



GARN
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR
THE RIGHTS OF NATURE



February 24, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

Earth Law Center, the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (a network of over 100 organizations and individuals worldwide), and the undersigned organizations support the Rights of Nature Bill introduced in the Philippines, and applaud the tremendous efforts and commitment by the Philippine Misereor Partnership, Inc. (PMPI), NASSA/Caritas Philippines and their colleagues in this undertaking.

Climate change, with its subsequent biodiversity loss and global environmental emergencies, is perhaps the greatest challenge ever faced by humanity. The situation is dire: sea-level is predicted to rise over 3 feet by 2100 and 12 feet by 2300;¹ drought, heatwaves, wildfires, and other extreme weather events will increase in severity, causing ² 250,000 human deaths per year (which will also increase)³ and billions of dollars in damage and lost livelihoods; and nearly 1 in 6 species face extinction due to climate change effects.⁴

The outlook is especially grim for island nations, such as the Philippines, and marine ecosystems. A 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reaffirmed that some island

¹ IPCC, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate: Summary for Policymakers* (2019), available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/chapter/summary-for-policymakers>.

² Donald Wuebbles, David W. Fahey & Kathy A. Hibbard, *How Will Climate Change Affect the United States in Decades to Come?*, EARTH & SPACE SCIENCE NEWS (Nov. 3, 2017), available at <https://eos.org/features/how-will-climate-change-affect-the-united-states-in-decades-to-come>.

³ *The Impact of Global Warming on Human Fatality Rates*, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN (June 17, 2009), available at <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/global-warming-and-health/>

⁴ Mark C. Urban, *Accelerating Extinction Risk from Climate Change*, 348 SCIENCE 571 (2015), available at <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/348/6234/571>.

nations will likely become uninhabitable due to climate-related changes to the ocean and cryosphere (i.e., the Earth's frozen water) and ⁵ fifty-eight percent of all reefs are at "serious risk" of extinction as a result of the increased acidity and ocean warming.⁶

Experts increasingly advocate for fundamental societal transformations in order to tackle climate change. A seminal IPCC report in 2018 found that limiting the global temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees Celsius – commonly recognized as the upper limit to avoid some of the worst impacts of climate change – “would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.”⁷ Additionally, a May 2019 United Nations “mega-report” on biodiversity loss concluded that efforts to protect individual species are no longer sufficient, calling repeatedly—*21 separate times*— for “transformative change” to restore, create, and safeguard a sustainable environment for humans and Nature.⁸

‘Rights of Nature’ is emerging in over 20 countries as a solution to our environmental crisis, including climate change. Rights of Nature laws change our current anthropocentric paradigm to an ecocentric paradigm, from humans as owners of and separate from Nature, towards humans as a part of Nature with responsibilities and obligations owed to Nature. Rights of Nature focuses on rediscovering interconnection, reformulating values and changing human behaviour, and therefore can create the change necessary to restore the climate.

Rights of Nature also presents distinct advantages to that of a wholly human rights focused regime. One advantage is that consideration of the inherent worth of Nature encourages the protections of ecosystems, plant and animal species, and other natural entities beyond their mere economic value to humans. Another advantage is the recognition that all species and ecosystems are interconnected, and that the continued well-being of humans necessitates the protection and restoration of the entire biosphere. Climate change law and policy based on an ecocentric perspective (i.e., Both humans and Nature have a right to a healthy environment and stable climate) better addresses root causes with the goal of protecting all life—not only humans.

Philippine law already allows citizens to sue on behalf of Nature for violations of environmental law. This is a great first step and one that many other countries do not have. Such law has already proven successful, for example to protect the largest Marine Protected Area, the Tañon Strait, from oil exploration. But transformative change is necessary to not only protect but *restore* ecosystems to health. If passed, the Rights of Nature Bill will help to promote the transformative change needed in order to combat climate change, while also protecting the rights of the Filipino people and the future generations of all species. As a result, we fully support the efforts to enshrine Rights of Nature in the Philippines, and the rest of the world.

⁵ IPCC, *supra* note 2.

⁶ “Reefs at Risk.” *World Resources Institute*, 9 Nov. 2015, www.wri.org/our-work/project/reefs-risk.

⁷ IPCC, *Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Approved by Governments* (2018), available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>.

⁸ United Nations' Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (May 6, 2019), at: <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>.

On behalf of people and planet,

Earth Law Center (ELC), USA

Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN), International
Movement Rights. USA

Gaia Foundation, UK

Society for Learning and Transformation (SALT), Kenya

African Institute for Culture and Ecology (AFRICE), Uganda

MELCA- Ethiopia

EarthLore Foundation, South Africa

Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien-Etre au Bénin (GRABE), Benin

African Biodiversity Network