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IN a clear indication that environmental concerns are all encompassing, British Government is supporting the participation of two representatives from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) in a training course looking at the impacts of climate change on economic growth. The British Government, in association with the Malaysian Government, organized the training in the “PAGE 09 model” delivered by Dr. Chris Hope of Cambridge University, a world leader in the field.

“The UK Government has put climate change at the heart of its foreign policy. We realize that as the world becomes more networked, the impacts of climate change in one country or region will affect the prosperity and security of others around the world,” said British Ambassador Stephen Lillie.

“We are pleased to have the participation of NEDA in this exercise and we hope that the training will be beneficial to the Aquino administration”, he added.

The two NEDA representatives, Leonard Guevarra and Christine Danao from the Agriculture and Power and Electrification Divisions respectively, were joined by other economic experts from Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Asian Development Bank during the three-day training course held in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

“The PAGE model is a world leader in its field, and the training would have been very useful for countries carrying out studies on the effects of climate change on the economy, or those that are looking at the likely development path for a low carbon and climate resilient economy,” noted John Pearson, head of the UK Government’s Climate Change Network for South East Asia.

He went on: “The PAGE model was used in the groundbreaking “Stern Review” of 2006, which turned climate change from an environmental to an economic issue. The review found that if we acted now to prevent dangerous climate change it would cost 1 percent of GDP—but if we waited later, it would cost 5 percent to 20 percent of global GDP. It was also used in the Asian Development Bank 2009 report on the economics of climate change in South East Asia. That report found that by the end of the century, climate change could reduce economic growth in the region by 6.7 percent each year, or twice the global average.”

“The training is a valuable support in advancing the climate change agenda of NEDA. The Agriculture Staff where I belong is currently the secretariat of the Philippine Council of Sustainable Development [PCSD] and a member of the Advisory Board to the Climate Change Commission in the Philippines,” said Guevarra.

Added Danao: “Given the Philippines’ climate change susceptibility vis-a-vis its contribution to

the cause of this occurrence (less than 1 percent of the global GHG contribution/emission), adaptation has been our more prudent focus, over mitigation. The training certainly takes into account the cost of adaptation initiatives, especially if the model of PAGE 09 is tweaked to focus and bring out the effects of Climate Change on the Philippines as a country. The training is going to be helpful in putting numbers to our Medium Term Philippine Development Plan.”

Community-based organizations, government agencies, local government units, NGOs, academics and other stakeholders in the field of disaster risk reduction met in Tagaytay City last week for a National Conference on Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction.

The gathering happened one year after Typhoon Ondoy hit the capital Manila, and was organized by the Citizens' Disaster Response Center through the MICRODIS Project, with support from the European Community's Sixth Framework Programme.

“This activity aimed to bring together various stakeholders to discuss ways to improve disaster management in the country”, CDRC Executive Director Lourdes Louella Escandor said.

On September 26, 2009, the country was caught by surprise when Typhoon Ondoy poured more than a month's worth of rain in just 24 hours, inundating several communities under floodwaters. It affected 4 million people, and killed 298, in one of the worst disasters the country has ever experienced.

“Typhoon Ondoy served as a wake-up call to most Filipinos. It only revealed the glaring fact that our country is not prepared for any kind of disaster,” Escandor said.

The Philippines also topped the list of countries most frequently hit by natural disasters in 2009, the records of the Belgium-based Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) showed.

Escandor stressed that “only through a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach can we adequately reduce the debilitating effects of disasters. This conference, which is part of the MICRODIS Project, has the overall goal to strengthen preparedness, mitigation and prevention strategies in order to reduce the health, social and economic impacts of extreme events on communities.”

The conference also hoped to increase the sharing of information and building of capacities and collaborations amongst various stakeholders in the field of natural disasters and human impacts.

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