20 kids petition for bike lanes in Santa Fe town

CEBU, Philippines - Around 20 children from at least two barangays in the Municipality of Sta. Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu yesterday filed a petition before the municipal council asking for bike lanes.

They were assisted by more than a dozen of Filipino and foreign lawyers and youth leaders who converge at the beach of the School of SEA (Sea and Earth Advocates) to launch a series of socio-political and legal actions to compel the present generation to take action on the impact of climate change.

“Today, the youth of the Philippines, backed by their international supporters, have launched a peaceful revolution. A revolution of the mind waged with only the sword of reason, the firepower of the Law, and the violence of an idea whose time has come,” declared the internationally-acclaimed environment lawyer, Antonio Oposa, co-convener of the event.

The petition was addressed to Sta. Fe Vice Mayor Renato Saagundo for the Sangguniang Bayan to act within 30 days as mandated by the Local Government Code of 1991.

"Kami naghangyo sa gobyerno nga tungaon ang karsada aron makaagi ang mga bata aron maka bike para dili hadlok maligsan," said one of the petitioners, Rome Jay Forrosuello, of Barangay Okoy.

Oposa said that it was a simultaneous activity in different parts of the country wherein his law students also initiated in barangay level using a little known law on people’s initiative.

More than 20 barangays in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao simultaneously filed the same petition yesterday, according to Oposa.

The filing of the petitions formed part of the ground-level activities of the Road Sharing Movement which calls on the Philippine Government to transform the road and transportation system from the present car-based system to one that is fairer and more people-friendly.

The petition proposed respective local governments to pass an ordinance which calls for the sharing of the road space: At least one-half of roads will be used only for path-walks and bicycle lanes, and the other half for a good public transport system.

The team of youth leaders and their lawyers are also set to send out a Nationwide Notice to Sue to the Philippine Government addressed to the Climate Change Commission (CCC), the sole policy-making body of the government tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government relating to climate change.

Since its establishment in 2009, Oposa said the CCC has failed to pass any policy to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Oposa said that climate change is an issue of intergenerational justice and equity.

Frustrated by the failure of the present generation to take meaningful actions to address the climate crisis, Oposa said the youth are fired to assert their right to a safe and healthful future by using the power of the law.

Lawyers Oposa, Sigfrid Fortun representing Team Beautiful Philippines, Gen Tadaba, Beryl Desabelle, Rica de Guzman, and a team of young lawyers, were joined by international environmental lawyers Brook Meakins of the International Climate Change Action Team, Durwood Zaelke, John Boyd of the United States, Selyna Pereis of Sri Lanka, Stephen Leonard of Climate Justice Program of Australia, among others.

“We congratulate the Filipino people for once again showing the world the way of a peaceful revolution. This time, they are leading a revolution of the mind,” said Durwood Zaelke, founder of the Center for International Environmental Law and director of the International Network for Environmental Enforcement.