

TESSIE AQUINO-ORETA, Senatorial Candidate (Team Unity)

Responses to the Survey of Green Initiative

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?
 - **Those things should have been done earlier. It may be late, but later is worse – we need to do what we can now to promote more sustainable technologies. I will support efforts to contain global warming.**

2. Will you support 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?
 - **We must be weaned away from our dependence on fossil fuels. The use of clean and renewable energy technologies like wind, hydro and geothermal must be promoted. We will support legislative measures such as The Renewable Energy Bill (REB) and other measures which will utilize environment-friendly technologies that will reduce dependence on fossil fuels.**

3. What legislative measures (i.e., demand-side management, market incentives, Integrated Resource Planning) will you initiate to mainstream energy efficiency in the country?
 - **Energy demand management efforts must be set in motion. Massive education and information campaign among the community should be done to promote efficient use of energy in the households, factories and companies. We can involve the non-governmental organizations in helping the government monitor various public and private agencies that are not using energy and electricity resources efficiently. The**

government must consciously influence the consumption behavior of the general populace towards more responsible energy usage. I will support the setting of community consumer standards to promote the use of more energy efficient technologies. I will advocate for the provision of more budgets for research on alternative energy technologies, and call for the strict enforcement of guidelines on the energy usage of government offices.

Water

1. Are you willing to commit a specific percentage of your Countrywide Development Fund (CDF) for the development of seepage and sewerage management, treatment, and infrastructure?
 - **Yes. At least 10% of my CDF will be devoted to projects for the environment.**
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 to provide stiffer penalties to polluters of water sources?
 - **A legislative measure should be crafted that should provide stricter penalties for large-scale water polluters. A comprehensive water use plan must be proposed to help in the conservation and efficient use of water for the whole country in line with worldwide trends. This plan must be implemented by a stronger water management office armed with prohibitive fines and other sanctions for violators. These will form part of my agenda for the environment in the Senate.**
3. What steps will you undertake to ensure people's fair access to water and guard against monopoly?
 - **I believe that communities must have equal rights over water. Hence, the policy of privatization will have to be checked as regards its impact on water resource usage. I will push for measures that will expand access to potable water particularly in the rural areas. I will**

support local governments and communities as they assert their rights in this regard.

Solid Waste

1. The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (Republic Act 9003) mandates the closure of all dumps and the establishment of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) or ecology center in every "barangay" [village or neighborhood district] 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 MRFs or ecology centers exist in the country's 42,000 barangay. What legislative action will you take to ensure the effective implementation of RA 9003?

- **Local governments need additional funds and technical know how to make the SWM Act work, particularly in their establishment of Material Recovery Facilities and in the implementation of grassroots information campaign on solid waste management. This is what the Senate must work on to the extent that it can – to support further the strengthening of the role of local governments and civil society in implementing the said law. Another critical aspect that needs to be given attention is to intensify the education campaigns through the schools. The law cannot be fully implemented if the people will not develop a good sense of discipline and environmental awareness.**

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?

- **SWM must be a coordinated community effort and experience. All sectors must be involved. To help realize this, I will propose amendments to RA 9003. Moreover, in my concern for education, I plan to promote SWM through the public school system. As I plan to use most of my CDF for education, I will push for the inclusion of SWM in the school curriculum and encourage the meaningful involvement of schools in SWM activities in their communities. The waste pickers**

should be given training on how to recycle waste materials and how they can make a livelihood out of these recycled materials.

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.)?

- **Yes. There is no compelling reason not to. The private companies should do their part in helping to protect our people from the hazard of toxic substances. The government should be stricter in implementing policy against the use of toxic substances in their production and packaging. We should continuously teach our school children to take care of the environment.**

4. Do you support banning certain types of plastics and disposables that 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?

- We must make our citizens more responsible for the environmental impact of the actions they take. The government can spearhead campaign on the use of materials which are recyclable rather than plastics. The strategy can be a combination of incentive based and education based campaign. The key here is to make the schools more active in supporting environmental projects supported. We need to make consultations with various private businesses and companies regarding the use of certain types of plastics which may create damage to environment.

