

Vicente Sotto III

On the Green Initiative Survey

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?
 - **It is my personal view that nothing must be left undone or untried in addressing the issue of climate change — and all studies on climate change point to the unsustainable fuel consumption as the main culprit. Perhaps we must even go beyond what the thirty-nine Asian and European leaders, including President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, had done in the two-day 6th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) at the Helsinki Fair Center with regard to the adoption of the ASEM6 Declaration on Climate Change. We face a "serious threat" as that declaration avers. Sustained international action in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol must be pursued or supported.**
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 hasten the use of clean and renewable energy technologies — wind, solar, biomass, hydro and geothermal. The Renewable Energy Bill (REB or what is in the current term House Bill 1068) — as espoused by environmental groups — must be enacted for the sake of the country's future. The REB should also promote our use of indigenous resources. This should make us less reliant on imported fossil fuels and thus also protect us from fluctuations in market prices. An agricultural, tropical country like the Philippines has tremendous untapped resources in energy which can be economically sound and not just environment-friendly.**
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 or demand side management (DSM) efforts must complement efforts at developing alternative energy sources. These**

actions that affect the quantity or patterns of energy usage or consumption by end users must be taken or initiated by government. Important legislative proposals in this regard that I could initiate include: 1) On setting community consumer standards to promote the use of more energy efficient technologies (e.g., replication of the Energy Star system in the U.S., which was first used in 1992); 2) Providing more public budgetary support to local inventors and groups that are into research and development of alternative energy technologies; and, 3) Strictly enforcing or regulating the use of energy by public agencies. Let me underscore that number three must lead all efforts since government's failure to set an example would undermine any effort at reform in the sector.

Water

1. Are you willing to commit a specific percentage of your Countrywide Development Fund (CDF) for the development of septage and sewerage management, treatment and infrastructure?
 - **Yes. Especially if there is already a plan acceptable by certain standards, I would be more than willing to share what my office can. In fact, all Senators must do more than working with the CDFs to help protect our water resources in the country.**
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?
 - **Hydrogeology must be developed. A legislative agenda should be pushed in this regard. In particular, a “hydrogeological mapping” of the country may need to be completed and, based on this, a water-usage plan must be proposed. This water-usage scheme will only be effective if backed up by state sanctions, e.g.: prohibitive fines, cancellation of permits to operate or business licences for erring businesses, and due imprisonment. These will be part of my environmental agenda in the Senate.**
3. What steps will you undertake to ensure people's fair access to water and guard against monopoly?
 - **We must begin with an assessment of the state's policy on privatization as it impinges on Philippine water resources. This can be done through a Senate inquiry which could lead to informed legislation. At the very least, I will push for such an inquiry and ensure participation from the broadest segments of society. In relation to this, I understand that there is now an existing network of advocates on water resources — the Bantay**

Tubig network. I believe that stakeholder groups like this must be thoroughly involved in the inquiry.

To be more pointed, I believe that our vision on the water sector must be founded on a clear pro-people development policy. We must consider water as a multi-purpose productive resource and policy must recognize increasing competition among users who should have their judicious shares — for water supply and sanitation, irrigation, hydro-power, tourism and recreation, environment, manufacturing, etc.

Most important of all, water rights must be recognized as usufructuary rights. As the UNDP has pointed out the global concern in water is most of all “a crisis for the poor” as “almost two in three people lacking access to clean water survive on less than \$2 a day, with one in three living on less than \$1 a day. More than 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day, and more than 385 million on less than \$1 a day.” Something simply needs to be done. Now.

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?
 - **Administrative, financial and technical issues confront the full implementation of the law. In the administrative and technical aspect, we will find ways to further assist our local governments. A law may need to be passed further empowering local executives on environmental issues and clearly linking the matter to local livelihood and development concerns. I will also set the example by setting aside a substantial part of the CDF for this issue so that the financial side of the matter can be addressed. Moreover, the national government can offer cost-sharing schemes or more grants so that the local governments can be assisted in developing their SWM programs. In all these, the Senate's oversight role must be maximized.**
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?

