

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**  
**News and Information Bureau**

**POST-SONA DISCUSSIONS – EDUCATION AND WORKERS’ WELFARE DEVELOPMENT**  
**HOSTED BY DAPHNE OSEÑA PAEZ**  
**JULY 24, 2024**

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Good morning, everyone. I am Daphne Oseña-Paez and I welcome you to the second day of 2024 Post-SONA Discussions. We hope that everyone is safe and well in their homes. It has been raining relentlessly due to Typhoon Carina and Habagat but rest assured that all government agencies involved in response and rescue led by the president are closely monitoring the situation nationwide. And that is why some of our panelists for today will be joining us via Zoom.

Isinusulong sa Bagong Pilipinas and dekalidad na edukasyong kayang sumasabay sa mga hamon ng makabagong panahon. Pinapahalagahan din ng Bagong Pilipinas ang kapakanan ng bawat manggagawang Pilipino saanman sila sa mundo. Kasama natin ngayong umaga ang mga panelists ng Education and Workers’ Welfare Development Cluster who will give us more details about their projects to enhance the education system and ensure the workers’ welfare and employment opportunities.

So, with us this morning are: Department of Education Secretary Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara; Department of Labor and Employment Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma; Department of Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Cacdac via Zoom; and also via Zoom, Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Prospero de Vera III; also via Zoom, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Deputy General Rosanna Urdaneta.

At this point, we will give our panelists time to expound on what the president had said in his State of the Nation Address and let’s begin with education. He stated, *“Ito ngayon ang magiging hamon sa ating bagong kalihim, ang tiyakin ang pagbangon at pagtaas ng kalidad ng edukasyon sa bansa sa lalong madaling panahon.”*

Secretary Angara, this is my chance to congratulate you on your appointment. Hello, sir, and I look forward to having—

**DEPED SEC. ANGARA:** Hi. Good morning, Daphne. Good morning to all our viewers and our fellow department secretaries.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, sir. Under your new leadership as the new DepEd secretary, how do you plan to improve the quality of education among the Filipino youth most especially that we face new challenges in learning brought about by the modern world?

**DEPED SEC. ANGARA:** Well, obviously this is a huge challenge, Daphne, but the president knows that it will take time. But we need to plant seeds for the long term as well as try to have

some wins in the short term. So, number one, the president said let us take care of our teachers so he has, I believe approved some form, in principle at least, the career progression of our teachers because that has been a long-time complaint of our teachers – that it takes very long for them to get promoted.

And then, we are also trying to activate the Teacher Education Council – this is a body created under a law which Congress passed around two years ago which is meant to train our teachers to ensure up-to-date quality and the methods of teaching that teachers are really improving and keeping up. And, of course, the president also mentioned the need to improve our scores in local and international tests.

And so, one of our recommendations is that we put up a task force for the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) exams specifically because we need to modify local conditions to be able to perform better in these exams, as well as to change our pedagogy or the way we teach to be able to approximate a more problem-solving approach. The president mentioned developing critical thinkers so it's really the ability to make use of significant concepts going forward and, of course, the president also mentioned that we need to harness new technologies. So, we need our students to be technologically savvy and at the same time, across the Philippines, we need to provide better inputs for our students.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you. Very interesting and, of course, still on the welfare of our teachers, President Marcos also stated, *“Of equal significance, we have allocated funds to finally implement the Expanded Career Progression System for our public school teachers which shall promote professional development and career advancement within their ranks. This expanded system lays out two career paths for our teachers to pursue – teaching and the school administration tracks. Each of which shall have ample career growth opportunities. With this system in place, we will accelerate the career growth of teachers. Sa sistemang ito, wala na sigurong public school teacher ang magri-retire ng Teacher I lamang.”*

Now, that being said, Secretary Angara, what are your plans in ensuring the steady implementation of the Expanded Career Progression System for our public school teachers?

**DEPED SEC. ANGARA:** Well, we're finalizing that document along with the three other agencies, Daphne – these are the—aside from the Department of Education, the Professional Regulatory Commission, the Department of Budget and Management and the Commission on Higher Education to have that career progression for our teachers. At iyan iyong sinasabi nila na kaya minsan... sometimes our teachers get pirated for better opportunities because it takes some time for them to be promoted.

So, this one gives them something to look forward to – a career track as you mentioned, there is a school track meaning teaching track and there's also an administrative track for those who are more suited or would wish to become administrators within our school system. But definitely, it is something which will encourage and incentivize our teachers and we really

expected good performance because of these innovations and developments which the president has approved.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Secretary Angara. Please stay with us, we'll be back with you shortly. For now, let's move on to Labor Secretary Laguesma. Para tayong may one-on-one dito ano *[laughs]*. This is the first time it happened in Post-SONA, but we adapt. Thank you, sir.

So, for Department of Labor and Employment. The President said, *"With tripartite consensus, minimum wage levels have been increased in various sectors in all regions including the BARMM for workers in private establishments. Makapagdudulot ito ng ginhawa sa mahigit apat na milyong mga kababayan natin at kanilang mga pamilya."* Could you please share with us other programs, Secretary Laguesma, in response to this?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Maraming salamat, Daphne. Muli, pagbati ng isang maganda bagama't maulang umaga sa lahat.

Bukod doon sa nabanggit ng ating pangulo, may kinalaman sa adjustment sa existing na minimum wage sa lahat ng mga rehiyon, magbalik-tanaw lang ako na mayroon pong binigay na direktiba ang ating pangulo noong nakaraang Araw ng Paggawa. Binanggit niya na lahat ng mga regional tripartite wages and productivity boards ay dapat magsagawa ng timely review, napapanahong pag-aaral doon po, sixty days prior to the anniversary date of the existing wage levels sa mga rehiyon.

At iyong nabanggit niya last year, lahat ng rehiyon pati na iyong BARMM ay nagkaroon po ng pagpapalabas ng kanilang mga wage orders. At nabanggit din niya na consensus, ibig sabihin ang kinatawan ng mga manggagawa at namumuhunan at ng pamahalaan na bahagi ng Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards ay nagkasundo na ito ang angkop na halaga matapos nilang isaalang-alang ang iba-ibang mga factors na nakasaad sa batas.

At nitong Labor Day, sinabi nga niya na dapat magsagawa na at nagkaroon na nga ng mga pagsasaalang-alang – nanguna ang ating National Capital Region Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board at nagkaroon ng wage order na nagkaroon ng bisa o effectivity noong nakaraang July 17.

Sumusunod na po ang ibang mga rehiyon batay po sa direktiba ng ating pangulo at siguro, mahalaga na bigyan ko ng diin ang tinatalakay at tinutukoy lang po ng mga regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards ay may kinalaman sa umiiral na minimum wage level – entry level, floor level. Hindi po niya tinatalakay iyong may mas mataas pa.