Toxic waste trade and JPEPA

1. Malacañang 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?

- **I will have take closer review on Japan Philippine Economic Partnership agreement. My primary concern is to ensure that the agreement will improve majority of our countrymen's socio-economic and environmental conditions severely.**
2. Parties to the Basel Convention adopted in 1995 the Basel Ban Amendment, which prohibits the trans-boundary 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 Republic Act 6969, which contains a loophole that allows toxic and hazardous wastes to be sent to the Philippines for "economic reasons"?
- **I will initiate the passage of a National Code on the Environment so that national policy on the matter will be made more consistent. We can further study the Basel Ban Amendment and the amendment to RA6969. Our primary concern is not to compromise our environment for economic gains. We need to look for long term solutions to our environmental and economic problems and not mere stop-gap measures with short sighted gains.**
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 at their end-of-life. Will you support legislative measures that will hold manufacturers accountable for their products at end-of-life?
- **Yes, definitely. The manufacturing companies should be more responsible and should be accountable for their products at end-life to prevent damage to the environment and health of the public. We can not just allow our production and consumption behaviors to go on like this. Part of corporate social responsibility for firms must concern itself with the environment. Firms must be made more accountable in this regard.**

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

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?

- **I will work for the increase of budgetary allocation for further research on the negative effects of GMOs to our public health and country's biodiversity. We need to provide our consumers with adequate information on the use of GMOs in agriculture and food to help them make informed decisions. Consistent dialogues with experts, scientists and environmental groups should be done by government. We need to advocate for a more healthy and balanced biodiversity. Together, public and private agencies can define the national agenda towards GMOs. The Senate can provide the venue for the crafting of such an agenda.**

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?

- **We should put priority to our safety and health of our constituents. Commercialization of GM rice should be done only after it has been approved by the Bureau of Plant and Industry to ensure that it is safe and cannot harm public health. Aside from the possible impact on our health, we need to set the agricultural and importation policies of this country right.**

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

- **Yes. That is needed. People must be properly informed and guided on these products especially if they are food products.**

3. Will you support 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 a move to rechannel these subsidies to the promotion of organic agriculture practices?

- **To my knowledge, the use of synthetic farm inputs have long term harmful effects on the environment. I will support such moves where our farmers can balance their immediate survival concerns with sustainable environmental strategies.**
4. Will you support 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 481 or the Promotion and Development of Organic Agriculture in the Philippines?
- **The DA must be commended for having environment-oriented policies. The Senate must support such policy initiatives. I will support legislation to promote organic farming and agriculture.**

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?
- **Community-based forest management must be supported. Community "forest rangers" must be deputized to really protect our forests. I will work on a bill to support such concern further empowering local leaders and concerned citizens.**
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 monitor their respective areas?
- **Yes. We cannot afford to lose our forests now. We have seen so many landslides, earthquakes and other natural disasters caused by the forest denudation. Community based forest management is a more appropriate alternative to save our remaining forests. We need to make some sacrifices for the sake our children's future.**

Mining

1. What legislative measures will you initiate to make mining companies accountable for the acute and long-term impacts caused by their activities on public health and the environment?
 - **We will review the provisions of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and see how it has been implemented so far . We will support efforts to institute stricter guidelines to make the mining companies more accountable to their mining activities and to make them adopt sustainable technologies for the use of mining resources.**
2. Will you support a community-based, environment-friendly small-scale mining legislation?
 - **Yes. Small-scale mining must be regulated properly to ensure the safety of our people and the environment.**
3. How do you intend to uphold the Indigenous People's Rights Act and National Integrated Protected Area System, especially in the context of these laws' outstanding conflicts and inconsistencies with provisions to the Mining Act?
 - **The IPRA and NIPAS provisions have not been fully implemented so far. We will work closely with the stakeholders in the mining industry as well as the indigenous people to know how the laws can be fully upheld.**

Air pollution

1. Air pollution remains a serious threat to public health. What legislative steps 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?
 - **My proposed National Environment Code will uphold the Clean Air Act as well. We will not support importation of dirty second hand diesel engines if they are causing hazard to the environment. The Congress must spearhead measures that will push for the full implementation of Clean air act As it is now, we have on record one of the most air-polluted cities in this**

planet. We have to be more stringent in our legislation and enforcement.

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 will study the the Renewable Energy Bill. It may be a good instrument to start with.**

Your environmental track record. 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 on the environment, if any.

I must admit that I have been most focused and concerned with education issues and concern. But this does not speak of my disinterest in environmental issues. I have supported the development of modules and other learning materials on the environment.

Moreover, among the landmark laws that I have proposed or authored-sponsored are RA 8976 or the Micronutrient Fortification Act, RA 9053 or the Philippine Landscape Architecture Act, RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act, and RA 9003 or the Solid Waste Management Act and Clean Air Act.

In my stint at the Senate, I have filed 197 Senate Bills (authored and co-authored) and resolutions, related to education, youth, women, family relations, health, local governments, trade and commerce, foreign relations, agriculture, agrarian reform, justice, public works, human rights, cooperatives, labor, mass media, electoral reforms, government service, and the environment, among many other concerns.

I envision a country with a development plan anchored on adequate investment in human capital, sustainable management of environment and good governance.