Regional lawmakers call out ASEAN governments’ failure to commit to raising climate ambition at COP25

JAKARTA, 13 December 2019 - As the COP25 drew to a close, regional lawmakers today denounced the failure of any ASEAN government to join the alliance of nations who intend to submit enhanced climate action plans for 2020 and urged their leaders to do so as a matter of urgency.

On 11 December, COP25 President and Chile Environment Minister Carolina Schmidt announced that 73 nations have joined the alliance of countries determined to submit an enhanced climate action plan (NDC) for 2020. None of the ASEAN member states joined. Only Timor-Leste took the brave decision to join the alliance and committed to increasing its climate action plan by next year.

“Southeast Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to climate change. From capital cities to villages and island archipelagos, people are already feeling its effects: in the Mekong, livelihoods are ravaged by saltwater intrusion; in the Philippines, people are being hit more and more by vicious typhoons; and entire modern metropolises like Bangkok are predicted to be underwater by 2050,” said Sarah Elago, Member of the Philippines House of Representatives and ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR).

“How many times do we need to explain to our leaders that there is no more time to ponder - bold action is needed now in 2020. The situation is critical: our youth are mobilizing and striking because they know that there are only 10 years left for governments to act for them to have a decent future. Why is it that children are doing more than the governing adults?” continued Sarah Elago.

Raising climate ambition is critical to stabilizing our world’s temperatures and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. According to the UN Environment Program, currently, the world’s climate ambition plans are considerably underperforming and not on track to meet the Paris agreement’s objective of limiting temperature increases to “well below 2°C.” Rather, our collective climate action plans are on track for a 3.2°C increase in the world’s temperatures this century; a catastrophic scenario for the people of Southeast Asia.

APHR calls on all ASEAN governments to protect their people, as well as the rest of the planet, by officially signaling their intent to submit enhanced climate ambition plans for next year.
“Our climate plans are underperforming. We must raise ambition for our future generations, our children, those most vulnerable in Southeast Asia, and for our own sake. Virtually all people’s human rights are at stake and it is each government’s duty to defend and protect these rights,” said Meity Magdalena, former Indonesian Member of Parliament (MP) and member of APHR.

According to the Climate Action Tracker, Indonesia and Singapore’s climate action plans are highly insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement goal. Vietnam’s is deemed “critically insufficient” on a par with countries such as the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, APHR calls on ASEAN governments to join the alliance of countries, and non-state actors committing to net-zero emissions by 2050 in line with the latest scientific information.

APHR welcomes the initiative of cities such as Ho Chi Minh City, Quezon City, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and other non-state actors to commit to achieving net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 but this will not be enough. In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, ASEAN governments must commit to this target too.

Currently, only Lao PDR has joined the alliance and stated its intention to commit to net-zero CO₂ emission by 2050. APHR commends this step and urges other ASEAN governments to follow suit. APHR further highly commends Timor-Leste for joining both alliances and urges ASEAN countries to follow its example.

“We cannot stay on the sidelines of this catastrophe. Southeast Asia is contributing to climate change through its reliance on coal, its deforestation and haze crisis, and its lack of ambition in its climate action plans. We call on all governments to reverse this shameful historical trend and right our past wrongs on the climate,” said Abel Da Silva, MP of Timor-Leste and member of APHR.