Subalit, bagama't nabanggit ng ating pangulo na four million ang direkta o directly na magbibenepisyo dito po sa mga adjustment na ginawa noong nakaraang taon. Mayroon pong makikinabang pa na bahagi ng ating mga manggagawa na medyo maliit nang kaunti ang angat sa minimum wage at iyon po'y kailangan na bigyan ng pagtugon nang hindi magkaroon ng tinatawag na wage distortion. Iyon po iyong direksiyon at asahan po na susunod na rin po ang

ibang mga Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards doon sa kanilang ginagawang proseso.

Mayroon pang mga ibang programa na dapat ginagawa ang Department of Labor and Employment complementary sa minimum adjustment – siyempre, nandiyan iyong bahagi ng aming employment facilitation; pagpapalakas ng atin pong kakayahan na makapagbigay ng training, retraining at saka iyon pong pagli-link sa merkado; at bahagi rin iyong madalas na isinasagawang jobs fair na kung saan ay kabahagi o ka-partner natin ang Public Employment Service Offices ng mga local government units at ang pinakamahalagang bahagi ng aming jobs fair – ang atin pong pribadong sektor, ang ating mga employers' organization, ang mga businesses po natin na sila ang nagkakaloob noong mga available na trabaho na puwede pong mapunan sa mga jobs fair.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, sir. The president also proudly mentioned during his third State of the Nation Address: *“Our employment rate has increased 95.9 percent; we also saw a significant increase in high quality jobs; underemployment too has decreased from 11.7 percent in May 2023 to 9.9 percent today which is our lowest since 2005. Halos dalawa’t kalahating milyong Pilipino ang naiangat natin mula sa kahirapan.”*

Secretary Laguesma, what do these figures say about the work of the DOLE and how do these numbers affect the lives of Filipinos?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Una, siguro bigyan ko ng diin na iyon pong improvement, pagganda ng kalagayan sa ating employment level – malaking bahagi po niyan ay kontribusyon po ng pribadong sektor. Sila po kasi ang tunay na lumilikha ng hanapbuhay o trabaho at hindi lamang basta trabaho – quality jobs.

Ang tungkulin po ng pamahalaan ay mag-provide o mag-create ng enabling environment conducive to investments para madagdagan pa ang bilang ng mga hanapbuhay. Kaya malaki ang pasasalamat ng Department of Labor and Employment sa patuloy na kooperasyon, kolaborasyon ng pribadong sektor at sana magtuluy-tuloy ito dahil nais po naman din nating makita sa pamamagitan po ng kolaborasyon ng manggagawa, ng namumuhunan at ng pamahalaan, DOLE in particular, will be able to really sustain the employment level at magtuluy-tuloy tayo na makalikha ng mas maraming hanapbuhay at hindi lamang basta hanapbuhay – iyon bang productive, remunerative, quality at sustainable na trabaho – iyan po iyong balangkas din na nakapaloob sa atin pong Trabaho para sa Bayan Plan.

Kung matatandaan natin, noong nakaraang taon September 27 to exact, nilagdaan ng ating Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. iyong Trabaho para sa Bayan Act. Mayroon na po iyang Implementing Rules and Regulations at ang medyo nakapagbibigay talaga sa atin dito ng inspirasyon din at nakapagbibigay sigla ay doon po sa nasabing batas, mayroon po dong nilikha na Trabaho para sa Bayan Inter-Agency Council at nandoon po iyong konsepto ng whole-of-government at saka whole-of-society approach, bakit po? Bukod po sa mga miyembro ng council na galing sa pamahalaan na pinangungunahan po ng ating NEDA,

siyempre bahagi diyan ang Department of Labor and Employment, DTI, DOF, DBM, DILG at TESDA ay mayroon pong kinatawan ang employers' organization, workers organization, informal sector at saka marginalized or vulnerable sector. Ibig sabihin, iyon pong plano na binalangkas ay mayroon po diyang kontribusyon, may ambag, may inputs itong mga sektor na ito. Hindi po ito isang dokumento na binalangkas lamang ng pamahalaan.

Ang gusto pong makita ng ating pangulo, talagang magkaroon ng pagkakaisa, pagtatagpo ng mga kaisipan at makita po natin ang ating mga ginagawang plano, bahagi po ang ating mga gustong makita na maiangat ang buhay sa bagong Pilipinas.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Secretary Laguesma, in keeping with providing jobs and finding jobs, your department is also involved in creating better jobs for Filipinos. Can you please share with us other programs of DOLE that would address the job-skills mismatch?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Mayroon tayong... siyempre kabahagi namin diyan, bahagi ng ating talakayan iyong TESDA. Siguro dapat dagdagan niya iyong sasabihin ng kalihim ng Department of Labor and Employment. Iyon pong mismatch, ang sinasabi kasi natin diyan very briefly mayroon ka hong available na skill pero hindi tumutugma doon sa available na trabaho. Mayroon din pong sitwasyon ang mismatch na mayroon pong skill na naririto sa isang rehiyon pero ang trabaho ay nasa kabilang region – so, geographical mismatch.

Paano po ina-address iyan? Una po na ginagawa siyempre sa bahagi po ng DOLE, mag-concentrate lang po ako doon sa mga programa ng DOLE – paghahanda sa mga mag-aaral, mga kabataan para nang sa ganoon ay magkaroon ng tinatawag na better managed school-to-work transition. Ano po iyong mga programa? Mayroon po kaming programa on Special Program for the Employment of Students, kabahagi din po diyan ang pribadong sektor; mayroon pong Government Internship Program; at mayroon din pong JobStart na partner natin lagi ang pribadong sektor eh kaya kami po ay nagpapasalamat.

Marami na po kaming napirmahan na mga memorandum of agreement sa iba-ibang mga kumpanya at iba-ibang mga organisasyon na ang layunin ay ihanda ang ating pong mga manggagawa o mga mag-aaral patungo po sa mga available na trabaho.

At mayroon pa pong isa sigurong dapat na mabanggit, paano po tinitingnan iyong skills and job mismatch? Mayroon na pong nalikha na National Coordinating Council for Philippine Qualification Framework – ang nangunguna diyan ay ang DepEd, siyempre kasama ang DOLE, ang PRC, ang CHED at saka ang TESDA. Ang layunin niya ay tingnan iyong mga pangangailangan ng ating mga existing na negosyo o kaya mga potential na investors para maihanda ang ating workforce. At sa bahagi naman po ng kasanayan, mayroon din tayong tinatawag na Philippine Skills Framework – nangunguna naman diyan ang DTI at always nakakasama ang DOLE kasi tuwing mayroong pagsasanay dapat naka-link iyan doon sa mga available na trabaho at napakahalaga, Daphne, ng kontribusyon ng ating pribadong sektor.

Sa TESDA po marami pong mga industry board, mayroon din pong mga kinatawan ang mga employers at mga manggagawa para ipakita po talaga ang kahalagahan ng kolaborasyon, pagbibigay po ng pagsasaalang-alang ng mga inputs ng ating mga constituencies ng ating mga partners towards improvement and betterment not just quality of education but the quality of life of every Filipino in our country.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Secretary. Ang daming programa talaga to address...

