

From: MIKE DEFENSOR

2007 GREEN ELECTORAL INITIATIVE

A. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY (10 PTS.)

1. Will you support a moratorium on proposed coal-fired power plants and the transition of existing ones to renewable energy sources as a means to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions and help in the international effort to contain global warming? Will you also support a moratorium on other greenhouse gas emitting sources such as "sanitary" landfills, "waste-to-energy", cement kilns, etc?

Response: I strongly support any initiative or policy toward the development and use of cleaner energy sources considering the need to ensure energy self-sufficiency and security as well as protecting the environment. However, this should be carried out in a manner that will not bear adversely socio-economic effects, especially to the poor.

I will support a moratorium on sanitary landfills if there are available viable alternatives to waste disposal.

2. Will you support a strong renewable energy legislation with high and binding renewable energy targets that will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and assure genuine energy security for the country's future?

Response: I will support a strong renewable energy legislation with binding renewable energy targets with the end in view of ensure energy self-sufficiency and security.

3. What legislative measures (i.e., demand side management, market incentives, Integrated Resource Planning) will you initiate to mainstream energy efficiency in the country?

Response: At present, the government is implementing demand side management with market based incentives such as lower costs for Special Economic Zones, Napocor One-Day Power Sales.

I will support the use of the same market based measures for residential consumers or non-bulk users, as appropriate.

B. WATER (10 pts.)

1. Are you willing to commit a specific percentage of your Countryside Development Fund (CDF) for the development of septage and sewerage management, treatment and infrastructure?

Response: Yes.

2. The pollution of our sources of clean water (e.g., freshwater, groundwater) is exacerbating the water crisis, with the prospects of severe water shortages in the future looming large. What legislative measures would you propose to ensure stricter protection of our aquifers (groundwater), as well as providing stiffer penalties to polluters of water sources?

Response:

Amendments will have to be introduced to the Clean Water Act to impose stricter penalties for polluters of water resources as well as to unauthorized extraction of ground water.

3. What steps will you undertake to ensure people's fair access to water and guard against monopoly?

Response:

The Philippines is an archipelagic country with rich water resources. However, access to potable water is still a problem in urban centers and in upland communities.

Likewise, we are frequently visited by typhoons every year. It is unfortunate that most of the rainwater are wasted as they drain the sea. We need to study how we can design a catchment system for rainwater giving priority to upland communities where access to is a major concern.

C. **SOLID WASTE** (10 pts.):

1. The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (R.A 9003) mandates the closure of all dumps and the establishment of Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) or ecology center in every Barangay or cluster of barangay. Six years after the law took effect, the country remains littered with more than 1,000 open and controlled dumps. To date, only 1,723 MRF's or ecology centers exist in the country's 42,000 barangays. What legislative action will you take to ensure the effective implementation of R.A 9003?

Response:

The problem with solid waste management in the country is that we have a very weak appreciation and market for recyclables. LGUs have the operational problem of closing dump sites without any alternative as there are resistance in hosting landfills. On the other hand, sanitary landfills, being capital intensive, cannot be established without a defined market which will ensure its viability.

To remedy this problem, there should be an increased appreciation by LGUs of the solid waste concerns. LGUs should be given incentives to gain their cooperation. The establishment of MRFs should be accompanied by the development of and support to a market for recyclables.

The efforts of LGUs to close dumpsites must be complemented with waste reduction at the household level to greatly reduce the waste that go to these facilities.

2. Thousands of families subsist by collecting discards from bins and dumps. R.A 9003 barely responds to the waste pickers socio-economic, health and other needs. How do you plan to plug this legislative loophole in R.A 9003 so that waste pickers, including itinerant and dump based waste pickers will be recognized as integral players in the ecological and safe management of discards?

Response:

The issues raised on the welfare of waste pickers is a serious concern, and this is so because of the kind of environment where they operate. Waste pickers abound in open dump sites where health and labor standards are not observed.

Waste pickers must be integrated in the over-all context of proper waste disposal system. Waste pickers must be allowed at the MRFs where their working environment are regulated including occupational health and safety as well as labor standards.

3. Will you support legislative measures that will compel companies to phase out toxic substances in their products, in packaging and in production systems as well as institute take back systems for their end of life products (e.g., computer waste, etc?).

Response:

There is a need to legislate a measure to address the disposal of toxic waste products (e.g., computer waste, cellphone batteries, used batteries, etc.). The cradle-to- grave concept for these products must be observed and there must be a law to mandate the companies that makers of these products to be responsible to take them back and dispose of them accordingly.

