



## THINKING LOCAL, ACTING GLOBAL: FORESTS, COMMUNITIES, AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN BONN

**Forest Foundation Philippines and Parabukas Inc.**  
Antonio G.M. La Viña, Jose Andres Canivel, Nicole Torres

---

In November of this year, countries will meet in Bonn, Germany for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This year's COP will be chaired by Fiji, and it will be the first UNFCCC meeting under the presidency of a Pacific Island nation.

In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly, the Fijian Prime Minister emphasized the need for a global response to the threats of climate change. He highlighted the value of broad-based collaboration between governments at every level, civil society, the private sector and ordinary citizens, to meet the challenge of climate change head on and together.

Collaboration has been the response to many challenges to climate action. Although the United States announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement earlier this year, State governors and City mayors from all over the country have stepped up with pledges to cut their local carbon emissions. Other countries, including large emitters like China and India,

have also persevered with their own actions to implement long-term carbon reduction plans. Businesses have likewise pitched in with their own commitments to keep the world on track to limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

This united front cannot come soon enough. For an increasing number of people, the threats that climate change poses to their ability to access and enjoy adequate food, clean water, safe housing and a dignified life have become all too real. This year alone, Hurricane Maria laid waste to crops and farms in Puerto Rico, in the same few months that a heatwave triggered massive wildfires in homes and vineyards in California's wine country. Closer to home, Filipino farmers are preparing for the hot and dry conditions of El Niño, even as fishing communities in the eastern part of the country have yet to fully recover from the floods and storm surges brought by Typhoon Haiyan nearly four years ago. These actual experiences of communities and people on the ground emphasize the unpredictability of climate change phenomena and the severity of its impacts, and could soon become realities for people all over the world.

## Forests, Communities and Climate in the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement acknowledges the link between climate change and human rights. Countries are called on to respect and promote human rights in the climate actions that they develop and implement. The rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, persons with disabilities and children, as well as gender equality and the empowerment of women are especially emphasized (Preamble, par. 11). Because of this, human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups should be a consideration in all climate actions that are undertaken under the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement also recognizes the value of forests as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases (Preamble, par. 12). It further notes the importance of ensuring the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity when undertaking climate change actions (Preamble, par. 13).

Conserving and enhancing forests is a critical component of climate change mitigation. The Paris Agreement encourages parties to support or implement activities under the REDD+ framework (Article 5, Sec. 2), which should provide incentives for activities in developing countries that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve and sustainably manage forests and enhance forest carbon stocks. The Paris Agreement further affirms the importance of providing incentives for non-carbon benefits (Article 5, Sec. 2), acknowledging that in addition to their value as carbon sinks and reservoirs, forests also provide habitats for biodiversity, sources for community livelihoods and key ecosystem services.

The Paris Agreement also recognizes the importance of avoiding and minimizing the loss and damage that occurs because of climate change (Article 8, Sec. 1). The negative effects of climate change have slowly but inexorably become more and more evident; climate change mitigation actions can no longer prevent climate change, but are now focused on controlling the degree to which it will impact future generations. Adaptation measures may no longer be enough to respond to extreme weather events (such as typhoons, droughts and heat waves) and slow onset events (such as sea level rise and land and forest degradation). Enhanced action and support are needed to be able to address these adverse effects, especially for developing countries which are often most at risk.

## Discussions to watch in Bonn

This year, countries will continue negotiations on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Questions related to land use, human rights and sustainable development are expected to come up in several discussions. Some of these will be taken up under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), which are advisory bodies to the COP. An Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) has also been formed to make recommendations on rules and guidance for the COP to adopt.

### ● Food, Agriculture and Forestry in the ASEAN

Member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can be expected to deliberate common positions on climate change impacts on agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, and food security. These will be guided by the Vision of ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry towards 2025, a strategic plan that was developed in 2016. In line with this Vision, the ASEAN negotiating bloc is likely to emphasize equitable, sustainable and inclusive growth, lessening poverty and ensuring food security, increasing resilience to climate change and natural disasters and achieving sustainable forest management in the negotiations in Bonn.

### ● REDD+

The SBI will consider existing institutional arrangements or the need for potential governance alternatives for the coordination of support for REDD+ implementation. These discussions will build on a series of meetings between countries, United Nations bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders. From these talks, recommendations will be made and sent to the COP.