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Yes, madami. Nalulula na nga iyong mga kasamahan ko. Parang sinasabi ko sa kanila, dapat tuluy-tuloy tayo na palakasin pa iyong ating ginagawang trabaho para talagang maisulong natin iyong mga programa ng pamahalaan at matupad natin iyong pangarap ng pangulo, unang-una, iyong kaniyang sinasabi na dapat ang poverty reduction, ang antas ng kahirapan mapababa to single digit – medyo nagpupunta na tayo doon, Daphne, nakikita natin sa statistics; ikalawa, iyong inclusive growth – walang maiwan, lahat ng ating mga kasamahan ay magkaroon ng pagkakataon sa biyaya ng pagbabago at improvement, pag-unlad; and thirdly, itong medyo napakalapit sa puso ng Department of Labor and Employment, makalikha nang mas disente, dekalidad na trabaho para sa atin pong mga kababayan.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Wow! Still on labor, but this time we switch a little topic but very important because this part President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. received a standing ovation and overwhelming applause when he tackled the POGO operations in the country in the third SONA. He also cited plans for Filipino POGO workers saying that DOLE in coordination with our economic managers shall use the time between now and then to find new jobs for our countrymen who will be displaced. Secretary Laguesma, what are the plans to ensure that these workers will continue to have decent jobs?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Daphne, siguro brief backgrounder lang, noong nakaraang taon medyo naging napakainit nitong usapin na may kinalaman sa POGO at dahil diyan ang PAGCOR nagkaroon sila rin ng mga reporma – iyong POGO, nag-rebrand sila naging IGLs ‘no. So, nagkaroon sila ng transition at in the meantime ang DOLE, humingi po rin kami ng mga listahan para naman mapaghandaan namin iyong transition period na sinasabi.

Ang Department of Labor and Employment po ang kauna-unahan sa aming plano iyong profiling ng mga manggagawa na puwedeng maapektuhan at magagawa po namin ito o ginagawa namin ito sa pangkasalukuyan sa pamamagitan ng pakikipag-ugnayan, interaction with the employers – iyong mga IGLs na sinasabi. Ano po ang aming layunin? Humihingi po kami sa kanila ng listahan ng mga manggagawa nila na direktang nakikinabang doon sa operation nila nang sa ganoon ay makita po namin ano ba iyon aming pinaghahandaan na mga programa ng DOLE.

Sa profiling po, kasama po siyempre iyong kasanayan nila, trabaho nilang pangkasalukuyan, ano ang kanilang suweldo, anong preference at ano ang puwedeng intervention – kasi ang intervention at plano ng Department of Labor and Employment ay puwede pong sabihin natin

una, employment facilitation, referral sa mga trabaho na existing at tinitingnan iyong kanilang skills o kasanayan. Kung may kakulangan, papasok iyong isa pang programa, upskilling/retraining at saka siguro pagbibigay ng guidance kung papaano makakakuha.

Secondly, mayroon din pong programa ang Department of Labor and Employment na may kinalaman sa livelihood. Iyong ayaw nang magtrabaho, puwede bang tulungan magkaroon ng negosyo? Ang Department of Labor and Employment, bahagi ng kaniyang plano magsasagawa po ng mga jobs fair ‘no focused doon sa mga available na trabaho at tingnan kung paano ima-match ang ating mga puwedeng maapektuhan ng closure, ng banning ng POGO.

Mayroon na po kaming mga inisyal na mga impormasyon lalo na po sa bahagi ng National Capital Region-Department of Labor and Employment dahil ang majority po ng mga POGO na naging IGL ay naririto sa NCR. Tapos ho mayroon na rin kaming initial profiling sa Region IV-A (Laguna at Cavite) at mayroon na rin po sa Central Luzon.

So, sa pagpapalano po ay importante iyong bilang ng mga manggagawa nang sa ganoon maiswak namin iyong mga dapat na intervention, hindi lamang para sa mga workers na affected pati sa mga dependents ng mga affected na workers. Iyong mga nabanggit kong programa na may kinalaman sa pag-aaral, iyon ang gusto naming ilinya para matulungan sila.

At mayroon pang isang aspeto na aming tinitingnan dito sa aming mga plano – paano po namin sila matutulungan na may kinalaman naman sa posibleng mga benepisyo nila na dapat maipagkaloob ng kanilang employer at kung sila po ay magku-qualify pati rin po iyong possibility na magkaroon po ng unemployment insurance sa bahagi po ng SSS.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Okay, thank you, Secretary Laguesma. Right now, let’s dive deep into the next topic about our modern heroes, the Filipino migrant workers. Among them are our seafarers and with this, the president mentioned: *“Through vital partnership with like-minded states, we have been able to promote our mutual interest resulting not only an investment here and our strengthened national security, but also in quality jobs for nationals seeking foreign employment.*

*Through intense Philippine lobbying the UN has adopted the resolution on promoting and protecting the enjoyment of human rights of seafarers which will ensure their safe and decent living and working conditions at sea, a human rights imperative.”*

This is for Secretary Cacdac, could you please share with us updates on bilateral labor agreements that you have been pursuing to protect OFW rights?

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Yes, good morning to all. Well, we have made strides especially during the administration of the president in terms of bilateral labor relations. If we will recall, it seems his very first State of the Nation Address he had emphasized at least one major bilateral

labor relations that we hold dearly for the last five decades and that's with Saudi Arabia, the main, should I say, the host country having the most numbers of OFWs.

And since then, we embark on a series of discussion, agreements with Saudi Arabia in terms of improving the standards of protection for OFWs in Saudi Arabia with the opening or the reopening of the domestic worker market, especially the standard contract have been renewed to provide stronger protection for domestics workers in terms of providing safer standard, safer living conditions and working conditions at home, in their employer's households.

We've also look into 'live out arrangement' for domestic worker, where they will be hired by institution and would be deployed either to institutions or employer households and would not have to stay in their respective employer's household.

Also, there have been proper standards with respect to insurance coverage which includes health insurance coverage and wage protection. Also, the matter on a white listing or black listing framework as it is called for recruitment agencies both here and abroad, in Saudi, in terms of making sure that only a recruitment intermediary or entities with good track records, with clean track records will be able to recruit and deploy our domestic workers.

And of course, aside from Saudi Arabia, at least in the three other major or Middle East destination of our OFWs, we have also definitely opened the lines of bilateral labor relations and should I say, amicable and cordial discussions for the better protection of OFWs in the United Arab Emirates. We just concluded our recent joint committee meeting between the Philippines and the UAE – with the DFA, with DMW for the Philippines side in discussing stronger method means of protection and methods of protection for our OFWs.

Among topic discussed for instance would be the matter on ensuring that all workers in UAE would be properly documented and not come in as tourist. And also with respect to so called third country hiring, we raised the matter on enhancing protection for OFWs who comes from other countries and come in the UAE especially as domestic workers with possibly less protection.