As to the use of toxic substances and packaging, we must ensure that the public health is not jeopardized to these kinds of substances.

4. Do you support banning certain types of plastics and disposables which contribute to our worsening waste problems? What are your views regarding slapping a kind of “sin” tax on disposable plastics

packaging, taking into account that citizens and taxpayers are currently shouldering the cost of disposal of these types of waste materials?

Response:

The problem of disposing plastics and disposables should rest on the producers and distributors. The use of plastics and disposable packaging materials is dictated by economics, since these are cheaper. Thus, their disposal should be the responsibility of the producers. An example would be for restaurants and fast food chains, since plastics are predominantly used, their disposal should be borne by these companies. However, for certain products (e.g., products brought from grocery stores, malls, take-out food products, etc.) packaging using non-plastic materials should be encouraged.

The imposition of the “sin tax” to make the use of these products prohibitive is sound. However, it must be clear that the producers and establishments using them should bear the burden and should not be passed on to the consumers.

D. TOXIC WASTE TRADE AND JPEPA (10 pts.):

1. Malacanang has submitted the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) to the senate for ratification. Considering the concerns raised by the different sectors over the absence of democratic consultation and participation of civil society, and also regarding the toxic and nuclear waste trade, and other exploitative provisions under the proposed treaty, will you vote to reject or ratify JPEPA? Why?

Response:

When I was the DENR Secretary, I objected to the inclusion of toxic waste under the JPEPA. I will vote to reject the JPEPA.

2. Parties to the Basel Convention adopted in 1995 the Basel Ban Agreement which prohibits the transboundary movements of hazardous waste from developed to developing countries for any purpose. The Philippines is a party to the Basel Convention but is yet to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment. Will you initiate and support the ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment in the 14th Congress, and work to amend RA 6969 which contains a loophole that allows toxic and hazardous wastes to be sent to the Philippines for “economic reasons.”

Response:

I will support the ratification of the Basel Ban Amendment in the 14th Congress. Pursuant to the provision in the 1987 Constitution that we adopt the generally accepted principles of international law as part of the law of the land, if there are inconsistencies of such amendment with RA 6969, then amendments will have to be introduced.

3. The dumping of post consumer goods from developed to poorer countries containing toxic waste, such as electronic waste, is becoming a global concern. There are efforts underway in the developed world, particularly in Europe to hold manufacturers of these products responsible for the take-back and proper recycling of their products at its end-of-life. Will you support legislative measures that will hold manufacturers accountable for their products at end-of-life?

Response:

Again, pursuant to the cradle-to-grave concept of responsibility over toxic wastes, including e-wastes, I will support any legislation to hold manufacturers of these products responsible for the their disposal to include an effective take-back mechanism.

E. GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMO's) (10 pts.):

1. What steps will you take to protect the country's biodiversity and public health from the contamination and unpredictable adverse effects of the release and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture and food?

Response:

The use of GMOs in agriculture and food should only be allowed if all the risks are addressed and minimized.

Prior to use, GMO's should be required to undergo a strict biosafety procedures to ensure that public health and safety are not compromised.

2. Despite widespread rejection of genetically modified (GM) rice in markets worldwide, illegal genetically modified rice is being sold in Philippine supermarkets and approval for the use of another GM rice strain for food, feed and processing is currently pending at the Bureau of Plant Industry. Do you support the introduction and commercialization of GM rice in the country?

Response:

If there is illegal introduction of GM rice in the Philippines, then this should be stopped.

Again, the use of GMOs in agriculture and food should only be allowed if all the risks are addressed and minimized.

3. Would you support the mandatory labeling of all products containing GM organisms sold in the Philippines?

Response:

Yes so that the consuming public will have an informed decision when buying these products.

F. **SUSTAINABLE AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE** (10 pts.):

1. Will you support a legislation that will remove subsidies to synthetic farm inputs as well as measures that would significantly reduce the use of pesticides and agricultural chemicals in the country? Will you support these subsidies be re-channelled to the promotion of organic agriculture practice?

Response:

I support the use of environmentally-safe production methodologies and technologies not only in agriculture but also in other sectors. Agricultural productivity and food security and organic agriculture are not mutually exclusive.

2. Will you support a legislation that will shift the DA's policy orientation from chemically based and synthetic agriculture towards the development of sustainable and organic agriculture as defined by Executive Order No. 481 or the Promotion and development of Organic Agriculture in the Philippines?

Response:

Again, I support the use of environmentally-safe production methodologies and technologies not only in agriculture but also in other sectors. Agricultural productivity and food security can be pursued using organic agriculture practices.

