



STATEMENTS 2010

Opening Address at the Seminar-Workshop on Freedom of Association, Civil Liberties, Labour Laws and the Issue of Impunity (13-14 December 2010)

By Mr Lawrence Jeff Johnson
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13 December 2010
Davao City, Philippines

Undersecretary Cacdac of the Department of Labor and Employment

Director Rebecca Chato of the DOLE Bureau of Labour Relations

Our distinguished speakers and resource persons from

- The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, Employers' Confederation of the Philippines,
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples,
- Department of Justice,
- Commission on Human Rights and
- The Armed Forces of the Philippines

Honourable Justice Robyn Layton, former member of the Australian Supreme Court and former Chairperson of the ILO's independent supervisory body, and the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

My colleagues from ILO Bangkok Tim de Meyer and Jajoon Coue

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, *magandang umaga* (good morning)!

December 10 marked the observance of Human Rights Day. Working women and men around the world have rights at work-

- rights to organize and have a voice,
- rights to full respect of human dignity,
- equal opportunity, and
- rights to decent and productive work.

The ILO is pleased to be your partner in this initiative. Indeed, Freedom of Association,

Civil Liberties, Labour Laws and the Issue of Impunity are relevant themes to help ensure that human rights are guaranteed for everyone.

The Universal Declaration of Human rights was adopted in 1948, the same year the ILO adopted ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention. The Convention can be seen as a human rights instrument as it calls to protect freedom from any restrictions or infringements by the State.

At the same time, it protects the right of workers and employers to form and join organizations and to freely decide on internal matters without interference from public authorities.

One year later, the ILO adopted another relevant convention - ILO Convention 98, the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention.

Labour rights are human rights.

The ILO's mandate is closely related to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As the Universal Declaration affirms, everyone has the right work, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against:

- unemployment as stated in Article 23 including the right to security in such circumstance, based on Article 25 of the Declaration
- to equal pay and just remuneration and
- the right to form and join trade unions.

Since 1948, the Philippines has been an active member of the ILO, giving strong support to policies and programmes. The Philippines has ratified 34 ILO Conventions, of which 32 are in force. This includes the two key Conventions mentioned earlier.

In 2009, the Philippine government accepted the ILO High-Level Mission. It affirms the commitment of the Philippine government to full and effective application of ILO Conventions 87 and 98. The ILO High Level Mission recommended both short-term and long-term programmes, which includes addressing challenges to stop a climate of impunity.

Since the High Level Mission, the ILO has supported many follow-up activities to strengthen enforcement of freedom of association in the context of human rights and civil liberties at the national level and in specific geographical areas which include economic processing zones.

In the spirit of social dialogue, the Philippine government, employers' and workers' organizations including the police and armed forces were involved in various efforts to apply the High Level Mission's recommendations.

As part of ILO's continuing support to the Philippines, sessions in the next two days will seek to:

1. Look into the possibility of moving forward the investigation, prosecution and resolution of pending cases involving violation against trade unionists;
2. Obtain a better understanding of the principles and interrelations of freedom of association, civil liberties and their enforcement. How to achieve this together with partners -- government, employers' and workers' organizations;
3. Define specific roles of social partners, particularly those in economic zones in Mindanao in relation to the principles of freedom of association; and
4. Enhance social dialogue mechanisms as a tool for better application of the principles of freedom of association in the economic zones or in Mindanao as a whole.

Similar to past activities, our efforts in the next two days are geared not only to discuss problems but also to find solutions to improve policies, practices and mechanisms.

We do recognize that changes will not happen overnight.

The impact of the global economic crisis threatens all efforts to defend human rights and level the playing field.

Workers who lost their jobs face uncertainty and insecurity. Rather than becoming unemployed, we have seen increasing trend of vulnerable employment, growing level of inequality and worsening condition of poverty.

In June 2009, the ILO which is made up of representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations adopted the Global Jobs Pact as a response to the crisis.

The Pact is currently being used in many countries to guide national and international policies. It is centred on accelerating employment creation and building social protection systems.

At the same time the Global Jobs Pact reinforces that respecting fundamental principles and rights at work, promoting gender equality and encouraging voice and participation are critical to recovery and development.

It is about protecting people while safeguarding rights and promoting dialogue which will foster sustainable growth and development.

In times of crisis, we need a culture of social dialogue, a critically important mechanism for maintaining social peace and stability and advancing inclusive policies for economic recovery.

The new Philippine administration's commitment is linked to the Global Jobs Pact as it placed creating decent and productive employment opportunities, achieving inclusive growth and reducing poverty central to its national development objective.

At this point, let me thank the Department of Labour and Employment for coordinating preparations for this seminar-workshop.

It is through joining forces that we can effectively address challenges and ensure human rights and civil liberties in the context of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in Mindanao.

Let me assure you that ILO is committed to partner with you to guarantee human rights and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.

Thank you and *Mabuhay!*

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