

2007 GREEN ELECTORAL INITIATIVE

Former Senator Gregorio B. Honasan II

Prior to any undertaking with regard to the environment, it is imperative that we define as a nation our vision, our long-term policies, and development plans on such. In the absence of this definition, environment or sustainable development legislation, plans, programs, projects or activities can end up as piecemeal attempts that might not be synchronized with each other and with other laws and our efforts might not have the immediate and intense impact that is needed by the environment today.

As I see it today, this vision, long-term policy, and development plan vacuum exists.

It is my priority to push for long-term national policies on broad issues of environmental concerns. This is to begin with the codification and harmonization of our existing environmental laws, an Environment Code. It is a long and arduous task of huge proportions, but I do believe it will be a monumental step in defining what we really want as a people today, and what we want our legacy to the next generations to be.

A. CLIMATE AND ENERGY CHANGE

- 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?**

In calibrated measures, yes. This is to ensure that we can first address any backlash effect that any moratorium can create on other stakeholders, especially those whose livelihoods depend on these plants and operations.

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?

Yes. I had filed a bill (SBN 2205, 10th Congress) encouraging the construction and use of solar power facilities nationwide and reduce dependence on conventional energy sources. With more current renewable energy source options available to us today, I intend to raise this legislation to a more comprehensive policy level.

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

There are various factors in making energy efficiency a part of the national mainstream grind. In our current situation, education is the key to ingrain principles of energy efficiency in our national psyche. Incentives for entities that promote energy efficiency can be put in place as well.

In the case of popularizing, utilizing and implementing new and environment-friendly alternatives of energy production on a national scale, different factors will also have to be taken into consideration. There will have to be producers in it for the long haul; there must be a market that is educated on energy efficiency, one that is open to, and is capable of acquiring alternative energy products; and there must be governmental institutions and systems in place to deliver such products to the market, hopefully on a national level.

My intention is to encompass in a legislative piece provisions that will address these factors. There are various tools that can be utilized to initiate this "energy revolution". On the production side: Tax incentives for investors in renewable energy facilities; incentives for local researchers, scientists and inventors who can come up with affordable equipment and processes; provision of funds for such undertakings, among others. On the market side: the inclusion of the principles

and forms of renewable energy and energy efficiency in the educational curriculum for primary and secondary levels; relentless information campaigns; social marketing; incentives for households or even local government units that promote and utilize such products, among others. And on the government side, the provision of appropriate infrastructure for producer-to-market delivery; the creation of a commission or center for renewable energy, among others. Pilot areas can be launched, especially in the rural areas.

As always, this piece of legislation must take into consideration the aspect of synergy with current laws, with current available resources, government institutions in place, and the like. To pass a piece of legislation like this, not only must its author have a strong political will, but the people and organizations involved must have it as well because it will upset a certain kind of status quo that might not be appealing to some industries and economic and political players. It is a monstrous task, but it has to be done.

A. WATER

- 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?**

Yes.

- 2. The pollution of our sources for 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?**

Among my legislative priorities is to push for a bill I had filed as a Senator in the 11th and 12th Congress entitled "An Act Providing for A Comprehensive Water Resource Policy and Water Sector Development, Creating the Water Resources Management Commission and for Other Purposes"

I have always said that the world can do away with oil, but never water. A water crisis can create devastating scenarios for any nation, developed or not. We have to address this issue while we still can.

Yes, I am a believer in the environmental principle of "Polluters Pay" – whether in form of dues, penalties or doing time. Provisions for such in any legislation will serve well.

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

B. SOLID WASTE

- 1. The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 200 (ra 9003) mandates the closure of all dumps and the establishment of Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) or ecology center in every barangay or cluster of barangays. Six years after the law took effect, the country remains littered with more than 1000 open and controlled dumps. To date, only 1,723 MRFs or ecology centers exist in the country's 42,000 barangays. What legislative action will you take to ensure the effective implementation of RA 9003?**

I would push for the creation of an environmental oversight committee in the Senate in order to monitor passed legislation such as RA 9003, and to ensure that it is properly being implemented, as well as to identify and address loopholes in the law. It is not an easy task to implement this law as it heavily relies on local government units to do this. Their education on the law's provisions is imperative. Funding must also be ensured for local MRFs, as quite a number of barangays can hardly even cover their operational expenses, much more to put up MRFs and the consistent operation of such.

This is a piece of legislation close to my heart as I am a part of it as a co-author, and I would not want to have it implemented in a mediocre way. The stakes are too high to pay.

- 2. Thousands of families subsist by collecting discards from bins and dumps. RA 9003 barely responds to the waste pickers' socio-economic, health and other needs. How do you plan to plug this legislative loophole in RA 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?**

I do see it as a blessing of some sorts that we have an existing pool of manpower that can be tapped into for the operation of our MRFs. Local Government Units must recognize this and provide for the integration of these people into their Solid Waste Management programs. Again, the education of these people (waste pickers) on the principles and processes of Solid Waste Management is imperative.

- 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.)**

In calibrated measures, yes. There are efforts today by some NGOs to collect such end-of-life products, most of them working hand-in-hand with the barangays. I believe it is about time that producers contribute their share in institutionalizing this process.

