



# FEDERATION OF FREE WORKERS

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## RESPONSE AND UPDATES FROM THE FFW<sup>1</sup>

1. We are delighted with the conclusions of the 14<sup>th</sup> Asian Regional Meeting held in Busan, Korea, especially in its penultimate declaration to make the decade, beginning as of the end of the Meeting, an *Asian Decent Work Decade*.
2. We also feel encouraged about the Report of the Committee on Technical Cooperation, in particular its conclusion to integrate the Decent Work Agenda into the programming framework of the United Nations system.
3. We think as others do that there are far reaching consequences of these development in the work of the ILO and the social partners that are also ILO's constituencies. In essence the widespread acceptance by the United Nations system of the concept and programme of Decent Work is a recognition accorded to all the pioneering efforts of the social partners in the Philippines in their desire to mainstream Decent Work in Philippine development efforts, as also elsewhere in the 8 pilot countries implementing similar programs. At the same time, we consider this recognition as a further challenge to work more thoroughly for the successful implementation of the second cycle of the Philippines Decent Work Country Programme.
4. Since 2001 till April 2006, the FFW has adopted the theme of "*Promoting Decent Work in a Borderless World*", and in so doing it guided the programs and projects of the FFW to incorporate elements of decent work in all activities that it has undertaken. For the second cycle, beginning May 2006 until April 2011, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the FFW mandated for our organization to build up the appropriate capacity to implement the Decent Work Agenda in the context of strengthening our changed character as a trade union social movement – a trade union embracing into its membership and structures all types of workers, be they formal or informal, rural or urban, young or old, men and women, or whether they belong to the agricultural, industrial or service sectors of the economy.
5. Other than our continuing tasks to organize all types of workers and to develop appropriate services for them to carry out their primary task of representing, defending and promoting their social and economic interests in all kinds of workplaces, under whatever employment arrangement they are in, through collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue, the FFW is recently

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<sup>1</sup> Submitted to and read during the "Tripartite Forum with the ILO Regional Director Mr. Gek-Boo Ng". 10 October 2006 ILO Auditorium, 19/F, RCBC Plaza Building, Makati City

engaged in training for work or employability for its members, their working age children and kins.

6. To continue with its past involvement, the FFW is focusing an ILO-supported project to eliminate the worst forms of Child Labor in the mining pits of Diwalwal. Furthermore, the FFW is continuing with its project to integrate the domestic workers into its structures and activities, whose beginnings were implemented, again with the support of the ILO. The FFW also participated in the Philippines in the ILO's on-going project to promote entrepreneurship and employment among the youth and, in conjunction with our own efforts to train both young and old in skills to help them gain appropriate qualifications for work, as well as the soon-to-be-established employment counseling and matching facility, our own –self-directed although limited efforts at promoting employment and decent work for all will hopefully come to a modest fruition.
7. FFW is also in the process of finalizing cooperation arrangements with the appropriate ILO office and other trade union formations to organize unions in economic zones, and to improve the environment for the application of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 by maximizing the inspection systems and supervisory mechanism of the UN system, the ILO and the Bretton Woods Institutions, also known to us as the International Financial Institutions.
8. FFW is doing its part in propagating the concept and programme of decent work, especially among civil society organizations not directly connected to the tripartite system established in the country. We refer to our organizing efforts among workers of the NGO community whose rights and interest as workers are seemingly being forgotten even by social development-oriented NGOs. We have recently won a lower-court decision ordering the return to work of dismissed workers in a particular NGO, and while we expect that the process will go through the tortuous route of legal proceedings, nonetheless, the recent labor court decision gives us cause for hope. In the same vein, upon the suggestion of the FFW representatives attending the Labor Caucus meeting of the Fair Trade Alliance (FTA), the Labor Caucus of the Alliance has agreed to recommend a section on Decent Work in National Agenda of the Alliance.
9. As part of the Asian Labor Network on IFIs in the Philippines (ALNI/P), the FFW together with other trade union groups and civil society organizations that compose the ALNI continue to lobby the ADB and World Bank in the Philippines to recognize and promote in their policies and programs at least the international core labor standards and at most to make certain declaration for their support of Decent Work. In this respect, we must again congratulate the ILO in its untiring effort to engage the ADB that has resulted in the latter publishing their joint undertaking known as the *ADB Labour Standards Manual*, upon which the ALNI now finds a concrete platform to further lobby the ADB towards its wider acceptance of core labour standards and towards its actions to incorporate internationally recognized labour and social instruments into its policies and programs.
10. Even as we are trying our best to do our part and contribute our worth to the Common Agenda of our Decent Work Country Program, we must raise certain

concerns that we think are not being given enough attention by the ILO and our social partners. We refer to the continuing unfairness in world trading arrangements, either multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral that are resulting in the wholesale displacement of workers occasioned by the implementation of these agreements, without even an adequate social safety net to go by. Workers thus displaced are unable to re-enter the labor market on account of age and because of skills mismatch. The entrepreneurial and skills training program for the youth could be easily adjusted to fit their circumstance as well but there doesn't seem to be enough interest among the institutional partners of the ILO or in the ILO itself to focus on this devastating problem.

11. In a parallel effort, we must emphasize the concern about the increasing poverty of people already at work. In our opinion, that those who are employed continue to be poor on account of their underemployment and poor quality of work in marginal or low productivity economic activities is an indecent situation that any respectable program for decent work must pay serious attention to. This is patently applicable for all types of informal work, with workers in agriculture bearing the heavier burden. Even as ILO's local economic development projects are seriously addressing this problem, an extra effort is needed to involve more widely the social partners, in the spirit that makes the tripartite character of the ILO unique among the international organizations. This calls for more capacity building to enable the partners to contribute more to the general effort, which, of course, takes more money to do.
12. Which leads us to a final comment about the extra-budgetary sources of ILO that its various reports distributed to us for this meeting mention. It is crucial, in the light of the wide acceptance by the United Nations system of the Decent Work Agenda, that these extra-budgetary resources be tapped and that, through technical cooperation with the full participation of the social partners, be directed also to support programs and projects that will raise enough attention in the international community to take technical education and skills development more seriously than before, and where such seriousness is expressed in terms of budgetary support. It is also crucial that this budgetary support be expended to build the capacities of the social partners, in particular the workers' organizations, to respond to the needs of their respective constituencies and do their share in the common effort to promote decent work for all.