In Kuwait, we had resume deployment of OFWs with the proper standards of protection. For skilled workers, the market had been reopened, the deployment of OFWs had been reopened. We made the corresponding issuances and might I say, that in Kuwait, the matter of resumption of deployment was brought on by the cordial discussion between the president and the then royal crown prince who is now the emir back in October 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in the sidelines of the ASEAN–GCC Summit.

So, with respect to domestic workers for Kuwait, we had carefully laid the standards with respect to the qualification, with respect to only OFWs with overseas or employment experience should be able to work in Kuwait. As we know, skill sets and experience would be the highest form of protection, aside from laws and services that we provide.



In this being the case, the qualification of overseas job experience as a domestic worker abroad prior to working in Kuwait as domestic worker, indeed, ensures that first important level of protection for our domestic workers entering Kuwait. And aside from this, we are also putting in place the white listing and black listing of recruiters both here and in Kuwait as I've mentioned, applying it as well to the Kuwait.

There is also wage protection in Kuwait, which means that bank account will be—or there will be bank accounts opened for our domestic worker which means it now safer or at least timely and in the right amount should I say, that the wages of our domestic workers will be provided through this bank accounts. And of course, there will also be welfare officers. Aside from government DMW welfare office or welfare officers, there will also be private sector officer monitoring the situations of our domestic worker on the ground, so that's Kuwait.

For Qatar, we're scheduled to have a joint committee meeting, we had cordial bilateral discussions and then sidelines of the Abu Dhabi dialogue with Usec. Caunan last February and we had agreed on a joint a committee meeting that is forthcoming in the first week of August.

And then, of course speaking of other possible bilateral partners, we definitely had opened the avenues in terms of safe ethical labor mobility discussions with central and eastern European countries who have opened their respective job market as well for Filipinos. So, we have bilateral discussion and agreements with Austria and of course the presidential visit to Germany, to the Czech Republic and also opened avenues of discussion that are currently ongoing with respect to safe, ethical labor mobility of OFWs there.

And in Hungary, we've seen unprecedented deployment of OFWs to Hungary, legitimate deployment I should say, and therefore we had also opened the lines of communication with Hungary and deepened bilateral labor relations of the foreign minister for instance had just come over to the Philippines and we had cordial discussion as well, aside from the president and the secretary foreign affairs, we do have cordial discussions with the Hungarian foreign minister.

For seafarers, let me just say the president highlighted, of course, the UN resolution on protection of seafarers in the UN Human Right Council and we're very, very thankful of course to the United Nations and to DFA, spearheaded the effort with DMW support.

As we all know this comes in timely with the situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden where we had been monitoring since the attacks began last November 2023, the plight of our seafarers in terms of their protection from armed attacks. And we've had a series of issuances designating that area as a war-like zone and, therefore, directing ship-owners to divert their voyages from those routes and at the same time, monitoring those who still choose to navigate through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. And we had assisted the seafarers and their families, this is the foremost directive of the president to also look after the families of

distressed seafarers. And so, we had been looking after the seafarers in terms of honoring their right to refuse sailing, we have facilitated this long-standing right of OFWs and seafarers.

And so, we had also facilitated around a hundred ten or so seafarers had already exercised the right to refuse sailing. However, for those who had consented, as I mentioned, we monitor their situation. We repatriate those who need to be repatriated, the seafarers who are also affected by the situation in the Middle East and, again, handholding their families through the process and providing the necessary assistance through the action fund which the president had also directed for us to tap in order to help our seafarers.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Secretary Cacdac, for highlighting the importance and relevance of your hard work with bilateral relations in protecting the rights of our OFWs especially in times of emergencies and threats.

Now still on our migrant workers, our chief executive further expressed, *“Hanggang sa kanilang pag-uwi, buong puso pa rin ang ating pagtanggap at paglingap. Ang mga nagbabalik na OFWs kasama ang kanilang pamilya ay sinusuportahan nating mabuti upang maging maayos ang kanilang bagong simula dito sa bansa para makakuha ng magandang trabaho o ‘di kaya’y makapagtayo ng negosyo.”* The president also mentioned and thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for their help in ensuring that the displaced OFWs would be paid their claims. Could you please give us any more updates on the resolution again of these claims?

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Yes, first and foremost, the president indeed highlighted the emergency assistance that we had provided to OFWs over the last year, and he named a number of countries in the process. And I must say that I could name at least the two countries mentioned by the president where the foremost global crisis the world faced in the last year I would say, one would be the civil war in Sudan and then the Israel-Hamas war – civil war in Sudan sometime May-June, and the Israel-Hamas conflict in October. And on both cases, the DMW had been directed to provide assistance, together with the DFA. And we had repatriated around 800 OFWs from Sudan who were caught in the strife. And in Israel, the count is around a thousand whom we have repatriated from Israel, from Lebanon, from the West Bank and from Gaza, again, together with the DFA.

And I must say, the assistance mentioned by the president is unprecedented. I’ve been in overseas employment for quite a while, but with respect to the assistance packages that the president had directed, a whole-of-government approach, we have been giving at least 100,000 pesos for the returnees from these emergency situations from DMW-OWWA alone.

And then, of course, when we are assembled together in the “salubong” at the airport, there’s Sec. Ted Herbosa, who exercises his authority as secretary of Health to board the plane, first and foremost – that’s in the law. And I’m so proud to see that no less than the secretary of Health do that. My first time to see, the secretary of Health actually boards the plane and exercises authority under quarantine laws and provide the necessary medical and

psychosocial assistance to OFWs from these situations of strife and conflict and to those in distress as well.

Secretary Rex Gatchalian also there with respect to providing the necessary social welfare assistance, the kits, social workers who provide assistance as we receive the distressed workers.

DG Teng Mangudadatu and his team from TESDA also providing the—I call them sort of blank check vouchers in the sense that the vouchers are blank and the returnee will choose the course in which he or she will take, and then the institution even, so this assistance provided by CHED...

Sec. Benny Laguesma, also we're working with Sec. Benny in terms of the facilitation of their reintegration through local employments, through the PESOs. And we have conducted various job fairs over the last 12 months along this line.

So, the assistance program continues, hopefully, there won't be any more situations of strife or disaster or conflict abroad. Of course, we're praying hard that it won't happen, but if it does happen, then we stand ready. And the president mentioned also the situation of disasters or natural calamities in other countries.

The effort actually is ... it doesn't begin with the reception, as mentioned by the president, of the returnees but really begins at the point of monitoring, preparation for crisis management, in terms of crisis plan implementation and monitoring their situation on the ground. So, in Israel for instance, at the height of the conflict last October, November, we had the DFA and our DMW teams doing the rounds, checking the shelters and the places where the OFWs who had been moved to safer ground, and providing the necessary assistance. Some of them were in hospital, so we visited them in hospital as well.

With respect to the claims, Saudi claims, I wanted to mention this when I mentioned Saudi Arabi at the outset but I reserved this point for the pronouncement by the president in his SONA that indeed, Saudi Arabia, we're so thankful that the Saudi Arabi is proceeding with the releases of the claims.

