **Heherson T. Alvarez** presented the update on the ***River Basin Management for Sustainable Development*** with a ***Carbon War Room Strategy*** towards green growth presented through the inter-agency partnership of the DENR Secretary **Ramon Paje**, Chair of the Cabinet Cluster for Environment and Climate Change.

An update on the video presentation initially presented at Rio by the Chairman of the House Committee on Environment in Rio by Congressman **Dan Fernandez** highlighted the adoption by the Office of the President of River Basin Management strategy as the science- and risk-based framework for addressing impacts of extreme climate events and disasters on sustainable development. The Philippines is one of 3 countries in the world most vulnerable to disasters (World Risk Index, 2012). The recent disasters in major river basin systems has fast-tracked, capability building by national agencies for improved local mapping of vulnerabilities and planning, climate and disaster risk proofing, and proposed institutional administrative arrangements for implementation and monitoring.

Today, communication projects to introduce the concept, as well as to assess readiness of local government units for participation in river basin management are being undertaken with the Climate Change Commission, the DENR and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). A law mandating the creation of river basin authority is pending in Congress. Flood forecasting systems in 13 river basins is now being established.

Commissioner Alvarez also explained the Philippine Carbon War Room (a Public-Private Partnership) for implementation of Smart Island Strategy in liaison with the Climate Institute in Washington D.C, Energy Efficiency/Green Building initiatives, and Black Carbon Particle Emissions Reduction, and other measures for building resilience of small islands and urban economies.

The **Philippine Carbon War Room (PCWR)** in process of development is meant to promote appropriate low-carbon and renewable energy sources and technologies including encouragement of green building that ensure and enhance the resilience of Filipino communities vulnerable to climate and disaster risks. Selected small island economies, city and municipal governments shall be assisted to set in motion a clean energy revolution.

#### **The objectives are as follow:**

- Free foreign exchange otherwise spent on importing fossil fuel for economic development
- Promote local and locally-based green energy technologies
- Bring together successful entrepreneurs, business leaders, policy experts, researchers, and thought leaders to focus on market-driven solution
- Identify technology and policy gaps and other barriers that are preventing market-based scale up of climate change solutions
- Initiate discussion for a framework that will eventually lead to a Memorandum of Agreement among its partners
- Engage all sectors, especially the youth with participatory communications, information and education modules for wider South-South Cooperation in forging the social conscience and political will necessary for confronting climate change with a sample modeling provided by the **Earthsavers UNESCO DREAM Center** as witnessed with the ***Tree of Action to Confront Climate Change*** and the mural painting created by persons with disabilities. (powerpoint presentation submitted)



MURAL PAINTING BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES PRESENTED ALSO TO UNFCCC SECRETARY CHRISTIANA FIGUERES

## CLOSING REMARKS:

*Dr. Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, Director of Earthsavers UNESCO DREAM Center and President of Philippine Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI-CIDC) suggested that the forthcoming UNESCO World Arts Education Week observance on May 21<sup>st</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> could fuse climate change content, problems & solutions, millennium development goals, and methods for cutting carbon and water footprints with the global animation of cultural diverse artistic expressions to sensitize the general public, awaken & forge the collective action of world leaders to “act now to save the future.” She expressed appreciation to those who assisted the project.*

## Organizing Committee and Partners:

The Tri-Continental Organizing Committee was formed with the patronage of UNESCO under the leadership of Director-General Irina Bokova. It is in liaison with some members of the UN family of agencies, such as UNESCO, UNIC, UNIDO, UNISDR, UNEP, UNDP composed of respective lead agencies in three countries involving partnerships with other groups like GIZ in Germany and the Climate Institute in Washington D.C linked with AOSIS. DENR is chair of the Cabinet Cluster for Environment and Climate Change under the Office of the President as well as the House and Senate Committees on Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources (Kenya), the Inter-American Center for Peace and Security. Serving as coordinating secretariat is the Earthsavers honoured as the 6<sup>th</sup> in the world designated as UNESCO DREAM Center in liaison with the International Theatre Institute in Paris. The ITI-Earthsavers Academy/ Ensemble which is also honoured as *UNESCO Artists for Peace* is modelling distinctively a creative communications paradigm through performance, media arts to popularize science and reach out to marginalized sector of society for social cohesion and transformation for peace and sustainable development.

## POST DOHA- Multiplier Effect:

*\*Earthsavers Founding Chairman & Climate Change Commissioner Heherson Alvarez was invited as panelist for the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit organized by the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) led by Director-General, **Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri** on January 31<sup>st</sup> to February 2. He spoke on Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation towards a Resource-Efficient Green Development.*

*\*The **Tree of Action** to Confront Climate Change was launched at the Senate hosted by **Senator Chiz Escudero**, Chairman of the Committee on Environment as a multi-media arts exhibition caravan from February 5<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> to travel to different regions and institutions as a participatory vehicle to respond to climate change. The Design Team is composed of Leni, Chito, Clarisse Firmacion with Susan Claudio.*

*\*Secretariat assistance with broadcast reportage on DZRH-Radyo Balintataw was given by ChowKing, PLDT-SMART, MetroBank, SanMig Coffee, Tesoro's, Air 21, Provincial Government of Isabela*

*\*A note of appreciation to the UNESCO DREAM Center Secretariat was extended by **Chairman Fahad Al-Attiya** through his personal assistant Antoine Artiganave for International Affairs “Mr. Chairman conveyed his congratulations to you on the tree project which you so magnificently managed, as well as your side-event. We hope that your experience in Qatar was pleasant and that you had a safe trip back to the Philippines.”*