

Message by **ATTY. ALLAN MONTAÑO**
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Forum on Decent Work and Social Justice in Times of Crisis

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Your Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo
Colleagues in the ILO, and our Social Partners
Friends and Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

We join in today's celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the ILO with the expectation that this will not be the last; rather, we are hopeful that this would be a part of a continuing effort of the social partners in our tireless efforts to achieve decent work and social justice for all.

For truly, as the invitation pamphlet describes, "Working for social justice is more than the theme of our 90th anniversary, it is our assessment of the past and our mandate for the future."

Therefore, we express our belief that decent work for all, while now the road that is less traveled, in the future, will be the main highway towards achieving social justice for all.

It really does not matter so much that we highlight this twin themes in these times of crisis. What does matter, and perhaps, what spells the difference, is that we remain constant, as the ILO had in its 90 years of existence, in our desire to promote decent work that will help us achieve social justice that, in turn, will lead to decent work, in our spiraling ascent to a life of human dignity and decency that is birthright of all.

For after all, both decent work and social justice are in themselves only means toward a greater end; and that the greater end is to enable and empower each and every human being to live and develop to his or her highest potential that befits the purpose of life.

90 years may be a long time in the lives of women and men; but 90 years of the ILO, in fact on of, if not the oldest among, international agencies in existence today, is merely a heartbeat in the unending quest to live a full, human life.

The road that, till now, is less traveled, lead us to "opportunities for women and men to work productively, under conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity." It emphasizes that the human victims of an economic crisis cry for social justice, the crisis having been stoked underneath by the fire of greed in the marketplace that has finally exploded as a social volcano spewing its deadly lava on all facts of social life.

Those of us who are serious with fulfilling our commitments to the ILO's goal of social justice are called upon to respond, quickly and efficiently, to end the human misery especially of the most vulnerable in our respective societies.

For us in the trade unions, that response is both simple and workable: let the social partners work together to align our labor and social laws and practice to the principles and standards that ILO has established, and that we, as members of the only tripartite international organization ever established, are duty-bound to implement.

It will not be an easy road to traverse. Yet we are confident that continuing social dialogue, truly practiced, inevitably will lead us to the twin goals of achieving decent work and social justice for all.

Good morning.