I just came from Saudi, as directed by the President, to once again, follow up the releases of the claims. And I talked to my counterpart, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development there, and we had been assured once again that the releases will be forthcoming. One point nine five [1.95] billion pesos had been released by the Saudi side so far, benefitting 2,500 workers.

And we've also been told, Usec. Bernard Olalia also provided the ... led the technical team as I was there, we've also been told that there will be at least around 1,800 more forthcoming in the next few weeks. We're hoping that it will come in August, and so the number will go up to around 4,300. And then after, there will be another release of around 2,200 in the coming

months. And, of course, our target by the end of the year substantially most of the 10,000 beneficiaries have been given their benefits and claims.

And so, we continue to hope and work with the Saudi side. I, of course, will make another visit in the course of the year to Saudi Arabia to visit my counterpart. The talks were cordial by the way with my counterpart in Saudi Arabia. While I'm at it, I might as well mention also that we discussed the forthcoming review of two major bilateral agreements, labor agreements we have with Saudi Arabia – one is the 2013 Domestic Worker Agreement and the other is the 2017 General Labor Agreement.

So, we both agreed, my counterpart and I, that it's time to review in the context of the many, many other factors that affect domestic workers/OFWs in general in this day and age. And the president definitely has directed us to add on, to highlight, to modify or emphasize greater protection for our OFWs in Saudi Arabia.

The matter on strengthening also our Migrant Workers Offices was a topic of discussion when I met the labor minister there and we both agreed, we're so thankful to the labor minister because he supports our latest initiative to strengthen, to improve our presence in Saudi Arabia so that we can help more OFWs. I won't just express the details at this stage, I think there will be an appropriate moment/time with the DFA and our counterparts in Saudi to announce the developments along these lines.

Thank you.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Oh, thank you, Secretary. There's certainly are a lot of moving parts in your department considering the geopolitical issues, emergencies and threats but that's a lot of work. And, of course, you mentioned the unprecedented support of a president, President Marcos, in the assistance and the level of support that the national government is giving. Thank you.

And, now let's move on to TESDA. During his SONA, President Marcos Jr. stated, *"Statistics do not lie – 8 out of 10 graduates of TVET ultimately land decent jobs. With its high employment rate, TVET will definitely be instrumental in capacitating our people and in maintaining our employment rate at consistently high levels. Cognizant of this potential, the DepEd, CHED, DOLE and TESDA have joined forces to incorporate TVET in the senior high school curriculum to further boost the employability of our students."*

DDG Urdaneta, does the TESDA have initiatives to partner with industries to develop training courses that address their needs especially in highly technical areas?

**TESDA DDG URDANETA:** Yes. Good morning, Daphne. Thank you for this opportunity for us to be able to dwell deeper on the pronouncements of the president in the State of the Nation Address.

Let me put it this way. Basically, why we are very proud of the employment rate, is because of our partnership with the industry. It starts with sitting down with the industry on developing—on trying to identify actually the skills that are needed by a sector or by an industry and thereafter, developing those competency standards as well as curriculum with the industry and also coming up with assessment packages which means to say that they do with us the tests and certification process.

So, basically, the partnership has been there since our NMYC days, National Manpower and Youth Council. It has been fortified because of the mandate of TESDA that we have to create industry boards and, of course, our attachment to the Department of Labor and Employment and we were also an attached agency before of the Department of Trade and Industry that's why it fortified really the elements in the systems and the processes of really identifying programs with the industry.

What we are doing now is that we are doing area-based demand driven. So, in each of the specific area, whatever is demanded by the industry, doon lang kami talaga nag-o-open ng mga programs because our secretary believes, Secretary Teng Mangudadatu, that sayang lang iyong pera ng gobyerno kung gumagawa tayo ng mga program na hindi naman kailangan ng industriya at hindi kailangan ng area.

So, what he was trying to really do is to make work, make operationalize the concept of area-based demand driven. Napakalaki din pong tulong ang binibigay sa amin ng industriya lalo na ngayon that they are really very well consolidated in one group, iyong PSAC (Private Sector Advisory Council). Ang laki din ng tulong mga sectoral meetings ng presidente para talaga magkaroon ng focus ang bawat ahensiya so that iyong mga areas na iyon, iyong mga meetings na iyon with the industry, talagang now we can really tell them what challenges have we encountered and ano naman po ang tingin nila sa TESDA.

So, with this, we are proud to say that we have done, at least iyong dating mismatch na sinasabi, nearer na kami doon sa katotohanan and reality na talagang ang mga kailangan ng industriya ang dapat naming maibigay.

Iyon namang—we had worked together, yes, we are so happy and proud that at last, we had worked together in one project and this is the embedment of TVET in senior high school. When we say embedment, ito po iyong pag-integrate ng TVET skills.

Pero nais ko lang po din na i-explain na hindi po... kasi kapag sinabing TVET, iyon 'yung sinasabing mga skills on carpentry, skills on cooking – hindi po ito iyong ganito. Of course, nag-evolve na po ang TVET. Hindi na ito iyong TVET na alam natin before. Ang mga ino-offer namin doon sa embedment with DepEd ay iyong tungkol po sa web development, sa visual graphics design, events management, iyong mga Java programming, agri-entrepreneurship, iyong iba't ibang klase ng TVET. Ito po 'yung mas ano na, elevated na or higher level qualifications na sinasabi ng ating pangulo sa SONA niya.

So, what we do right now is to come up with a curriculum with DepEd and CHed – umupo po kami, ginagawa po namin iyong mga curriculum kung paano po ma-contextualize. Ibig sabihin po, we will not disturb the hours, we will not disturb the processes and the curriculum of DepEd – we will just contextualize po. Ibig sabihin, kumbaga mayroon silang Accounting and Business Management, iyong ADM na track so iyong bookkeeping po namin na training regulation, ie-embed po sa mga subjects nila na related. So, hindi po magkakaroon ng malaking disturbo sa oras o malaking disturbo po sa curriculum ng DepEd.

So, ang kailangan lang po namin talaga is ma-train iyong mga teachers on how to contextualize TVET skills into the subjects. So, ngayon po gagawin na namin iyan kasi natapos na nilang gawin ang mga curriculum. So, by next week po, magti-train na kami ng mga teachers, mga cadre of trainers so that we could have this multiplied in the different areas kasi ipa-pilot pa po namin ito bago namin i-full blast nationwide for us to be able to gather more lessons and experiences para hindi po masabi na, *“O, gumawa na naman kayo ng kung ano-ano tapos hindi naman pala puwede o hindi ano”*.

So, we’re trying to do a pilot test next September, next month or September para po ma-pilot namin iyong contextualized na embedment. This, together with DOLE kasi... bakit kasama namin ang DOLE? Ang DOLE naman po, ang hiniling po namin sa DOLE is iyong ma-identify nila iyong key employment generators ng bawat area kasi ganoon din po ang mangyayari eh – kung ano-ano lang na naman ang ibibigay nating mga subjects na hindi naman kailangan noong area na iyon. Parang gusto pa natin na pumunta pa kung saang malalayong lugar ang mga bata or ‘learners’ para lang po sila magkaroon ng trabaho when in fact they are needed sa mga areas nila at mga communities nila para hindi na rin po ma-congest iyong mga prime cities or even Metro Manila for that matter.

