

Statement of  
**HONORABLE ROSALINDA DIMAPILIS-BALDOZ**  
Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment  
Philippines

(Delivered by Undersecretary Rebecca C. Chato)

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**THE FUTURE OF WORK CENTENARY INITIATIVE**

Madame President, I congratulate you for your esteemed leadership of the Conference. I commend Director General Guy Ryder for the report on the Future of Work Initiative, the centerpiece of the ILO's centenary in 2019.

Sixteen years ago in 1999, when I first stood before this august body as then Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards, I took note of how the world of work was being altered drastically by changes brought about by globalization, rapid technological advancements and innovations. I have said that the changes were not expected to diminish, but rather they should bring more focused attention to the critical role of the ILO and international labour standards in ensuring lasting peace based on social justice. They should add more dynamism and more collaborative efforts among the social partners to enhance the values of tripartism and social dialogue in improving the terms and

conditions of employment and the quality of work and life of all people. Decent work, after all, is for men and women everywhere, and is both a means and an end for the ILO in an era of globalization. As the social conscience in the world of work, ILO finds its perfect fit as the equilibrium that balances economic with social progress, and it should move in pace with the demands of social justice and give the global economy its human face.

Madame. President, I am convinced then and more so now, that the future of work remains anchored on the timeless principles embodied in the four pillars of decent work: employment through sustainable enterprises, rights at work, social dialogue, and social protection. The global forecast on employment and social outlook seems daunting, but as leaders of this tripartite organization today our most important role is to inspire hope and confidence for the next generation of workers, employers and government leaders. What remains is how to make these principles work and produce concrete results. One big step is for the ILO to push the inclusion of decent work in the new Social Development Goals (SDG) to acquire its deserved prominence.

Also, the ILO should include only relevant and strategic items that impact on decent work in its annual Conference. The Recommendation that addresses the issues of transition from the informal to formal economy with SMEs as creator

of decent and productive employment is one good example. It is linked to the global issue of security of tenure if subcontracting is used to violate basic labor rights and evade compliance with minimum labor standards including safety and health. These standards are non-negotiable social floor, below which no self-respecting governments, employers and workers should be allowed to bargain away in favor of unrestrained labor flexibility.

We take particular interest on safety and health issues in the recurrent discussion, considering the recent Kentex fire incident in the Philippines that claimed the lives of 72 workers. The severity of the case prompted the highest level of intervention by the President to ensure that administrative, civil and criminal liabilities of those involved, are determined by competent authorities. He also directed the fast mobilization of local chief executives and fire protection and labor officers to inspect all establishments and require employers, under pain of sanctions including closures, if they fail to comply with the safety laws and regulations. The Kentex case puts at the top priority the need to review standards and capacity building of government, employers and workers. We appreciate the technical assistance to be provided by the ILO and the Government of the United States to help address the need, complemented by another project with the Government of Canada.

The situation of rural workers especially in the agriculture sector is of particular interest to the Philippines where high level of poverty persists with serious unemployment and underemployment. Climate change issues are timely and learning good practices to manage its adverse effects on work, in a tripartite manner, is most appropriate.

The future of work cannot be isolated with human resource development. The Philippines is starting to reap its demographic dividend because of our young and educated workforce and our strategic investment with the biggest share in our budget for health, education, skills training and other social services. We are reforming our educational and training system to produce 21<sup>st</sup> century skills needed by the industries. To ensure labor mobility, we engage governments hosting our migrant workers to enter into Mutual Recognition Agreements.

The future of work, as we know it today, rests on the ILO as it focuses its activities and resources on its mandate to promote social justice, and on the governments and the social partners as they harness tripartism and social dialogue to forge consensus in shaping the future of work. The three-stage process of implementing the Initiative leading to a centenary declaration deserves our support.

Thank you, Madame President, and God bless.