- **Our schools trumpet the line “*May ginto sa basura.*” However, policy and programs do not seem to be consistent with what the formal schools teach our students. I fully agree that waste pickers’ socio-economic, health and other needs must be addressed by our SWM programs/policy. This can be addressed at two levels: 1) Amending the law to add the necessary provisions, and this could dovetail with the concern in the section above; and, 2) Ensuring that waste picking is a recognized livelihood component in whatever SWM models we support on the ground through our CDF.**
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.)?
- **Most definitely. This is simply an application or adaptation of “NIMBY” — the corollary of which is *kalat ko, linis ko.***
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?
- **In other countries, waste collection costs the waste producer. It is but proper that a person “pays” for the privilege to dispose of his waste in a particular way. We are a culture that used to depend much on paper — for example in transactions in wet markets, to package various items. Perhaps it is time for us to promote that material more by banning what can and should be banned.**

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?
- ***Res ipsa loquitur* as our lawyers say. During my stint in the Senate, I voted to reject the GATT because it does not embody the interest of the common *tao* who I aim to represent in the Senate. JPEPA hits everyone and not just the common *tao*. I can do no less against this treaty.**
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”?

- **No amount of money now can pay for the destruction of the environment in future. We must plug loopholes in all national laws to make them consistent with our international commitments. We need to affirm and strengthen those vows that we make, as it were.**
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?
- **Again, the notion of NIMBY and *kalat ko, linis ko* come to mind. Various carrot-and-stick measures may be developed in the legislative to push manufacturers to be more conscious and responsible for their products impact on the environment.**

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?
- Heighten awareness, develop technologies for detection, and increase local food productivity. These three should form a policy bulwark against GMOs.

First of all, as a media personality, I can help develop media material disseminating crucial information on this issue so that the public is informed. An informed public will be a good defense against GMOs. We must take the cue from The Province of Bohol. Bohol passed Provincial Ordinance No. 2003-101 known as the ‘safeguard against genetically modified organisms (GMO)’ which would prevent the entry of genetically modified plants, animals and microorganisms into the province. Penalties for violations were set. The wisdom of such enactment must be magnified at the national level.

Secondly, technologies must be developed. For example, I understand that the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (NIMBB) has formulated a cheaper process of detecting GMOs. GMO detection is required for exporting products from the Philippines. We must further develop and tap such technology to protect the country from

unwanted importation of GMO material. As former Chair of the Science and Technology Committee of the Senate, I have been most supportive of utilizable knowledge such as this and I aim to pursue such concern in the next Congress.

In the final analysis, it is the productivity of our people and our capacity to provide for the consumption needs of our nation that will best assure us of being able to control the entry of GMOs into the country. GMOs are often promoted supposedly because they are “cheap” food material. Such claim must be rendered meaningless by a sustained effort to fully develop the local agricultural, fisheries and food production sectors. In this light, I will continue to support the program to modernize Philippine agriculture and fisheries through the AFMA.

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?
 - **I fully believe in research and development (R & D) in science and technology as a crucial component of national development. Where the people’s welfare and safety is concerned, I try to remember that science must serve the best interest of humans and their natural environment. Now, if even the more developed economies with more advanced R & D are rejecting GMOs or are at least very scrupulous in dealing with such material, we cannot be no less careful. Particularly for rice, I do not believe we now need GMO technologies thus far.**
3. Would you support the mandatory labeling of all products containing GM organisms sold in the Philippines?
 - **Yes. That is needed. As a consumer, I would want to know what I am taking into my system. As a parent, I am most concerned of my children’s nutrition. My bigger family, the Filipino nation, must also be considered in this light. Hence, such labeling is of utmost significance. I am all for it.**

Sustainable and organic agriculture

1. 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?
 - **Yes, I am most open to such proposals and will support them especially if supported by the necessary technical and feasibility studies. Sustainable**

and organic agriculture works. To my understanding, the technology must be applied on a wider scale to really make it work and that such technology relates to people's health and the health of the environment. I must therefore give it my full support.

2. 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?
 - **Sometimes the executive may be way ahead of the legislative arm. In this case, I would say that the technical people in the DA must know what they are doing. Perhaps what is needed is to translate such Executive Order into a national legislation, properly melding it with the AFMA. Studies show that chemically based and synthetic agriculture may not be too good for people and their environment. We must develop the alternative.**

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?
 - **Natural forests must be kept for the health of the natural environment. Commercial logging can be developed in other areas. I will support the filing of a bill on sustainable forest management. In fact, there is one pending or shelved in the current Congress.**
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?
 - **The logging industry can survive such a moratorium. It should have been done years ago, then we could have perhaps avoided incidents like that in Infanta, Quezon. In light of such environmental disasters, late is tragic; but late is better than never.**

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?
 - **A review of the Mining Act is in order. This must be initiated at the soonest possible time. It has been over ten years since its passage. Now, if even the Philippine Society of Mining Engineers is for the scrapping of**

this Act, there really must be something worth — at the least — amending about it. For example, its reliance on self-regulation and non-regulatory approaches for the mining industry does not seem to hold in practice. Mining-related disasters in this country are clear proof of this.

