

## **Environmental education, strict implementation of laws crucial in protecting environment – DENR**

Environment and Natural Resources Assistant Secretary Juan Miguel T. Cuna talking before technical and environmental academic experts from Korea, Japan, China and South East Asia in a joint international symposium held in the Philippines last November 11-12 expounded that “environmental education and good practices, including political will from leaders from the national and local governments to implement environmental laws are central in mitigating environmental problems amid growing population in urban cities in the country.”

The annual United Nations University (UNU) and Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST) Joint Symposium, now on its 13<sup>th</sup> year, tackled researches and studies from international experts that promote scientific studies and researches, development, and training in science and technology for environmental sustainability.

The joint symposium has become a focal point among researchers, policy-makers and local stakeholders who discussed pressing issues regarding environmental pollutants and contaminants that cause broad adverse impacts on health and the environment.

For his part, Atty. Cuna, who concurrently heads the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that “with population growth and rapid urbanization, we are faced more than ever with growing environmental problems such as air and water pollution and solid waste management.”

“The impact of the degradation of the environment brought about by population increase as this equates to consumption, growing production levels and human activities will eventually deplete our natural resources. If unabated, they will potentially cause adverse impacts to the environment,” Cuna said.

“Environmental laws and counterpart policy issuances and regulatory reforms from implementing agencies like the DENR/EMB are good measures but are not enough to curb these environmental challenges,” he said.

The DENR through EMB has put up various mechanisms and programs in monitoring air quality through the establishment of air quality monitoring stations, intensified industrial and smoke belching operations, issuance of certificates of conformity for vehicular sources; adopt-an-estero/water body program to clean waterways and the engagement of local government units (LGUs) to address environmental problems in urban cities.

The Philippines has also enacted various laws such as Republic Act (R.A.) 8749 or the Clean Air Act; R.A. 9275 or the Clean Water Act, and R.A. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management. Likewise, to educate the citizens to carry out their social responsibilities in protecting the environment the R.A. 9512 or the National Environmental Awareness Act was also enacted.

“Enforcement of these laws from both national and local governments should be with more teeth coupled with behavioral, and good environmental practices among communities in urban cities. These are crucial components in preventing air and water pollution and solid waste management,” Cuna reiterated.

The joint symposium held at the Marco Polo Hotel in Ortigas, Mandaluyong City was spearheaded by the International Environmental Research Center (IERC) in partnership with the Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology of the University of the Philippines-Diliman and in cooperation with the DENR-EMB. ###