

Opening address at the Bridging between coconut and tourism stakeholders' forum

**By Mr Hideki Kagohashi, Enterprise Development Specialist,
delivered on behalf of Mr Khalid Hassan, Director, ILO Country Office
for the Philippines, 18 October 2024, Siargao Island, Philippines**

- ▶ Government officials and local government partners,
- ▶ Employers and Siargao tourism operators,
- ▶ Brothers and sisters representing trade unions and workers organizations;
- ▶ Coconut farm owners and workers,
- ▶ Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen;

Marajaw na buntag!

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is grateful to the Siargaonons for the opportunity to partner and help build back better after Super Typhoon Rai, locally known as Odette.

This was possible with funding support from the Government of Japan, through the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Today, we thank you, our partners and stakeholders, for your support and collaboration as we strive toward a common vision of a sustainable and resilient Siargao Island.

The coconut industry and tourism are critical pillars of Siargao's identity and economy. However, these industries are under threat from the evolving pressures of development, climate change and increasing intensity of natural calamities.

Siargao faces significant challenges that demand urgent attention and collaboration. We cannot afford to address them in isolation.

First, the project supported the implementation of the Philippine Coconut Authority's (PCA) COCO CARE rehabilitation plan. Thousands of coconut seedlings were planted and farms damaged by the super typhoon were restored.

Through cash-for-work schemes that accelerated the replanting efforts of PCA, local farmers can revitalize their coconut farms, ensuring that productivity is restored and sustained in the long term.

Second, assessing the value chain of non-traditional coconut products (NTCPs) has yielded promising opportunities for coconut farmers to diversify their income sources.

Participants in the value chain study have taken the crucial first step by forming technical working groups, and actively engaging institutional and coconut stakeholders in the development of these products, which will become key features of the Siargao tourism experience.

Third, we were able to formulate an integrated and inclusive recovery model that promotes synergy between Siargao's coconut and tourism sectors, based on project experiences and insights gathered from local communities, industry stakeholders, and institutional partners.

By adopting this multi-stakeholder platform, we can position Siargao's coconut industry as a key feature of the island's unique brand – the Tatak Siargao, Sustainable Siargao.

As we move ahead, the path forward will require the involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders. Now is the critical time to enhance infrastructure, strengthen policies, increase incentives, and converge efforts necessary to develop these opportunities.

We envision today's stakeholders' workshop as not only an opportunity for dialogue, but also for solidifying partnerships, forging new ones, and charting the course ahead, in which Siargao's coconut and tourism industries complement and uplift each other.

A warm welcome as we rely on your strong support to grow the island's coconut economy, promote sustainable enterprises, strengthen value chains and make prioritize decent work, social protection and just transition in efforts to rebuild better and stronger, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Salamat karajaw!