G. **LOGGING** (10 pts.):

1. What measures would you propose to advance community-based forest management and enforcement of laws against illegal logging? Do you agree that natural forests should be kept free from commercial logging or conversion into other uses?

Response:

With respect to CBFMs, there is a need to comprehensively review the performance of all these communities. The purpose of the CBFM is to provide

livelihood to the upland communities at the same time utilizing them to guard the forests in their communities. When I was DENR Secretary, I ordered the suspension of CBFMs because their operations were not being monitored and their performance were not being reviewed. A strict monitoring and performance review must be done for effective community-based forestry management system to ensure that only those communities with capacity to fulfill their obligations under the agreement should be allowed to operate.

I agree that natural forests should be protected. I agree that there must be strict protection in all natural forests. There must be protection zones and production zones. One must be allowed to cut only those trees he planted.

2. Will you support a five year moratorium on commercial logging to allow our forests to regenerate and while our communities are trained to do community-based forest management and in monitoring their respective areas?

Response:

Again, natural forests and severely denuded areas must be strictly protected, that means no logging. However, to meet our requirement for wood products, commercial logging should be allowed in private tree plantations in private lands.

H. **MINING** (10 pts.):

1. What legislative measures will you initiate to make mining companies accountable in the acute and long term impacts caused by their activities on public health and the environment?

Response:

I will propose an additional safeguard requiring mining companies to secure insurance that will answer for damages not only for the environment but also for the adverse effects on health of the communities. The insurance must be proceeded against immediately without the need of any investigation or any court decision.

2. Will you support a community-based, environment-friendly small scale mining legislation?

Response:

I will support a legislation supporting environment-friendly small-scale mining as long as the areas where they will operate, proper regulation and management are well defined.

3. How do you intend to uphold the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) and national Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS)

especially in the context of the said laws outstanding conflicts and inconsistencies with provisions to the Mining Act?

Response:

The provisions of the IPRA Law on the Free and Prior Informed Consent required before any project inside an ancestral domain should be properly observed.

I. **AIR POLLUTION** (10 pts.):

1. Air pollution remains a serious threat to public health. What legislative step will you initiate to make the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 more effective? Would you support a ban on the importation of dirty, second-hand diesel engine?

Response:

Seventy to Eighty percent (70-80%) of air pollutants come from mobile sources, thus, it is important to monitor the registration of motor vehicles. That is why, when I was the DENR Secretary, I was really hard on Private Emission Testing Centers which were involved in issuing clearances to motor vehicles even if their emissions were failing the standards set by the Clean Air Act.

We should not allow motor vehicles with dirty engines, emitting air pollutants, regardless or whether they are imported are not.

2. What legislative measures will you propose that would mainstream the production and use of clean fuels, increase motor efficiency and reduce fuel consumption?

Response:

The choice of consumers on fuels, motor efficiency and fuel consumption is always a function of economics. However, the Biofuels Act and the Clean Air Act are legislative enactments that are in the right direction in providing measures for cleaner fuels.

These laws must be complemented with an effective market-based incentive system for the consumers and fuel manufacturers.

J. **YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL TRACK RECORD** (10 pts.):

1. Please enumerate and describe your earlier and existing initiative(s) in the environmental field (not necessarily in the legislative area) including sponsoring, voting, history in congress with respect to environmental bills, environmental programs implemented, benefits for the environment, etc. Please include your party platform in the environment, if any.

Response:

As DENR Secretary, the following are my accomplishments:

- Implemented an unprecedented nationwide total log ban in natural forests (total log ban in Quezon and Aurora), except in Region IX-Davao and Region XIII-CARAGA.
- Confiscated the greatest number of illegally-acquired forest products and conveyances over the first six-month period and filed cases against big time illegal loggers
- Identified the 5 biggest suspected illegal loggers for each of the 16 regions.
- Suspended 80 DENR personnel and officials on their involvement with illegal logging activities in their areas of jurisdiction
- Closed down 15 sawmills found in possession of undocumented and illegal forest products
- Unprecedented comprehensive performance review of all forestry permit holders (about 3,452) such as Timber License Agreements (TLAs), Industrial Forest Management Agreements (IFMAs), Community-Based Forest Management Agreements (CBFMAs).
- Reforested 14,707 hectares of open and degraded forestlands, through combined effort of government and private sector.
- Conducted the most extensive nationwide registration of wildlife in possession of private parties
- Intensified the Clean Air Campaign by penalizing factories and industrial establishments in the CaMaNaVa (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas at Valenzuela) area.