

**Trade Union Joint Forum on ILO Conventions 87 and 98:
ILO's standards and jurisprudence on the fundamental rights at work and
applications in the Philippines
(March 11, 2009: ILO Auditorium)**

**WELCOME SPEECH
by
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Distinguished guests, and
Sisters and Brothers,

Good afternoon!

On behalf of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its Subregional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, I wish to extend my warmest welcome to all of you to this Trade Union Joint Forum on ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

I would like to particularly welcome members of Congress present today. Your participation in this forum will surely add extra value to discussions and any conclusions of the forum.

I should like to congratulate the members of Trade Union Technical Working Group – namely, representatives of TUCP, FFW and APL – for taking a very good and timely initiative in organizing this joint forum. We always appreciate your active participation in our tripartite consultations on Decent Work as well as in various projects and activities we run for trade unions in the Philippines.

I am particularly thrilled today by recognizing the presence of representatives from a large number of trade unions in this country, which we haven't seen so often. The topic you will discuss today is surely the issue concerning all workers without distinction, and I think organizing this event jointly involving a wide range of trade union organizations from various levels and sectors is not only appropriate, but also necessary to have effective discussions and decisions for future actions.

It goes without saying that Conventions 87 and 98 are the most fundamental Conventions among 188 Conventions that the ILO has adopted in its 90 years of history. They define vital requirements for tripartism within the ILO that all its 182 Member States are obliged to respect, implement and realize. They also recognise the fundamental nature of these principles and rights for strengthening democracy as the underpinning of sustainable economic progress and development.

Philippines has ratified both Conventions long time ago, and we should commend the efforts and commitment by the Filipino tripartite constituency ever since in implementing the

Conventions in laws and practice. However, we all know that there is still room for improvement. The ILO's supervisory bodies have observed that the Labour Code of the Philippines has provisions that are not fully in conformity with the Conventions 87 and 98, and have made recommendations for amendments. I hope that this Forum today will try to revisit the recommendations of our supervisory bodies and discuss how best trade unions can facilitate the tripartite efforts and initiatives in realizing the Labour Code reforms to further strengthen tripartism and social dialogue, and to promote Decent Work in this country.

We should also not forget that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are developmental issues as well. Respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining plays an important part in sound economic development, and has a positive effect on economic development by ensuring that the benefits of growth are shared, productivity is promoted, and making possible adjustment measures and industrial peace. I think this is particularly important during the time of economic crisis we are in today.

I sincerely hope that you all will enjoy this great opportunity to jointly study the key technical elements and issues of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, including also the right to strike, and set specific targets and plan of joint actions for trade unions to promote the principles through your engagement with the other social partners.

I wish you very fruitful and productive workshop!