

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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Tree Planting Now Part of the School Curriculum and a Requirement for Graduation.

CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – The Philippines is embarking on an ambitious program to reforest its countryside by planting 500-million trees in one-million hectares, involving 50-million people, mostly students, in the next five years. The total land area of the Philippines is approximately 30-million hectares.

A news release distributed by Robert E.A. Borje, Third Secretary and Information Officer of the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations based in New York, New York, quoted Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Demetrio Ignacio, Jr. as saying that the massive reforestation program will be made possible following the inclusion of tree planting as part of the school curriculum and a requirement for graduation.

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Undersecretary Ignacio made the announcement before a United Nation's Forum on Forests' 9th session that concluded early this month. Mr. Ignacio said that "this year alone there is a plan to plant 50-million trees in 100,000 hectares that will involve about five-million people."

Underscoring the gains in forestry management achieved at its national and in regional levels and the positive impact on communities, the Philippines unveiled the ambitious national reforestation program grounded on a sustainable-development strategy.

Mr. Ignacio stressed that forests have positive impact on the lives of people. They provide basic needs, a healthier environment and a life support system that protects biodiversity and production areas, and lessens risks to disasters.

"Forests affect the lives of all our people. Yet while people are dependent on forests, our forests are also dependent on people," Undersecretary Ignacio explained the symbiotic relationship between the two.

He pointed out that, to further bolster Philippine efforts in managing its forests, the country has developed a more sustainable strategy for its reforestation program in "a way that will create jobs, livelihood and income."

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“The Philippine government has a convergence strategy with our agriculture and our agrarian-reform program. We are actively promoting private investments in our forestlands, especially projects with low-carbon footprints, under our Public-Private Partnerships or PPP.” Ignacio said.

“We are using the portfolio approach whereby government does all the preparations for investors. For this to work, we are pursuing good governance. We have decentralized and devolved authorities and decision-making at the lowest possible level, with the necessary transparency, accountability and checks and balance.”

“To maximize benefits for our forest dwellers, we have expanded our tenurial system. Presently, more than nine-million hectares are under some form of tenure, especially ancestral lands, representing 62% of our forestlands and benefiting roughly 11.4-million people,” Undersecretary Ignacio added. # # #

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PHL to Plant 500-Million Trees in One-Million Hectares - MabuhayRadio

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