

## **Redefining policy on direct hiring ban**

*Secretary SILVESTRE H. BELLO III*

Policy Research and Development of a Risk Assessment and Due Diligence Guidelines

*8 February 2019, Discovery Suites Manila*

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Honored guests from the International Organization for Migration and other international agencies; Ms. Kristina Dadey of the IOM, Ms. Marla Asis of the Scalabrini Migration Center, our very own POEA Administrator Bernard Olalia;

Dear fellow workers in government, partners, and representatives from the non-government sector, a pleasant afternoon to all.

Allow me to express my appreciation to IOM for jumpstarting and funding this policy research initiative. Your continued support to the Philippine Government is of great help to us. Along with our other partners, we are able to better serve the Filipino workers all-throughout the migration cycle, from pre-employment to reintegration.

With the end-view of protecting Filipinos against human trafficking and illegal recruitment, we have long imposed a ban on direct hiring with the exception of certain categories of workers.

And even as we seek to promote migrants' welfare through this policy that allows us to effectively monitor recruitment, illicit direct hiring continues to persist. Our enterprising countrymen found this as alternative mode of entry to other countries, what more with accessible information and easier direct communication through technology.

But let there be no mistake. The rights and welfare of OFWs and migrant Filipinos remain the major foreign policy concern of the Duterte Administration. The President would rather have our

OFWs back home when their human dignity is already being trampled upon.

I am convinced this endeavor would further put our Government and the Labor Department fully responsive to our mandate.

With fresh insights and perspective, we may be able to refocus existing policies. We may be provided as well with new dimensions in preventing abuse of our OFWs and migrants by working on defining standards and strengthening our capacity to manage the migration cycle.

This policy study, which aims to come up with recommendations on addressing direct hiring ban and its exemption, is a welcome development towards making informed policies on the matter.

We expect the Risk Assessment and Due Diligence Guidelines for Workers and Foreign Direct Employers to clearly lay down the procedures and fully inform stakeholders about the issues relating to direct hiring.

We also expect to have improved and more defined policies on the ban exemption so that it is not taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals and entities.

Let me commend the Parties in this project – the IOM, the Scalabrini Migration Center, the POEA and all other organizations involved – for committing to this endeavor.

I congratulate everyone and look forward to seeing the fruitful outcome of this undertaking.

Once again, thank you for your overwhelming support!