So, we needed also the participation of the industry on this particular endeavor. Because what we really wanted is for us to have an authentic learning environment, which means to say na kapag po nakatapos sila ng senior high school, they will be able to really know what work environment is. So, we need the participation of the industry on this matter, so that we would be able to attach them on immersion. Para gawin pong laboratory, also iyong mga areas ng company. So that, we would be able to really provide a deeper na talagang appreciation of these particular learners para po, kaya na nila na talaga, when they graduate senior high school, ibig sabihin employable na po sila, they are ready for the world of work. And kung gusto nilang magtrabaho muna, magtatrabaho muna and then after that, iyon na naman pong Philippine Credit Transfer System, if they want to go to college, so that maki-credit naman po iyong lahat ng natutunan nila, when they go to college.

So, that’s basically the Philippine qualifications framework, now being operationalize, of course it’s being chaired by the DepEd Secretary. So, gusto po namin na maging seamless na iyong education system which means to say, even tripocalized kami nag-usap-usap kami at lahat po ng puwede naming maitulong sa isa’t isa, puwede naming gawin together, then we will be able to really provide a very robust framework para po makatulong talaga sa bawat indibidwal at makatulong talaga sa workforce natin.

So, that is basically if and we would like, in behalf of Secretary Teng Mangudadatu, we would like to thank DOLE, we would like to thank DepEd, CHED and of course, the industry sector for helping us for this particular endeavor. And the president himself, he said that at one point, he said “mahirap ito, pero hindi imposible”. And we have to do it and with that, iyon po iyong kailangan pa namin ng madaming tulong at suporta and we will be validating and vetting this with the major stakeholders and the education environment, so that they would be able to have their comments and recommendation in order to enhance and intensify the concept. Maraming salamat po.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Deputy Director General Urdaneta. You know, it's been great to see the various agencies here and how they work together and to create a seamless experience from education, to skills development, to employment whether here or abroad. Kitang-kita naman sa leadership na talagang well-coordinated and whole of government and even whole of society approach, with the support of course of the private sector. And now, we have some time for some questions. We have some media here. Let me call on Zen Hernandez of ABS-CBN? This I believe is for DOLE.

**ZEN HERNANDEZ/ABS CBN:** Secretary Laguesma, may we ask about the POGO ban? So can you just confirm, how many workers we expect to be displaced, because there were initial figures like around 40,000, if you can confirm this. And also, do we have an idea as to what are the possible job prospects for the displaced workers are? Do we have talks with certain sectors perhaps, the BPOs or IT who are willing to take them in?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Thank you. As far as DOLE is concern, the number is actually moving. When I say moving, we are looking at the list being provided by the IGLs who are actually cooperating with the Department of Labor and Employment. Initially, so far as NCR is concerned, there is an estimate of more or less 15,000 workers affecting, representing submissions made by 34 IGLs. Hindi lang naman iyong ang tinitingnan ng Department of Labor and Employment, kasi other than the IGLs, mayroong authorized provider na nagri-render din ng services sa IGL and the so called special BPOs.

As far as Region IV-A is concerned, may initial na report na rin of the number and this actually covers the Laguna and the Cavite area, more or less 5,000 workers. So, gumagalaw iyong number. And we continue to more or less coordinate also with PAGCOR, because the initial list was provided to us, there was a mention of a number of 79 operating. And so, if you minus the 34, medyo marami pa iyong hindi nagsa-submit sa amin. We hope that in the next coming days, list will be provided to the DOLE, so that we can sit down with our colleagues in the Department of Labor and Employment and also, based on the directive of the President, in coordination with the economic managers, para matingnan anong klase ang kanilang intervention.

So, ang profiling na ginagawa ng DOLE as of now is intended to really look at, ano ang kasalukuyang trabaho ng mga manggagawa sa IGLs, ano ang lebel ng kanilang suweldo,

tinitingnan din namin. At tinitingnan din namin ang preference nila, ano bang klase ang puwede naming maipagkaloob na trabaho. Kasi noong tiningnan ng DOLE-NCR, iyong listahan ng mga manggagawa na ipinagkaloob ng mga kumpanya, malaking bahagi doon ay nandood sa mga encoders, mga encoders na ibig sabihin puwede talagang i-link up sa ating IT-BPO management sector and fortunately, the Department of Labor and Employment has a very strong partnership with the IT Business Association of the Philippines headed by Mr. Jack Madrid, we do regular consultation and dialogue with them and they are actually providing us information, ano ang puwede a maipagkaloob sa ating mga puwedeng ma-displace.

Hindi lang naman ito, ginagawa ng DOLE dahil sa POGO. Ginagawa namin ito in totality dahil ang services ng Department of Labor and Employment are actually open, should be afforded or given to not simply sa formal workers but also sa informal workers. And that is our mandate. So, tinitingnan namin iyong profiling to help us na makapaggawa talaga ng konkretong plan of action, gaano ba karami iyan, ano ang puwedeng ipagkaloob and we are also doing this in collaboration or coordination with their respective employers. So, iyan iyong state of things and we are awaiting reports coming from other regions na maaaring may operation din ng POGO.

In Region III, as far as the Region III is concerned which is Central Luzon, ang report ng regional director diyan ay isa na lamang ang IGL. Pero may mga related siguro na mga trabaho o negosyo na dapat ay i-consider din namin doon sa pagbabalangkas namin ng plan of action.

**ZEN HERNANDEZ/ABS CBN:** Follow-up. So, since the BPO, the IT sector is a potential sector that can absorb these workers, sir, do we know how many are the vacant positions now in that sector and if we have a timeline for the profiling and all that process, because the president said that the POGO ban is effective immediately?

**DOLE SEC. LAGUESMA:** Iyong timeline namin would also probably have to consider iyong submission. If they submit already, siguro in a matter of one week, two weeks, we will be able to have a complete profile. But again, let me emphasize, depende iyan doon sa submission, kaya nakatutok iyong ating mga regional implementors, para kunin iyong listahan. At mayroon din kaming pakikipagpulong sa PAGCOR para ma-validate namin iyong listahan na ipinagkaloob nila sa amin so that we can also more or less do verification inspection. As you are aware, the Department of Labor and Employment has a visitorial power. Iyong mga makocover ng Department of Labor and Employment, siyempre iyong mga legitimate at saka on record, mayroong mga data ang Department of Labor and Employment.

Outside of that, iyong mga underground ay medyo mahirap. Kaya it is actually probably providential or fortunate that last Saturday, there was a coordination meeting initiated by the Department of the Interior and Local Government, para tulung-tulong iyong mga ahensiya, at bahagi ang DOLE dahil ang bottom line lagi ay mayroong maaapektuhan na manggagawa.

