

Keynote Message
Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz
Signing of Joint Statement in the Bus Transport Industry
11 November 2011, 9:00
The Bayleaf Hotel, Intramuros, Manila

(Greetings)

It is with great pride that I congratulate each and every one of you for being here today. Today is a special day, as this is probably the first time in the history of the bus transport industry that key industry players, namely bus operators, drivers, government regulating agencies and experts from the academe in the fields of engineering and traffic psychology, have come together and agreed to adopt and implement measures that will ensure road transport safety.

It is to your credit, as members of the various bus transport sector groups and bus drivers associations, and the hard-working DOLE-Technical Working Group consisting of the NWPC, ILS, OSHC, BWC, BLES, and DOLE-NCR, and of course, our collaborating agencies in government, MMDA, LTFRB and LTO, that today we can rightfully call ourselves as tripartite partners who are firmly in control of our future to make our streets safer for motorists and passengers alike.

We have agreed that road transport safety is a priority concern for policy and program reforms of government. We cannot forever close our eyes to the tremendous loss of previous lives and damage to property that we have witnessed over the years due to road-related accidents. Safety advocates say at least two vehicles in major highways in the Philippines get involved in an accident every hour. Fifty road accidents occur every day. These are significant numbers in a country where about 78

percent of the population relies on buses, jeepneys, taxis and tricycles for mobility.

We can easily recall the more infamous accidents in recent history—that busload of Iranian medical interns, doctors, and their families that plunged into ravine in Balamba, Cebu, killing 20 passengers in June 6, 2010. Barely a month later, an overloaded bus in Toledo City lost its brakes and careened downward striking a concrete fence. 15 died in that accident. Only last July, a passenger bus fell off the Skyway in Parañaque City killing 2 passengers and the driver. And who can forget the case of UP professor and veteran journalist Estella “Chit” Simbulan killed in May 2011 along one of the country’s deadliest roads in Quezon City?

Globally, it is estimated that 1.3 million people die each year from road crashes. Experts in fact consider road and traffic accidents more fatal than malaria. This is a very sad fact, especially because about 80 percent of these road accidents are reported by safety advocates to be caused by avoidable human error.

With these statistics painting a grim background, the President issued in April 28, 2011 Proclamation Order No. 159 creating the Philippine Road Safety Action Plan with a view to substantially cut down road crashes and fatalities in the country. The Order declares 2011 as the launch year of the country’s strategies on road safety plan, which incidentally coincided with the global launching of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 by the World Health Organization and the UN Road Safety Collaboration.

On the part of the Department of Labor and Employment, I issued Administrative Order No. 182 creating a DOLE-TWG to study the working conditions and compensation schemes in the

bus transport sector. Our objective for the study was to identify the factors that affect road transport safety and recommend measures within the context of labor and employment as well as in the broad areas of responsibility of concerned transport regulating government agencies.

The results of the quick survey done in early June 2011 corroborated some findings that road accidents can be largely avoided when proper measures are instituted and strictly implemented. In the National Capital Region, in particular, these measures are associated with the drivers' lack of proper training on motor skills, safety and traffic rules and regulations, poor health due to long hours, exposure to health hazards, lack of income security under a purely commission-based compensation scheme, weak enforcement of traffic rules and regulations, poor road design and a weak licensing system.

The DOLE has completed the necessary consultations and technical studies to enable everyone present to contribute towards ensuring road safety. We have prepared this Joint Statement on Road Transport Safety, in collaboration with all concerned agencies as well as with representatives of the Bus Transport Industrial Tripartite Council. We are all one in praying that, as each of the concerned agencies and groups faithfully do its part, we can substantially reduce fatal road accidents and pursue road safety on our highways and thoroughfares.

As presented to us earlier, the Joint Statement that we will be signing soon after represents our collective commitment to promote road transport safety. I believe these are doable measures. It will not be difficult to come up with actions to improve working conditions, in particular, work hours and income security; comply and enhance social protection; develop and administer competency measures; improve

franchising system; enforce traffic rules and regulations and provide traffic-related information, and improve road design. What is more difficult, perhaps, is to have the will and the resolve to carry on and persevere in our chosen path.

Thank you and good day.