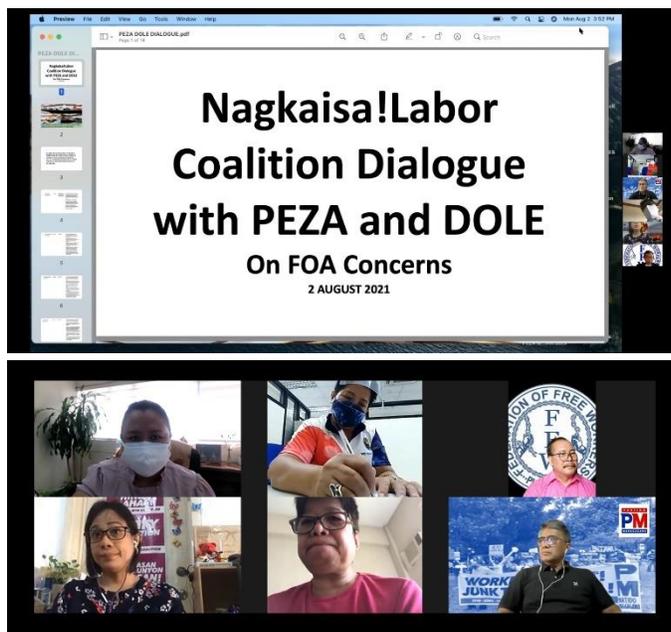


DOLE, PEZA, and Labor Groups Discuss Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining for Workers in Economic Zones



The DOLE Bureau on Labor Relations held a virtual dialogue with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) and labor organizations on 02 August 2021 (Monday) to discuss the labor sector's concerns on the status of the right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining of workers in economic zones. The dialogue was scheduled after the NAGKAISA! Labor Coalition raised that Sections 15 and 38 of Republic Act No. 7916 or the Special Economic Zone Act and Rule XXIII of its Implementing Rules and Regulation, pertaining to the establishment of an advisory and tripartite body in economic zones, is not in full effect.

Twenty-one (21) labor representatives were in attendance to the dialogue where they were able to present ongoing cases that illustrate violations to the right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining of workers in economic zones. Following this presentation, a three-point recommendation was given which include (1) the formation of tripartite mechanisms within economic zones, (2) the continuation of the review of the guidelines on the conduct of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and (3) the abandonment the establishment of the Joint Industrial Peace and Concern Office (JIPCO).

In response, the PEZA, headed by Director General BGen Charito Plaza, shared the Authority's initiatives in upholding the rights and welfare of workers in economic zones, particularly at the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. According to the Director General, the PEZA prioritizes ease of doing business for investors and locators since this is the key to ensuring continuous employment for over 1.6 million workers in economic zones. In terms of tripartism, Director General Plaza highlighted that the Authority is already heavily involved in tripartite industrial peace councils on various levels nationwide, and that the strengthening of these existing mechanisms should be prioritized as opposed to the creation of new ones.

As way forward, the PEZA requested the labor sector to submit a letter detailing all the pending cases related to the violation of the right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining of economic zone workers. The PEZA is also expected to set a follow up meeting with the labor sector to discuss these additional pending cases.