And just to emphasize, DOLE will always be seriously concerned, kahit isang trabaho lang ang nawawala, dahil other than job creation, we also would like to see and emphasize job



preservation. Dapat napi-preserve ang trabaho. Having said that, kung mayroong mga dislocation, may mga programa naman ang Department of Labor and Employment in place to help either temporarily sa pamamagitan ng aming programa na ang pangalan ay TUPAD.

Puwede rin naman kami sa livelihood, iyong jobs fair na nabanggit ko kanina, which will be doing specifically for this purpose and we will be needing the support noong sectors ng private sector, hindi lang naman sa IT. Kasi mayroon ding mga manggagawa na maaapektuhan na ang trabaho nila ay administrative, HR at mayroon din iyong mga utilities and maintenance. So, tinitingnan namin iyong kabuuan para maip plano namin nang maayos iyong aming gagawin na hakbangin para matulungan sila.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Let's bring you back to Secretary Angara on education. There is a question here. Secretary Angara, hi, sir. How would you tackle the challenge of increasing the proficiency of our students in problem solving and critical thinking as these are some of the areas that they are not faring well. And maybe in general, how will you address the state of Philippine education as it is?

**DEPED SEC. ANGARA:** In the short term to possess the skills, we are injecting some periods in the everyday curriculum for reading to strengthen the foundations of literacy and numeracy, Daphne. But in the long term, we will have to really institute also some reforms in how we teach. So, we are inserting a 30-minute reading periods in between classes to strengthen the reading and comprehension skills of our students and we're supplementing current initiatives like catch-up Fridays with the focus on science projects, because the coming 2025 PISA exam is gonna deal with science.

So, we are also going to craft some PISA-type quizzes and examinations to give to our students periodically because we need to monitor their progress to see the interventions we are making are making an effect. And hopefully we also have data to more granular level, meaning at the student level, where we can really monitor who are adapting well to the new learning programs. And as the president said, the national recovery program must continue.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Sounds good, very exciting time. We will [unclear] to seeing all those reforms and support you, sir. Now, let me call on another member of the media, from Al Jazeera. We have Mr. Barnaby Lo.

**BARNABY LO/AL JAZEERA:** My questions are for Secretary Hans actually, and Secretary Laguesma, you can also chime in, you're welcome to chime in. So, my questions are in light of the Seoul City government's recruitment of 100 Filipino domestic workers which I believe is ending on August 6 and launching in September. Before this recruitment program, the Philippines has been sending seasonal farmer/workers to South Korea and there have been complaints of abuse and exploitation. So, I just wanted to get an update on investigations on these complaints. So, one, the accountability and number two, how the government plans to prevent these abuses and exploitations given that we are sending more workers to South Korea?

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Thank you for the question, Barnaby. You are right, we have been deploying workers to South Korea. Let me start with the standing employment permits system which is around a 20-year program, it's a government-to-government hiring program for factory workers. And we have, should I say, another sector that we had identified under the EPS Employment Permit System program and that is the program on caregivers. It's not domestic workers, but caregivers.

So, we are braced to commence with the pilot program in terms of deployment. We have gone through the hiring stage and the caregivers had been selected and there will be 100 of them forthcoming in terms of deployment, it's all in the pilot stage. The contracts were carefully discussed with the Korea Ministry of Labor. They are above standard both under Philippine and Korean Law especially with respect to labor standards and minimum wages and other aspects of Korean Labors Standards Law. So, once again, we are braced to deploy in the coming weeks, there will be appropriate announcements along these lines. They are caregivers and not domestic workers.

With respect to seasonal workers, late last year, we had embarked on discussions with the Korean side in joint meetings with respect to the matter on abuses of seasonal workers, through LGU to LGU programs, hiring programs, which we find to be highly irregular from the Philippines standpoint because they don't go through the DMW, it's an arrangement between Philippine LGU and Korean LGU and they agreed to deploy seasonal farm workers in that regard. So, we put a stop to that, because it's plainly illegal.

We know that various labor complaints, we had around 60 labor complaints that had been addressed by the Korean authorities in terms of resolving the labor situation on the ground. Here, in the Philippines, we filed cases of illegal recruitment against 58 individuals, 49 of them are Filipinos and nine are Korean nationals and the cases of illegal recruitments are still pending with the Department of Justice. I looked at the status matrix and noticed that many of the cases have been forwarded to their respective provincial prosecutors for perhaps finalization of the DOJ finding.

So, there are cases that are pending now with respect to illegal recruitment. But all told, since we came in, we had a series of guidelines issued early this year. Since we came in and imposed a process whereby everybody goes through the DMW seasonal workers, I mean, we have deployed, around 5,000, approved the deployment of 5,000 workers who went through the DMW, which essentially means that we reviewed their contracts, we ensure that there is insurance arrangement, medical insurance and other types of insurance arrangement for the workers and also, that they are OWWA members. We are thankful to Admin Arnell Ignacio for this, which means everybody is an OWWA member whereas, in the past, the contracts have not been reviewed.

We don't know for sure whether the standards were up to Korean law and Philippine Law and they were not OWWA members. But now, everybody is on board, in terms of the necessary

standards and protection that we laid. Also, there are proper education briefing, pre-departure education briefings that we now conduct under our auspices.

And also, we monitor their situation on the ground. So, around 5,000 of them have been deployed for the last six months or so, and we continue to monitor their situation on the ground. Thus far, due to our monitoring effort, we have not incurred at least major complaints as in the past. So, I should say that so far, it's so good in so far as this program is concerned.

And I also need to add that there is an appropriate Department of Justice ruling by the way, on the matter of the deployment with respect to seasonal worker arrangements. However, the deployment should be under the auspices, monitoring of the Department of Migrant Workers.

**Q:** If I may just follow-up, labor rights organization say that although the Department of Migrant Workers have already put the seasonal workers under the auspices of the national government, some local governments, some brokers are still able to send seasonal worker to South Korea. Do you concur that this is still happening, it this something that you'll able to monitor?

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Yes, that goes to my point about filing of illegal recruitment cases. So we vowed toughness along this lines that we were working closely with the DOJ, we're thankful to Sec. Remulla and his team of undersecretaries who have been working closely with the Prosecutorial Services whom we've been closely working with.

So, we have five cases of illegal recruitment and we will not hesitate to file cases of illegal recruitment. You mentioned the brokers, so I need to highlight that point: One major reason why we step in is to stop the brokering system. The workers in the past have been charged with amounts from 30, 40, 50 up to 100,000 pesos and they need, they were required to pay for these amounts.

Well, they incurred loans. To pay for these amounts, they were required to pay for these loans in terms of salary deduction. This system had been curtailed. But having said that, Barnaby, we are still continually filing the appropriate cases with the DOJ and we will not hesitate to do so if these brokering arrangements continue at the LGU level. Even if some of them are LGU employees, actually, we have filed cases against.

