

DOLE responds to EU GSP+ Mission Probes on Workers' Right to Freedom of Association

The 4th European Union – Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (EU-GSP+) Monitoring Mission Labor Cluster Meeting was held on 3-4 March 2022 at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, Makati City. Officials from the European Union visited the Philippines as part of the country's commitment under the GSP to discuss the implementation of the country's commitments under the eight (8) core International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions, particularly ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize.

In his opening statement, Undersecretary Benjo Santos M. Benavidez, head of the Philippine Labor Cluster Delegation, stated that “the Philippine government takes pride that the labor and employment situation in the country has been characterized by continuous and progressive improvements over the years in all fronts, both in law and in practice.”



The most critical issue discussed during the Labor Cluster Meeting is the Philippine acceptance of the ILO High Level Tripartite Mission this year. In clarification, Usec. Benavidez said that the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) already sent a letter to the President seeking clearance for the acceptance of the ILO Mission.

“The DOLE Secretary signed an Administrative Order on the creation of a technical working group which will work in the preparation for the acceptance of the Mission before the 110th Session of the ILC on 30 May to 10 June 2022,” Usec. Benavidez added. He likewise mentioned that since 2019, the government has been ready to accept the Mission, but was

deterred by the global health crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Usec. Benavidez informed the delegation that in preparation for the ILO Mission, a tripartite roadmap on the promotion of freedom of association and civil liberties shall be adopted and implemented along the recommendations in the Report of the September 2021 Tripartite High-Level Virtual Meeting and Committee on Application of Standards (CAS) Conclusions in 2019.

On the issue of reported cases of extrajudicial killings and harassments against trade unionists, Usec. Benavidez underscored that these cases do not define the true labor and employment situation in the country as these are isolated cases. He further emphasized that there are existing mechanisms in place that are functioning and effective in providing legal and administrative remedies in such cases.

“The Philippine government has undertaken proactive measures to address and prevent reported violence in relation to the exercise of workers' legitimate activities,” said Usec. Benavidez.



In closing, Usec. Benavidez expressed the long desire of the government to finally close the long-standing issues noted by the ILO-CAS. He added that the Philippine government has high hopes that the tripartite roadmap will be presented in the next 110th ILC Session in June 2022.

Mr. Lluís Prats, EU GSP+ Labor Cluster Head, commended Usec. Benavidez for the successful chairmanship of the labor cluster meeting and providing clarifications on the issues raised. He expressed his appreciation to Usec. Benavidez for being physically present during the Labor Cluster Meeting, reflecting the Philippines' sincerity to an open dialogue. <END>