

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO IN 2019

The Philippine National Commission for UNESCO (PH NatCom) continued its sail towards bridging the Philippines and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through UNESCO programmes and thrusts. PH NatCom has braced and expanded its international and local networks to ensure that the waves of inclusivity, equality and development will ripple among Filipinos especially at the grassroots level. The youth played a pivotal role as about 500 youth/youth organizations, through partnership with the National Association of UNESCO Clubs in the Philippines and the Associated Schools Network, were mobilized for the promotion and cascading of UNESCO programmes, projects and advocacies.

Harnessing the universal mandate and global convening power for ocean science and capacity development, PH NatCom, with UNESCO, key Offices in the Department of Foreign Affairs such as the Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office and the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, and other national partners, hosted the 12th Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific in April 2019. The event also served as an avenue for the signing of Letter of Intent between IOC and the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute for the establishment of a Regional Training and Research Center on Reef Management and Restoration.

The Commission supported UNESCO and the Albay Biosphere Reserve in the hosting of the 12th Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserves Network Meeting. The meeting included a special session for the Asia and the Pacific Biosphere Reserves Network that brought together representatives from the region's four subregional Man and Biosphere or MAB networks. Three guidelines related to the management of Biosphere Reserve were launched at the session: Sustainability Science; Eco-labelling and Certification; and Legal Aspects of Biosphere Reserve Zonation with the support of Japan Funds-in-Trust. Through PH NatCom, UNESCO's MAB Programme was further mainstreamed and resulted to partnerships with multi-stakeholders for the International Conferences on Biosphere and Sustainability (July in Palawan and November in Davao) that showcased current and possible BRs as learning

laboratories for sustainability. Also, the Commission supported the launching of the website of the Philippine Biosphere Reserve Network, composed of existing and aspiring BRs and supporting government and non-government institutions, in 2019.

PH NatCom served as a main vessel in championing SDGs, especially global citizenship education (GCED) and lifelong learning in the country. PH NatCom facilitated coordination with the trifocal education agencies in the country on matters relative to SDG4-Education 2030. The Philippines, through the Department of Education, sits as part of the Steering Committee (SC) with the support/guidance of the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, United Nations and International Organizations, and PH NatCom. The Commission, together with the Philippine Normal University and members of Associated Schools Network, organized a GCED Roadshow that involved almost a hundred educators in the country. It paved the way for more long-term commitments as the Department of Education, with the support of local and international partners, pledged to develop in the next three years modules for the national curriculum. In November 2019, PH NatCom facilitated the formation of a Philippine team that participated in the Capacity Building Workshop on Developing Education System in Lifelong Learning Perspective in Shanghai, China. The team produced a document entitled, *Operationalizing Lifelong Learning in the Philippines*, that is expected to be mainstreamed in the updated Philippine Development Plan.

It likewise aligned with safeguarding Philippine cultural heritage through mounting the 1st International Conference on Capacity Building Series for World Heritage Sites and Tentative Lists with the UNESCO Category II Center World Heritage Institute for Training and Research in Asia-Pacific, continuing efforts in organizing awareness-raising workshops for the Memory of the World Programme, and supporting local initiatives such as the 1st International Conference on Southeast Asian Crafts and Folk Arts hosted by Baguio City, a UNESCO Creative City. PH NatCom continued to perform its facilitative and supporting roles in endeavors that reaped success through multi-stakeholder initiatives, namely the recognition of the City of Cebu as a UNESCO Creative City of Design and the inscription of *Buklog*, a Subanen ritual, in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Safeguarding in 2019.

Ultimately, PH NatCom contributed to steering policies that put some sectors at the margins towards inclusivity such as “The Filipino Youth and Violent Extremism” that tackled radicalism in Southern Philippines and Gender and Development project with Indigenous Peoples of Luzon islands using UNESCO Management of Social Transformation (MOST’s) Inclusive Policy Lab principles.

Featured Success Story

The Philippines hosted the 12th Intergovernmental Session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC-WESTPAC), from 02 to 05 April 2019 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Manila. The hosting, supported by UNESCO/IOC-WESTPAC, is a joint project of the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office and the Philippine National Commission for UNESCO, in cooperation with the University of the Philippines-Marine Sciences Institute (UP-MSI), with the guidance of the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO and the National Committee on Marine Science.

More than a hundred representatives from 22 countries discussed strengthening institutional frameworks at the regional level as commitment to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. Among its milestone activities is the signing of Letters of Intent, respectively between IOC and the University of the Philippines-MSI concerning the establishment of a Regional Training and Research Center (RTRC) on Reef Management and Restoration; and between IOC and the Institute of Oceanography, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology concerning the establishment of RTRC on Marine Toxins and Seafood Safety.

The event culminated in a collective agreement and commitment of all countries and partners in the region to actively contribute to and engage in the implementation of the action plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

As a member of the UNESCO-IOC, the Philippines has been and continues to gain support and assistance (both technical and financial) from UNESCO-IOC and its subsidiary bodies including IOC-WESTPAC. It has actively participated in

international and regional scientific programmes and activities of the IOC and IOC-WESTPAC. Filipino experts participated in various scientific conferences, seminars, workshops, training courses, etc., organized by UNESCO-IOC, IOC-WESTPAC and/or its partners. In the past, several Filipino scientists/experts were recognized internationally and led the IOC and became members of its subsidiary bodies. At present, the Philippines, represented by the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO and Dr. Gil Jacinto of the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), joins 39 other members on the IOC Executive Council for the period 2019 to 2021.

"As a maritime and archipelagic state located at the center of the world's marine biodiversity, the Philippines shall continue to contribute to the commission's unique role in fostering international cooperation in ocean science and in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly Goal 14 on Life Below Water." – Department of Foreign Affairs

WAYS FORWARD

For 2020, PH NatCom will continue to align its programmes and priorities with the thrusts of UNESCO and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while also weaving these with the Philippine Development Plan and contributing to nation building through need-based capacity development; grassroots-inspired cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation and protection; multi-stakeholder partnership for the promotion of the SDGs and UNESCO Programmes in the education, culture, science and technology, social and human science, and communication and information sectors; empowered women and youth engagement; and pro-active facilitation, coordination and knowledge sharing.

Under the UNESCO Florence Agreement, UNACOM was able to process/endorse to the Department of Finance around seven hundred (700) requests (from government/private entities) for tax and duty-free exemption of qualified materials. In the years to come, PH NatCom aims to maintain its very good to excellent rating from clients served.