

Take responsibility for global warming, Filipino educators tell First World

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Manila, Philippines - As 15th United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP 15) enters its third day, cause-oriented groups and progressive educators in the Philippines hit the US and other developed countries for refusing to take responsibility for global warming.

Led by the Educators for Development (EfD), the groups held the Peoples' Assembly on Climate Change: 'Speakout Against Climate Change', in Quezon City, a cultural forum to express their vigilance on the ongoing climate talks in Copenhagen. The groups are urging the 192-country UN delegation to sign a landmark deal that would require developed countries to significantly reduce GHG emissions and exact payments for their massive GHG emissions that led to the increasingly rapid warming of earth's atmosphere.

According to Jaz Lumang, EfD spokesperson and IBON executive director, while the industrial and massive resource extractive activities of First World corporations are largely responsible for the earth's warming, they managed to use climate change as a new arena for profit generation through the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. 'The US and its corporations lobbied for market based mechanisms to be part of the solutions to climate change to be embodied in the Kyoto Protocol,' she said.

The Kyoto Protocol actually facilitated the creation of a global carbon market which as of 2008 is worth some US\$126 billion which is about 12 times bigger than when the carbon market started in the European Union at US\$10 billion in 2005. Since then, the size of the carbon market has tripled and doubled in the succeeding years.

Richard Gadit, who represented indigenous peoples in the 'Speakout' said, 'Indigenous peoples see the Kyoto Protocol as a market-based solution and mechanism for the encroachment of big foreign corporations into our ancestral lands. It is a profit-oriented scheme aimed to intensify their exploitation of the rich natural resources in our territories in the name of environment protection.'

Meanwhile, Arnold dela Cruz, union president of Republic Asahi Glass Corporation in Manila said during the 'Speakout' that the Philippine government should also made accountable for the growing vulnerability of the country to the effects of climate change. 'The government continues to enact and implement laws like the Mining Act and NIPAS as well free trade agreements such as the JPEPA that intensify the plunder of our land and resources resulting in the further environmental destruction,' he said.

According to the EfD, the many thorny issues confronting the COP 15 only show how uncommitted developed countries are in addressing the damage they have caused. 'It is only right the peoples of the world make them accountable and demand their full compliance to reduce their carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases and stop the plunder and destruction of the world's natural resources,' said Buncan.

The 'Speakout' featured cultural presentations that depicted corporate plunder of the environment by progressive groups such as Sinagbayan, Peoples' Chorale, Katribu and IBON.

At the end of the activity, EfD participants signed the Peoples' Protocol on Climate Change and put their thumbprint on a symbolic image of a dying earth. 'This act represents our vow to take action against climate change and carry this commitment to our schools and communities beyond COP15,' said Buncan.