



## **The test and opportunity posed by Typhoon Haiyan**

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The devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines continues to mount. Winds that reached 195 mph brought unmitigated ruin, an untold number of deaths and displaced more than 600,000 people throughout the country. This beast of a storm has not only destroyed human lives but human health, too. Not just physically and emotionally, but socially; when natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy strike, they threaten and decimate entire social fabrics of many established communities.

This tragedy reminds us that we are obliged to pay attention and to act—whether it's donating goods and support to the affected region or bolstering the resilience of vulnerable communities to avoid this extent of damage from future catastrophes. Here at USGBC, our thoughts and hearts are with the people of the Philippines.

The tragic effects of this typhoon have reignited conversations about global action to address the deceleration and the effects of climate change and how buildings play an important role in addressing both climate change mitigation and human health.

This disaster was at the front of minds at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Nineteenth Conference of Parties (COP19) that began in Warsaw, Poland. The distinguished delegate from the Philippines delivered a stirring and emotional invention during the opening session of the COP. He called for urgent action on climate change, including adequate climate finance and loss and damage compensation.

Watch the video (<http://vimeo.com/79117298>) of his remarks and read an excerpt from his speech below:

"To anyone who continues to deny the reality that is climate change, I dare you to get off your ivory tower and away from the comfort of your armchair. I dare you to go to the islands of the Pacific, the islands of the Caribbean and the islands of the Indian ocean and see the impacts of rising sea levels; to the mountainous regions of the Himalayas and the Andes to see communities confronting glacial floods, to the Arctic where communities grapple with the fast dwindling polar ice caps, to the large deltas of the Mekong, the Ganges, the Amazon, and the Nile where lives and livelihoods are drowned, to the hills of Central America that confronts similar monstrous hurricanes, to the vast savannas of Africa where climate change has likewise become a matter of life and death as food and water becomes scarce. Not to forget the massive hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and the eastern seaboard of North America. And if that is not enough, you may want to pay a visit to the Philippines right now

...Typhoons such as Yolanda (Haiyan) and its impacts represent a sobering reminder to the international community that we cannot afford to procrastinate on climate action. Warsaw must deliver on enhancing ambition and should muster the political will to address climate change

As these global challenges continue to mount, global solutions are required. We can and must do

better to reduce the negative impacts of climate change and we must do better in the design of our built environment to promote human health and disaster resilience."

As USGBC gathers next week for our annual Greenbuild conference, this disaster, the imperatives of community resilience and considerations for human health will be on everyone's minds. In light of this global challenge, we pose a global question: How many more Superstorm Sandys or Typhoon Haiyans will it take to instigate urgent, meaningful action on climate mitigation, action and resilience?

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