

DOLE ORGANIZES LABOR SUMMIT TOWARDS THE FORMULATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE LABOR AGENDA

A total of 399 labor leaders and trade unionists from 61 labor federations participated in the Labor Summit conducted last October 17 at the Occupational Safety and Health Center in Quezon City. The Department of Labor and Employment spearheaded the activity in the endeavor of the current administration to draft its comprehensive labor agenda. The Labor Summit also coincides with the ongoing review of Department Order No. 18-A on contracting or subcontracting.

“DOLE is here to listen,” the Secretary said as he welcomes the representatives from different labor organizations. He added that the participants should keep an open mind as both workers and management are important social partners of the government to achieve industrial peace.

In explaining the workshop mechanics, Dir. Benavidez of the Bureau of Labor Relations expressed his hopes that the labor organizations, in spite of differing political ideologies, may come up with a unified stand on the following areas: (1) security of tenure in the private sector, (2) security of tenure in the public sector, (3) industrial policy and economic roadmap, (4) wage, tax, price reforms, (5) labor rights and standards, (6) informal sector, (7) migrant workers, and (8) women workers.

Before the start of workshop sessions, Assistant Secretary Soriano of the Office of Cabinet Secretary gave a presentation on the 10-point Socio-Economic Agenda, the emerging 10++ Social Developmental Agenda, and the 12 National Security Agenda in pursuing the national interest under the Duterte Administration. Assistant Secretary Avila of the Department also communicated the eight-point Labor and Employment Agenda and the progress made under the stewardship of Secretary Bello III.

From the discussions, it is clear that the labor sector opposes the Win-Win Solution offered by the DTI and employer organizations. The participants reiterated in one voice that it is high-time for the government to seriously end contractualization and regularize all workers both in the public and private sectors. For them, to improve the working

conditions and raise the living standards of ordinary workers require veering away from neoliberal policies and promoting national industrialization alongside with genuine agrarian reform to generate more decent jobs in the country.

Among the policy proposals noted during the Labor Summit include the enactment of the Magna Carta for the Informal Sector, and the legislation of separate measures that will prosecute violators of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards and grant 120-day maternity leave for women workers, respectively.

The participants further raised the issue of deputization of labor organizations to conduct inspection and ensure compliance among establishments. Recurring recommendations are the fixing of national minimum wage, implementing a progressive taxation system, and providing unemployment insurance.

To be able to draft a responsive and inclusive labor agenda, the Department will also be holding a Labor Summit in Cebu and Davao in November.

END/ Athena M. Villagonzalo