

Message by **ATTY. DEMOCRITO T. MENDOZA**
President of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP)
Forum on Decent Work and Social Justice in Times of Crisis

(Presented by **Mr. Jesus Villamor**, *TUCP, Vice President*)

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Her Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
ILO Director Linda Wirth
Department of Labor and Employment Secretary Marianito Roque
Senior Officials and delegates
Distinguished guests, good morning!

I am honored to be here and to be among so many friends.

On behalf of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and our members, I congratulate and greet the ILO and its social partners- government, employers and workers—on ILO's 90th anniversary.

We may bring different interests into the arena, but its gratifying that we decide to be together still even after 90 years of (sometimes frustrating) efforts to promote decent work and social justice.

Decent Work and Social Justice are powerful concepts. But these ideas become severely challenged in these times of global crisis which has brought more unemployment and poverty.

Labor believes that the correct approach to fighting the challenges of this crisis is by upholding decent work and the dignity of the Filipino people and families. We know that, with a "can-do" spirit, commitment, shared sacrifice and collective action—we will get there.

Appreciating all these, let me summarize all the challenges- unemployment, poverty, fundamental freedoms, human rights, discrimination, quick labor justice and massive contractualization—and stress the need for concrete action with continuing, sustainable, tangible results.

1. Transformation through creation of productive and remunerative jobs

Without jobs in the country, many of our people are forced to leave town and family to seek greener Pasture. Migration has always been with us, even 90 years ago. It has been a complicated, delicate, political and economic challenge. Preserving dignity of work and protection of rights is difficult in country; protection of overseas workers is much more so. For so many Filipinos, expectations, children's futures, even lives—are severely challenged.

We have to do much, much more, to reduce migration and its social impact through local employment creation and strengthen protection of Filipino migrant workers!

2. Empowerment through respect and promotion of workers' right

There can be no decent work without respect for fundamental labor standards, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Anti-union actions are an affront to decent work. Ninety years into the ILO, yet we continue to grapple to eliminate barriers for the genuine exercise of free trade unionism.

We are sad that widespread contractualization remains to be the greatest hurdle in the exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

3. Liberation through social protection

Social protection is designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risk, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income.

We acknowledge the effort of the ILO in the establishment and strengthening of social protection mechanisms in the country. These mechanisms need to be enhanced and strengthened. In these trying times, we need quality health care; education and training; protection of women, youth and children; and effective assistance to the poor and the unemployed.

We do not look kindly on efforts of some parties to compromise minimum labor standards in the guise of responding to the global crisis. We know the progressive tripartite sectors would not tolerate this kind of opportunism.

4. Unity and consensus through social dialogue

Tripartism and social dialogue are empowering. They make life exciting, and they are our way forward. They allow us to focus on solutions that work and that will enhance the lives of our workers and their families.

We need to keep reinforcing the capacities of workers, employers and government. We have many good practices in the past 90 years. Together, with these genuinely good practices, we can look forward to accelerating development and equity in the next 90 years.

In closing, to paraphrase a song, let us say: "A better world of work starts here; and let it begin with us—the tripartite sectors."

Good morning and a pleasant day ahead of us!