- 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 costs of disposal of these types of waste materials?**

In calibrated measures, yes.

In relation to this issue, I had filed SBN 2191 in the 10th Congress requiring all manufacturers of non-biodegradable plastic materials for consumer purposes to print a warning in legible or bold letters on their products.

C. TOXIC WASTE TRADE AND JPEPA

- 1. Malacanang has submitted the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) to the Senate for ratification. Considering the concerns raised by 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?**

International policies should be dictated by our interest of upholding national sovereignty, ensuring our welfare and security and assuring respect for human rights. There should be no trade-offs or sacrifices in any of these.

Upon debate on the Senate floor and the agreement is found to have transgressed these principles as enshrined in our constitution, then I will reject it.

- 2. Parties to the Basel Convention adopted in 1995 the Basel Ban Amendment 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”?**

Yes. We cannot be a dumping ground for other countries. I have had the unfortunate experience of meeting victims of toxic wastes left by the US bases, and I cannot allow this to further happen to any Filipino citizen.

- 3. The dumping of post consumer goods from developed to poorer countries containing toxic wastes, 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?**

Yes.

D. GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

- 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 GMOs in agriculture and food?**
- 2. Despite widespread rejection of GM rice in markets worldwide, illegal GM 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?**

I believe we have enough knowledge and technology in the rice production industry not only to do away with the importation of GMO rice, but of any kind of rice in general.

- 3. Would you support the mandatory labeling of all products containing GMOs sold in the Philippines?**

Yes. In fact I had filed SBN 1766 in the 12th Congress requiring the mandatory labeling of food and products containing GMOs and those produced by genetic engineering technologies.

E. SUSTAINABLE AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- 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 that these subsidies be re-channeled to the promotion of organic agricultural practices?**

I will support the calibrated reduction of subsidies to synthetic farm inputs and the re-channeling of these to the promotion of organic agricultural practices.

- 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 EO 481 or the Promotion and Development of Organic Agriculture in the Philippines?**

Yes.

F. LOGGING

- 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?**

I had filed SBN 1311 in the 12th Congress providing for the sustainable management of forest resources. It is a part of my legislative priorities should I return to the Senate.

Additional support should be given to enforcement agencies. There is a dire need for forest rangers and the upgrading of their equipment and gear needed for them to be fully effective. NGOs and POs should be engaged in the advancement of community-based forest management as well.

Yes, I do agree that what is left of our natural forests should be protected from commercial logging and conversion. The detrimental effects of these practices, given the current state of our forests, will be devastating for the lives of our countrymen – not only the immediate effects of disasters brought about by the denudation of our forests, but even the long-term, cyclical economic, cultural and social aftereffects as well.

I had also filed SBN 2204 in the 10th Congress requiring the teaching of disaster awareness and disaster mitigation as part of the curriculum of all primary and secondary schools in the country. This should lay down the foundations in ingraining environmental protection and conservation in the minds of our young ones and hopefully will be the pillar of a national consciousness on the matter.

- 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?**

In calibrated measures, yes.

G. MINING

- 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?**

Mining companies must be held accountable for their operations and the subsequent effects it may have on the community and environment they are located in. As I have mentioned, I am a believer in the environmental principle of “polluters pay” and would like to adopt this as a national environmental policy to guide any legislation, plan and program.

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

Yes.

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 of the Mining Act?

This is another issue close to my heart as I am a co-author of the IPRA.

My priority piece of legislation today is the passage of the National Land Use Policy and Planning Framework and Creating Institutional Mechanisms for Implementation. I do believe this will reinforce provisions of the two abovementioned laws.

H. AIR POLLUTION

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 engines?

Again, I do plan to push for the creation of Senate oversight committee for environmental issues.

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

I. ENVIRONMENTAL TRACK RECORD

1. Laws Passed:

- i. Clean Air Act, Principal Author
- ii. Solid Waste Management Act, Co-Author
- iii. Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, Co-Author

2. Bills Filed:

- i. SBN 1710, An Act Providing for A Comprehensive Water Resource Policy and Water Sector Development, Creating the Water Resources Management Commission and for Other Purposes
- ii. SBN 1455, An Act Providing for the National Land Use Policy and Planning Framework and Creating an Institutional Mechanism for Implementation
- iii. SBN 1893, an Act Providing for the Establishment of the Philippine Natural Resource and Global Change Center
- iv. SBN 840, An Act Providing for a National Ecotourism Policy
- v. SBN 2205, encouraging the construction and use of solar power facilities nationwide and reduce dependence on conventional energy sources
- vi. SBN 2191, requiring all manufacturers of non-biodegradable plastic materials for consumer purposes to print a warning in legible or bold letters on their products

- vii. SBN 1766, requiring the mandatory labeling of food and products containing GMOs and those produced by genetic engineering technologies
- viii. SBN 1311, providing for the sustainable management of forest resources
- ix. SBN 2204, requiring the teaching of disaster awareness and disaster mitigation as part of the curriculum of all primary and secondary schools in the country

3. Projects:

- i. Sponsored and supported the Linis Ganda Foundation