

Message by **MR. ANIANO G. BAGABALDO**
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Forum on Decent Work and Social Justice in Times of Crisis

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First and foremost, allow me to greet, in behalf of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), the ILO as it marks its 90th anniversary - a milestone indeed for its dedication and unwavering commitment of serving the tripartite constituents for the past nine decades.

It is an honor and pleasure for me to join you today in this momentous occasion.

Since its birth in 1919, the ILO on countless gatherings and activities has been bringing together governments, employers, and workers of member-States toward social protection and improving work conditions and quality of life around the globe. Its relevance, indeed, cannot be disputed given its vital labor standards, more so, in the rapidly changing global environment marked by technological and scientific advancements, and in these times of economic adversity.

Today's forum anchored on social justice evokes memories on the evolution of a formidable institution like ILO that has over the years adhered to the fundamental principles embodied in its Constitution, that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice."

The decent Work Common Agenda drawn up by the tripartite partners reinforces efforts towards realizing social justice and equity vis-à-vis strategic objectives of generating jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue.

In the face of the continuing global crisis, providing the environment to create opportunities in mitigating the odds and nurturing a business climate conducive in fostering competitiveness and enhancing entrepreneurship are essential. The collective concern should be job preservation and averting workers' loss of income.

We view the global economic crisis as a challenge for policy-makers in developing countries like the Philippines to come up with the innovative policies that can better manage labor market changes from an economic and social point of view. Experiences of Western industrialized countries have shown that they have organized their systems of employment and social protection in a way that allows flexibility for firms while ensuring income and broader social protection to workers at the societal level.

More emphasis should be placed on active labor market programs to make them available to job seekers who can effectively gain from them in terms of improving their capacity and employability and finding a job more rapidly. Active labor market programs

should focus mainly on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to accommodate their needs, improved their skills, and moderate barriers to work.

Action program should be geared towards regions experiencing high unemployment and underemployment, to contribute towards reducing labor market imbalances.

In order to ensure interventions with lasting effect, programs should take into consideration the causes of unemployment or forced inactivity, and the reason why workers are not re-employed, and combining appropriate measures addressing all these deficiencies.

Let me end by quoting Robert Baron, the renowned author of various books and papers on technology, business and management, who emphasized that “There is no such thing as free lunch- for management, for labor or for the government. They all share in success or in failure.”

Thank you and have a wonderful and productive day ahead.