

- Climate change / Environmental movement

QC's pioneering efforts in sustainability, environmental action

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QCitizens take pride in **Mayor Joy Belmonte's** recognition as one of Forbes' inaugural "50 Sustainability Leaders," highlighting her commitment to addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability in the city.

Forbes' list acknowledges individuals from various sectors—politics, science, business—who have made significant contributions to mitigating climate change. The recognition emphasizes the global importance of leaders who implement environment-friendly policies and pioneer green technologies, drawing attention to their efforts in sustainability.

As the chairman of the People's Council of Quezon City (PCQC), I have witnessed Mayor Belmonte's dedication to the city's development and her strong collaboration with civil society. The PCQC, representing over 5,300 accredited civil society organizations, actively participates in the deliberation, conceptualization, and evaluation of city projects. In cooperation with the city councilors, Mayor Belmonte has spearheaded various ordinances that directly address climate change and promote sustainable development. One of Mayor Belmonte's significant initiatives was her 2019 declaration of a climate emergency—the first of its kind by a local chief executive in the Philippines. Later, in August 2022, Makati's Mayor Binay followed suit. Declaring a climate emergency signifies the need for coordinated, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder action to combat climate change and global warming.

Ordinance No. 2868, Series of 2019, solidified Quezon City's commitment to addressing climate change and supported the city's climate emergency declaration. This ordinance aligns with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) global climate emergency declaration, focusing on climate adaptation and mitigation. The ordinance ensures that the city's resources and policies prioritize the climate crisis, allocating 13 percent of the city's budget to climate-related projects. The city aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

Under Mayor Belmonte's leadership, Quezon City has introduced several groundbreaking initiatives for climate mitigation and sustainable development.

In 2019, the city enacted Mandatory Green Building Standards to promote sustainable urban development. These standards require construction projects to incorporate energy-efficient designs, water conservation measures, and sustainable materials. Both public and private buildings highly encourage the use of renewable energy technologies like solar panels.

In 2020, the city introduced the Active Transport Ordinance, which expanded and improved its bike lane networks, promoting the use of non-motorized transportation. This measure increased bike lanes by 217 kilometers and integrated them with public transportation systems. It aligns with the city's goal of reducing reliance on fossil fuels, lowering carbon emissions, and fostering healthier and more sustainable mobility.

Additionally, Quezon City has a realtime Air Quality Index monitoring system with over 40 sensors scattered across the city—the highest number of air quality monitors in the Philippines.

Quezon City also enacted measures supporting renewable energy in public buildings. In 2020, the city installed solar panels in 50 public high school buildings, thereby reducing electricity consumption and lowering its carbon footprint. Furthermore, the city enforces a zero-waste ordinance, promoting strict waste segregation and recycling programs. One of these initiatives, "trash-to-cashback," allows residents to exchange segregated waste for cash credits, further institutionalizing recycling and proper waste disposal.

Quezon City's "Enhanced Local Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2050," which aligns with the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, encompasses all these efforts. Quezon City proudly champions climate leadership, aspiring to be the leading city in advancing inclusive, ambitious, evidence-based, and transformative climate actions in the Philippines.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognized Mayor Belmonte as a Champion of the Earth in 2023, recognizing her leadership in reducing plastic pollution and greening Quezon City. This award, the UN's highest environmental recognition, celebrates leaders whose measures have a transformative impact on the environment.

These environmental measures are particularly significant considering Quezon City is the most populous city in the Philippines, with a population of 2,761,720. Climate action is critical in Metro Manila, where the dense population exacerbates environmental hazards. The region's overpopulation contributes to increased greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and waste production, making it highly vulnerable to climate change. Extreme weather events, such as typhoons, flooding, and heat waves, have led to loss of life, damaged infrastructure, and economic disruptions in Metro Manila.

Informal settlements, often located in high-risk areas prone to flooding and landslides, further intensify these problems. The lack of adequate drainage systems and green spaces increases the need for sustainable urban planning and disaster preparedness. Implementing climate change action plans that focus on reducing emissions, improving waste management, and enhancing infrastructure resilience is essential for mitigating the environmental and health risks posed by overpopulation.

Quezon City's sustainable practices serve as a model for other local government units across the country. Climate change mitigation, the adoption of sustainable practices, and the battle against global warming are challenges that concern all of humanity.