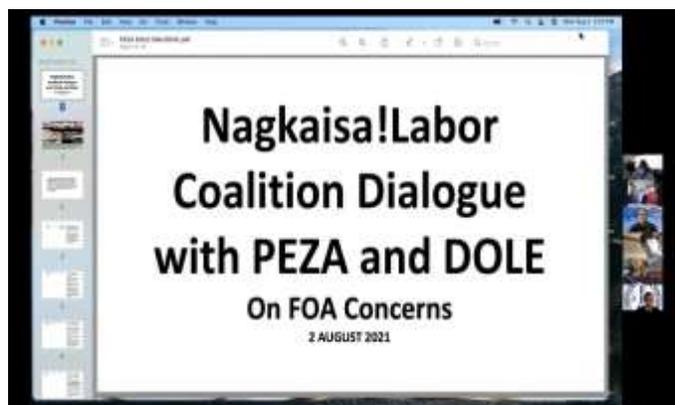


DOLE, PEZA, and Labor Groups Discuss Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining for Workers in Economic Zones



The DOLE 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.

Presided over by Undersecretary Benjo Santos M. Benavidez, twenty-one (21) labor representatives were able to present ongoing cases that illustrate alleged violations to the right to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining of workers in



economic zones. Following the 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 involved in tripartite industrial peace councils on various levels nationwide, and that the strengthening of these existing mechanisms should be prioritized.

As a way forward, PEZA invited the labor sector to submit in writing the list of pending cases involving violations on the right to freedom of association in economic zones with specific details. The PEZA also committed to holding consistent dialogues with the sector to facilitate the investigation of these cases as well as discuss the legal ramifications of establishing tripartite advisory bodies in economic zone authorities.