**Q:** Just one last quick question, just real quick. Is a bilateral agreement in the works?

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Yes, we are discussing closely with the DFA. You're right, we mentioned the employment permit system and employment permit system is a national-to-national, not LGU-to-LGU bilateral arrangement; government-to-government hiring arrangement. And we're seeing the same agreement on the seasonal farm workers with the Korea. So, we currently in talks with the Korean government along these lines. The dynamic is EPS, factory

workers, now caregiver also would be under the Ministry of Labor, ang kausap diyan Ministry of Labor.

But with the seasonal farmworkers, we're talking to a different ministry, Ministry of Justice. That's good in a sense that the legal protection are provided, right. However, we also want the Ministry of Labor, requesting at least the Korean government to bring in our labor colleagues, the labor ministry colleagues, so that we could also talk at the same footing as similar to the employment permit system agreement and arrangement.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Barnaby, and thank you to our friends in media for participating in the Post-SONA discussion. We are now down to the last part of our discussion as we listen to the final remarks of our panelists.

Let's begin with Department of Education Secretary Sonny Angara.

**DEPED SEC. ANGARA:** Thank you Daphne, to Sec. Benny, Sec. Hans, ADG Rose and to all the media friend and attendance, thank you for attending this and allowing us to expound on president's remarks. I think, the president's SONA was remarkable in the amount of detail it provided for a road map for education and not only education under my department but also education under TESDA, under CHED and the need for us for these agencies to work together, provide genuine options for our young people and of course, the president show this concern for our teachers and for the education sector and I think, people in the sector are very excited with what the president said and looking forward to the reforms of the president.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you. A round of applause for Senator Angara. And now, we have Department of Labor and Employment Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma.

**DOLE LAGUESMA:** Thank you Daphne. To my co-panelist, to our attendees in this Post-SONA forum, our friends from the media, co-workers in government, maraming mga taga-Department of Labor and Employment dito; they braved the rain and the flood.

So, let me join Secretary Sonny in thanking you and the opportunity, for this opportunity to be able to expound and probably respond to certain pressing concerns. I think we have to highlight that—let me also just say that we actually, other than the measures, mention steps taken to protect our workers.

I think the overall goal of the present administration under President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is to be able to really create more employment, quality employment so that overseas employment will become merely an option not the first choice.

Iyon po ang gustong makita ng ating pangulo, at bagama't mayroon pong mga ginagawa para maipagtanggol, mapangalagaan ang kapakanan ng ating mga manggagawa, siguro po ang pinakamahalaga na puwedeng maipagkaloob sa kanila ay ang option, ang first choice na makapagtrabaho sa ating sariling bansa.

And we also would like to probably give this assurance and commitment, that the Department of Labor and Employment ay lagi pong bukas, tutulong kung mayroon naman pong mga puwedeng magawa at ang mga programa ay puwede pong maipagkaloob sa ating mga manggagawa, higit po iyong mga nangangailangan. Lagi po kaming tatalima sa doon sa direktiba na dapat magtulung-tulong ang lahat ng mga departamento ng pamahalaan para nang sa ganoon ma-maximize ang resources, maiukol ang resources na magkaroon ng impact sa pagpapataas ng kalagayan at antas ng pamumuhay ng ating mga kababayan.

So, we look forward to interaction lalo na sa ating constituency sa DOLE, ang ating mga employers' organization, ang atin pong workers organization in the hope that we can actually in a sense "perfect" a roadmap towards the realization of a 'Bagong Pilipinas'. Maraming salamat.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Secretary Benny Laguesma. And now we have Department of Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac.

**DMW SEC. CACDAC:** Well, thank you, Daphne, and to our fellow colleagues in the cabinet and colleagues in government and our guests in the venue. Well, yes it was a SONA for the ages, two standing ovations and a lot of areas covered by the president. Actually, iyon pong mga other areas not necessarily the OFW feel, also affect OFW families and so we're thankful for all the achievements and the accomplishments along the lines of the other sectors that were mentioned by the president – the economy, education and health and even local employment as mentioned by Sec. Benny and DDG Rosanna.

But in the area of overseas employment is all about OFW protection – that is always a topic of discussion with respect to the president, he is always very mindful of their current state and condition of our OFWs and especially also with respect to OFW families and children. And so, along these lines abangan po ninyo magkakaroon tayo ng further development. We're working closely with the OWWA and other relevant government agencies, even reaching out to Sec. Sonny and the DepEd for programs with respect to OFW children.

Reintegration, everywhere we go the president invites the Filipino community to come home and try our current economic situation in terms of endeavoring in business and employment in our country. So, we will work harder and closer with other government agencies.

There are projects in line, I just won't state them at this stage, there will be proper announcement for the second half of the year especially with respect to reintegration. We will have stronger migrant workers offices; we will have better facilities. The president by the way did mention the OFW lounge which was opened in time in NAIA 3 and NAIA 1 because that was around the same time that we had the power outage and therefore we're able to accommodate, the lounges were able to accommodate stranded OFWs – Admin Arnell Ignacio and myself we're on the scene at the time last week. And of course, there will be better facilities, centers of excellence in terms of OFW Migrant Workers Centers all around

the world. And we will also strengthen our regional office presence; we're working closely in terms of beefing up our personnel and our workforce; our OFW hospital; we'll have a stronger workforce and better facilities and more services for OFWs in line.

So all told, we will have a—if last Monday's SONA was for the ages, then we will have an even better and brighter SONA for next year definitely, with the achievements, with the projects lined up by no less than the President in terms of better protection and reintegration of our OFWs. Thank you very much.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac. And now, we will hear from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Deputy Director General Rosanna Urdaneta.

**TESDA DDG URDANETA:** Thank you, Daphne. And my respect to the Secretaries – Secretary Laguesma, Secretary Angara and of course Secretary Hans Cacdac. Maraming-maraming salamat po sa kapuwa kawani ng ating pamahalaan lalo na iyong mga taga-TESDA nasa online po kasi binaha kami, binaha po iyong opisina namin.

On behalf of our Director General Secretary Teng Mangudadatu and the whole family of TESDA, we would like to express our gratitude to the Presidential Management Staff and the Presidential Communications Office for this particular discussion that we have for us to be able to really dwell and expound on the explanations of the statement of the president in the SONA.

We will continue and we will remain committed to continually enhance the quality of technical vocational education and training in the country lalo na po sa ating mga kababayan na gustong magkaroon ng kasanayan para sa pangkabuhayan nila at doon din po sa mga graduates ng college educations who would want to further their skills, please take note that TESDA is now having a lot of training regulations that might suit your needs and sa requirement po ng industry. In all of these, TESDA would need the support of all our stakeholders as well as the different government agencies for us to be able to do our work because TESDA alone cannot do it. So, maraming-maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat.

**MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ:** Thank you, DDG Urdaneta. And thank you so much to our esteemed panelists for being here today and for sharing the details of your programs and for collaborating for each other to support education and workers' welfare, of course under the leadership of our President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. para sa 'Bagong Pilipinas.'

And now, we will be taking a break and we will be back later at 12:00 noon with the Infrastructure Development and Energy Security Cluster. Again, I'm Daphne Oseña-Paez and this has been the 2024 Post-SONA Discussions.

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