### ● Loss and Damage

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage was established in 2013. It enhances and coordinates approaches to address impacts of extreme weather events and slow onset events in developing countries that are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. It is facilitated by an Executive Committee, which has crafted a work plan setting out activities for the next five years. In Bonn, the SBI and SBSTA will consider the annual report of the Executive Committee. From this, the bodies will draft conclusions for the COP to discuss and adopt.



## • Gender

The SBI will discuss gender and climate change. Elements of a gender action plan will be considered. This action plan is expected to support the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates as negotiations on the UNFCCC proceed.

## • Reporting and Transparency

Under the Paris Agreement, countries are required to submit individual commitments on actions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in the long term, while taking into account their national circumstances and capabilities. These commitments are considered the countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), or their plans toward meeting the goal of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

The APA has been requested to develop guidance on the features of the NDCs. Such guidance is needed to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of the information that the countries submit, and to elaborate how the NDCs will be accounted for. Options and recommendations from these discussions will be considered and adopted by the COP.

## Thinking Local, Acting Global

It is often said that many of the world's problems can be addressed by "thinking globally and acting locally." This conventional approach assumes that great and complicated problems can be addressed by understanding that the concerns of individual countries are often interlinked, and translating this understanding into tangible actions that can be executed at smaller scales in countries. This includes, for example, building institutions and developing policies and

approaches at the international level, and then applying corresponding solutions in local settings.

Still, international discussions on climate change can feel very distant from the everyday realities experienced by people and communities. The UNFCCC process and all its moving parts are often slow, confusing and sometimes frustrating, in the face of worsening climate change threats that many experience on a day-to-day basis.

It is thus important to keep people and communities at the heart of all the negotiations – thinking locally and acting globally. Local knowledge, experiences and analyses should inform discussions at the international level. Actions to address climate change and to respond to its threats must necessarily be a collaborative effort. This collaboration should make space for local ideas and practices, which should be considered a critical element of and resource for international policy making.

"Thinking locally" should drive global action on climate change, and ensure that any decisions reached will benefit real people and communities. By thinking locally and acting globally, this year's meeting in Bonn can be about more than high-level country positions championed by delegates and negotiators who will make the trip there. Many people and communities with an interest in the results of the COP may not be in Bonn this year, but efforts can be made to ensure that their voices are heard within and outside those conference rooms.



**Forest  
Foundation  
Philippines**

Let's grow together.

## Forest Foundation Philippines

is a non-profit organization that provides grants to organizations that empower people to protect the forests.

### About

Established in 2002, under two bilateral agreements between the governments of the United States of America and the Philippines, the Forest Foundation Philippines is a non-profit organization that provides grants to organizations that empower the people to protect the forests.

Since its inception, the Forest Foundation Philippines has supported over 450 projects which has improved the management of 1.5M hectares of forest lands, restored approximately 4,200 hectares of forests through the re-introduction of appropriate native species, established over 40 community-conserved areas and built over 60 community enterprises.

Today, the Forest Foundation Philippines' work continues as the forests still face threats. Guided by the Forest Foundation Philippines Program Plan, 2017-2021, the Foundation has allocated around Php 480M to protect the country's most critical forest landscapes: Sierra Madre, Palawan, Samar and Leyte, and Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental.

### Vision

Lush forests protected by empowered people

### Mission

To support activities that foster forest protection

# parabukas

## Parabukas

Parabukas provides consulting services in areas where law and policy intersect with environment and development.

### About

Our primary mission is to help demystify legal and policy issues around Climate Change, Energy, Forests and Land Use, Rights, Heritage, and Natural Resource Management. We aim to enable and enhance understanding of complex legal language, concepts, and processes by decision-makers and stakeholders, improving inclusiveness and participation, and ultimately empower those most affected by environmental degradation and associated social problems to address them practically and effectively.



### Parabukas

Website: <https://www.parabukas.com/>  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/parabukas](https://www.facebook.com/parabukas)

### Forest Foundation Philippines

2F Valderrama Building, 107 Esteban St., Legaspi Village, Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1229  
Phone: (+63 2) 891 0595; (+63 2) 864 0287  
E-mail: [info@forestfoundation.ph](mailto:info@forestfoundation.ph)  
Website: [www.forestfoundation.ph](http://www.forestfoundation.ph)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/forestfoundationph](https://www.facebook.com/forestfoundationph)