

**Statement of Avelino V. Valerio, Philippine Workers' Delegate  
Vice President, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP)  
92nd International Labor Conference**

Mr. President, brothers and sisters:

The world moves, yet things seem to remain the same.

The economies of the world prosper, yet the situation of workers and their families for most of the world remain stagnant, at best.

This Conference presents another opportunity for the ILO and its tripartite constituents to strengthen actions for the improvement of work and lives of working peoples around the world.

We will consider what has been done and what more needs to be done on certain things. All in the name of improving living and working standards and eradicating or minimizing poverty. The ILO, with its tripartite structure, demonstrates to the world at large the value of involving all sectors in the attainment of social justice and equity.

The Global Report under the Follow-up to the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work shows that a startling half of the world's workers remain unprotected by Convention Nos. 87 and 98 on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. These core conventions have not been ratified by many, including in some large countries. Without this appreciation and without a commitment to these Conventions, Governments and employers in many countries violate these Conventions with impunity. Others have ratified these Conventions, but have not given much effect to ratification, through implementation.

Continued threats to workers seeking to organize worker' organizations —including killings, detention and violence — persist. Our mother organization, the ICFTU, has time and again called the attention of the world to the most dangerous places for workers exercising these rights.

In other countries, violations are not as flagrant, but nevertheless as deadly. We deplore the recent killings of labor leaders in certain countries. Trade unionism has become the most dangerous profession in the world.

In the Philippines, we have not seen as many killings or violence as before, but they are there. Threats, intimidation, harassment, alternative arrangements — continue. We have made many strides in labor law and practice through the years, and especially in the Administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, but more need to be done. Many employers, multinational or otherwise, inside or outside export processing zones and industrial parks, have active and repressive measures against organizing unions in their enterprises.

Application of the principles of the Conventions remains a daunting challenge for workers, employers and governments.

The leading role of the ILO in promoting decent work for all has impressed on us that "decent work has to become a global goal". Decent work is the basic demand of all working people. And we encourage more meaningful joint work with governments and employers for the implementation of the decent work agenda at various levels, including the international, national, industry, community, and enterprise levels.

The work of the tripartite partners in the Philippines in this respect is going in the right direction. A decent work agenda, while not perfect, has been promulgated; but serious implementation needs to be accelerated. This has to be done to secure the moral high ground against those who would seek to further destabilize economy and society, while exploiting parliamentary processes for their hidden agenda.

Decent work is necessary for globalization to be fair. There are a number of interesting recommendations from the World Commission report on the Social Dimension of Globalization; these should be quickly translated into practical action. It is only right that the ILO should take a leading role in fair globalization.

The ILO's strength in its structure would facilitate the mainstreaming of fairness in the governance of the global economy and in moderating or alleviating the negative effects of globalization.

The second discussion on a new recommendation on human resources development and training should give focus on new approaches to life-long learning.

The world, and the employment world, and therefore employment requirements, have changed. Millions of jobs have disappeared or been replaced by others. In most cases, those who have lost their jobs have not found comparable decent employment.

Provisions for development and implementation of education and training policies, framework for recognition and certification of skills should reflect skills employability, and active citizenship. The times for just any type of employment are gone; broad-brush employment measures are no longer responsive. These days, appropriate economic and social policies have to be complemented with sector – or industry-specific measures to maximize remunerative employment.

The discussion on Work in the Fishing Sector based on the law and practice report will reflect changes in the sector over the last several years. We agree that the proposed revision of the existing ILO standards concerning fishing should give more protection to workers – including questions of minimum age of employment, medical attention, social security – and address enforcement and compliance with the standards.

The general discussion on Migrant Workers provides migrant workers' sending and receiving countries another opportunity to make things right. Continuing failure of existing mechanisms and systems to provide jobs and sustainable incomes in home countries continue to underline the need for improving services for the promoting the rights of migrant workers in receiving countries. Cross-border migration is expected to further increase rapidly in the coming years. A fair deal for migrant workers should start with appropriate enforceable international labor standards.

The discussion on Migrant Workers should lead to the ratification and implementation of conventions concerning this group of workers. Amendments of existing Conventions (Nos. 97 and 143) are timely.

Recent violent incidents in the Middle East and elsewhere give focus on a new urgent concern. Political differences and approaches have brought the world to new highs in intolerance, to say the least. How can we insulate migrant workers from these acts of intolerance and unmitigated terrorism? Migrant workers, who before at times were dying on the job, are now threatened even when off the job.

In all these, one principle should not be forgotten, regardless of the times and places. There can be differences in wages from one country or sector to the next. There can be varying menus for benefits for different industries and enterprises. But freedom of association and collective bargaining should apply in all cases; after all, these transcend countries, sectors, and industries. They are not negotiable; they cannot be reversed or restricted or undermined by administrative authority, negotiations or diplomacy. They are very fundamental; freedom of association and collective bargaining is immutable.

In fact, the ILO itself cannot be sustained without further advancement in law and practice in freedom of association and collective bargaining. One of ILO's three (Important) tiers – genuine workers' organizations – can be organized and maintained only under an atmosphere of free association and collective bargaining. Only free and independent unions can meaningfully contribute to substantial realization of ILO's principles and activities.

With fewer new unions, ILO would soon cease to exist as a viable tripartite International labor organization.

Having said all these, I know we can learn and share many things in this Conference. I know, given our shared commitment to bettering workers' lives and work, we will arrive at reasonable agreements.

Thank you. Good day.