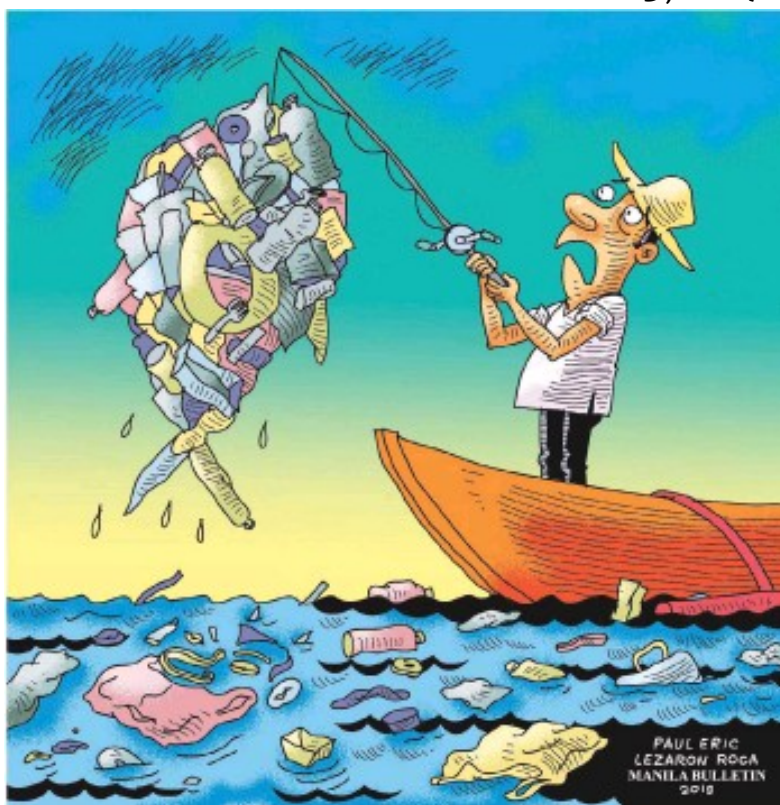


# Heed the world-wide call vs plastic pollution

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THE Philippines joined a worldwide call to end plastic pollution as it marked this April the first anniversary of its accession to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The country became the 138th state party to the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2017, a month after the Philippine Mission to the United Nations deposited our Instrument of Accession on March 23, 2017.



Plastic pollution was the theme of this year's Earth Day celebration around the world, focusing on the ill effects plastics of all kinds have caused not only in the countries concerned but also in the world's oceans. A recent report from scientists doing research on the matter said a staggering eight million tons of plastic pollution – shopping bags, bottles, food wrappers, toys, etc. – end in the world's oceans each year from the 192 coastal countries.

China was held responsible for most of the ocean pollution with about 30 percent of the global total, followed by Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Egypt, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. Coastal European Union na-

tions combined ranked 18th. The United States ranked 20th. The plastic pollution is killing huge numbers of seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, and other creatures.

The worldwide use of plastics has not only polluted the world's oceans and endangered ocean life. It has also exacerbated climate change, the Philippines' Climate Change Commission said. The drilling for oil and its processing into plastic releases harmful emissions to the environment, including carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, and methane, a greenhouse that has greater warming effect on local atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

Governments and private corporations around the world are beginning to act on the problem. In Britain, over 40 British companies responsible for 80 percent of plastic packaging in the country have signed an agreement to reduce plastic pollution over the next seven years, including making all plastic packaging reusable or recyclable. The British government itself plans to ban the sale of plastic straws stirrers, and other commonly used single-use items.

In the Philippines, many department and grocery stores have taken to banning plastic bags and promoting recyclable ones made of cloth or paper or other native materials like buri and coconut leaves. A Plastic Bags Regulation Act authored by Sen Loren Legarda has been filed in the Senate, with the support of the Climate Change Commission.

The worldwide effort against plastic pollution deserves the greatest support, not only from the government but, more importantly, from common, ordinary folk. We have all gotten used to using plastics to replace all the other items we used to have – like wooden utensils, paper bags, abaca ropes, clay pots, leather shoes, etc. It's time to see what we can all do to help save our world and its environment by returning to these biodegradable materials.