2. Will you support a community-based, environment-friendly small-scale mining legislation?
 - **In this case, small is sustainable and better for the community. Such legislation can be integrated in the efforts that I can help initiate to review the current mining act.**
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, to my mind, must take precedence. By all means, these two laws should be fully implemented. However it should not be done properly and not just for the sake of implementing it. The rights and welfare of our indigenous people are at stake here and they deserve our support on this. If only because of this, I would say that the Mining Act must be revised accordingly to prevent further conflict and inconsistencies. Again, this can be raised in the Senate by way of a review of the Mining Act.**

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?
 - **The issue of air pollution is intricately linked to the issue of the transport and power sectors. To make the Philippine Clean Air Act really work, an act on Renewable Energies and the Bio-Fuels Act must complement it. I will push for the Renewal Energies Bill, affirm the Bio-Fuels Act, and amend the Clean Air Act as necessary — e.g., on banning the entry of pollutant producers such as second-hand diesel engines into the country. We then need to ensure that an appropriate Senate oversight committee takes care of these closely related policy areas.**
2. What legislative measures will you propose that would mainstream the production and use of clean fuels, increase motor efficiency and reduce fuel consumption?
 - **As stated above, I am all for the REB, setting standards for the energy efficiencies of pertinent products, and demand-side management (DSM) policies. Some of these require legislation but some can be addressed by the Executive without need of legislation. Hence, I will work to make the Senate's oversight powers more effective especially on these matters.**

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.

- **My current campaign platform has this as a third component: MAHUSAY NA PAMAMAHALA — Good Governance as Effective Local Governments and Accessible Public Services**
 - a. **Better educational assistance (e.g., through the GASTPE);**
 - b. **People-oriented health services and science and technology;**
 - c. **Meaningful rural development;**
 - d. **Bigger budget for public services;**
 - e. **Sustainable tourism;**
 - f. **Youth and sports development; and,**
 - g. **Anti-drugs campaign.**

Although not explicit in the above formulation, this platform is founded on an appreciation of sustainable development and the importance of a healthy natural environment. Following this scheme, I have authored acts promoting the local development of these provinces in particular: ALBAY, BATAAN, BATANGAS, BOHOL, BUKIDNON, BUKIDNON, BULACAN, CAGAYAN DE ORO, CAMARINES NORTE, CAMARINES SUR, CAMIGUIN, CAR, CARAGA, CEBU, CORDILLERA, COTABATO, DAVAO, GUIMARAS, ILOCOS, ILOILO, ISABELA, LA UNION, LAGUNA, LANA DEL NORTE, LANA DEL SUR, LEYTE, LUZON, MARINDUQUE, MASBATE, METRO MANILA, MINDANAO, MISAMIS ORIENTAL, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, ORIENTAL MINDORO, PALAWAN, PAMPANGA, PANGASINAN, QUEZON, RIZAL, ROMBLON, SAMAR, SOUTHERN LEYTE, WESTERN SAMAR, and ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR.

Moreover, these more “general” acts which I have authored/sponsored relate to the environment and concerns highly related to the environment:

- RA 8550: development, management and conservation of the fisheries and aquatic resources integrating all laws pertinent thereto, and for other purposes
- RA 8960: Davao Light and Power Company, franchise to construct, operate, and maintain light, heat and power system in Davao City, Municipalities of Carmen, Panabo, Dujali, Santo Tomas, Province of Davao del Norte for 25 years
- RA 8997: First Gas Holdings Corporation, franchise to construct, install, own, operate and maintain a natural gas pipeline for the transportation and distribution of natural gas

- Various RAs on sustainable tourism such as (just to specify some): RA 8546: Site of Biak na Bato a historical shrine and tourist spot; RA 7668: Mt Samat as a tourist spot; RA 7690: Arayat National Park as tourist spot; Limasawa Island as tourist zone; Improvement of Chocolate Hills Tourist Spot; RA 8000: improvement of Ardent Spring in Mambajao; RA 8001: improvement of Dalama Shoreline in Molundom to a public beach resort; RA 8002: site of Municipality of Palo (Gen. Mc Arthur landed) as tourist spot; and RA 8024: Busay Falls in the Municipality of Babatngon as tourist spot.