

**Opening Address of Senator Loren Legarda  
CVF High Level Climate Policy Forum  
15 August 2016 | Senate of the Philippines**

**What does the future hold for us—nations greatly vulnerable to the ill effects of climate change?**

**We are walking on thin ice. Our future is uncertain because we are facing a crisis that we cannot resolve on our own.**

**Sea level rise threatens to submerge island nations including our fellow CVF member states--Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and the Maldives. Ocean acidification is causing irreversible damage to our coral reefs, while the sudden shifts from hot temperatures to incessant**

rains pose uncertainties to agriculture, greatly affecting our food security. The warming climate is now one of the most significant risks for World Heritage Sites, including the Philippines' own Ifugao Rice Terraces. Extreme rainfall and heavy floods constantly threaten lives, livelihood and development.

This is why we were not content with the use of the phrase “well below the 2°C goal” when the Paris Agreement was being drafted. Instead, we pushed for the inclusion of the 1.5°C global warming limit as our main goal.

It was not an easy journey during the Paris Agreement negotiations yet we continue to move forward through

the challenging path of pushing for its ratification. At this point, 22 of the 197 Parties to the Convention have ratified the Agreement, but they represent only 1.08% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.<sup>1</sup> This is still too far from the required representation of 55% of GHG emissions in order for the Agreement to take effect.

The 2015 Paris Agreement has been hailed by many as a landmark agreement, but its aspirations will not happen on its own. This is where the role of the CVF becomes even more crucial.

Allow me first to congratulate our Climate Change Commission for representing the Philippines in the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

**CVF. It was a challenge for our country to lead the CVF during that crucial period of crafting and negotiating the Paris Agreement. We could not have done it without the immense support of our fellow CVF member states and of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).**

**Now that Ethiopia will assume the CVF Presidency, I am certain that, with the unequivocal support of every member, it will continue to steer the CVF towards our common goal of being the voice of reason in the climate negotiations and asserting the rights of vulnerable nations.**

**Bending the global warming curve to 1.5°C is a moral imperative, because it means saving the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people; it means upholding the human rights of the poor and vulnerable; it means ensuring the integrity of our ecosystems.**

**Global warming has already breached the 1°C level with unprecedented warming in the past months. We have already borne countless tragedies and losses from recurring impacts of extreme weather events under a 1°C global warming. How much more with higher temperatures?**

**We cannot wait for the Agreement to take effect before we take action. We must continue to rally our respective**

states and the community of nations to take urgent climate action because global warming will not halt as institutions and nations all over the world debate whether to ratify or not.

Although we are not major emitters of GHG, we cannot let our respective economies grow through the ways that caused today's climate crisis; we cannot let human society live in a world fraught with dangers.

Quality of life comes with a price tag—but it is not necessarily beyond our reach. Building livable cities and communities requires good planning. More importantly, it requires a genuine commitment to the ultimate goal of

**putting the Earth's and our people's survival foremost over all other concerns.**

**We now enter a new era of development pursuits which challenges us to do more, to do better, and to be more innovative. Delivering on our commitments to the Paris Agreement is our way of telling and showing the world that though we are vulnerable, we are not incapable.**

**We strive for 1.5°C to thrive and we can do this together. The dream of a safer world needs the cooperation of all countries, and of every man, woman, and child.**

If we start today, there is no promise that we will be lucky enough to see the undoing of the damage within our lifetime, but at least, we leave our world with the gift of hope for a better, kinder future.

Thank you.