

PRESS STATEMENT

“Used sanitary napkins and diapers would not turn into waste in the first place if washable, not disposable,” Bangon Kalikasan Movement explained in reaction to a statement of Quezon City’s Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department head Frederika Rentoy, Tuesday.

These items, according to Rentoy, are among the reasons why “it was not easy to achieve a zero waste scenario” and why QC is now looking for a “sanitary” landfill or may send the garbage to the dump in Capas, Tarlac or to Rodriguez (Montalban) when Payatas closes this year.

All dumpsites should have been closed in February 2006.

“There is difficulty in dealing with certain wastes, but zero waste must remain to be our goal. There is no such thing as a ‘sanitary’ landfill which is really a ‘glorified’ dump,” Annette Papa of Bangon Kalikasan Movement explained.

“We must do our share in contributing to the ‘drastic, dramatic’ measures that experts are now looking at if only to mitigate, at least, the irreversible trend of global warming and climate change” Papa said.

About five storeys high or some 50 feet made up mostly of sanitary napkins and diapers in the Payatas dump killed some 1,000 people, of whom only 270 bodies were recovered while more than 800 based on the community register were not, and several more were transients who were there visiting at that time.

Only a small fraction of other wastes remains in the dump since the recyclables are immediately bought or gathered while the biodegradables are decomposed. Many of those who died in the Payatas disaster seven years ago were children who should have been in school that fateful morning. Classes, however, had been suspended due to the typhoons then that also caused a “damming” effect. Rainwater had fast seeped through and collected in the trash mountain until it burst.

It is not really that difficult if household members composted the cotton themselves, Papa advised, perhaps with some help from the barangay-based Ecology Center for recycling the plastic. Better if one used the good old “pasador.” Also, *lampin* is still the best for babies as those of previous generations were made to use.

Already, these would be “drastic and dramatic” measures that would go a long way in reducing global warming,” Papa explained. “Ms. Rentoy will not have to look for another dumpsite, even if Payatas will have been closed.” she added.

“In the first place, the law requires segregation at source, of biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes, as well as of hazardous, infectious, and toxic or special wastes. If we apply the rules thoroughly and sincerely, including on sanitary napkins

and disposable diapers, that would make us all environmental heroes, Papa said. The manufacturers as well could initially sacrifice some material profit for the long-term environment gain, by phasing out the plastics and replacing these with washable substitutes for good.

There appears to be a good number of cases related to the improper use of sanitary napkins and diapers, Papa said, such as urinary tract infection among infants and toddlers.

The concept of “residual waste” is also questionable among serious environmentalists. “There is no such thing in my vocabulary,” Luz Sabas, founder of the Zero Waste Recycling Movement and lately of a separate group, Zero Waste Philippines, would say, Papa cited.

Everything can be recycled. The Philippine Heart Center for uses hydrometallurgical extraction to neutralize infectious wastes and recycles these into hollow blocks. St. Luke’s uses autoclaving to sterilize its special wastes, Papa explained. ###