

Speech

Administrator Sonia B. Malaluan

MARINA

Forum on the IRR of RA No. 12021

AMOSUP Convention Hall

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Assistant Secretary Lennard Serrano of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), distinguished representatives from government partners, maritime industry stakeholders, and of course the host of this today's event – the Joint Manning Group led by its Chairperson, Mr. Ericson Marquez, esteemed participants, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am pleased to be here today as we continue a new chapter for the maritime industry—a sector that is not only the backbone of our nation's economy but also a testament to the unparalleled excellence of Filipino seafarers.

Allow me to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Joint Manning Group for organizing this timely and important forum. The discussion later on the reforms in maritime education and training is expected to be insightful and constructive, and will undoubtedly assist the administration in its efforts to effectively implement the provisions of Republic Act No. 12021 and its IRR.

It has always been said that the enactment of RA No. 12021 marks a defining moment in the maritime sector and it establishes a comprehensive framework to safeguard the rights and welfare of our seafarers and advancing the maritime education and training systems. This is a step

forward for the Philippine maritime industry, reaffirming its leadership and competitiveness on the global stage.

However, transformative change cannot occur without the proactive engagement of all stakeholders—shipowners, manning agencies, maritime education institutions, relevant government agencies, and the seafarers themselves.

At the heart of this legislation is our shared mission to safeguard the welfare of Filipino seafarers and elevate our maritime workforce to global standards. Yet, achieving this vision requires more than awareness; it demands action—our collective action.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not merely a discussion about policies; it is a call to actively build a future where every Filipino seafarer is empowered, protected, and celebrated. The successful implementation of RA No. 12021 and its IRR hinges on the commitment of every stakeholder in this room. I urge each of you to reflect on your role in this transformative journey and to take decisive steps in ensuring its success.

Let me share an update on MARINA's efforts. The MARINA has long been committed to developing a future proof and competitive maritime workforce, both nationally and internationally. Our goal is to maintain the Philippine status as a leading provider of qualified and competent seafarers in the world maritime labor market or even aim to increase the share of Filipino officers in the total supply. Under RA No. 12021, MARINA has assumed expanded responsibilities in maritime education. As of the moment, MARINA and CHED are working on the establishment of a Transition Plan to ensure the

seamless turnover of documents and systems, the transition of relevant policies, procedures, and guidelines, and the capacity building for MARINA personnel who will be assuming the functions previously under CHED.

Additionally, RA No. 12021 mandated the creation of the Office of the Deputy Administrator for Education, Training, and Certification—now referred to as the Office of the Deputy Administrator for Human Element (ODAHE) under the IRR, for MARINA to effectively implement the mandates of the law. The MARINA proactively acted upon this mandate. In fact, the MARINA submitted to the DBM and DOTr on 27 September 2024 our proposed organizational structure, along with the supporting documents, for the creation of the ODAHE, just four (4) days after the signing of the law. We remain hopeful for the DBM's approval, which is crucial for MARINA to fully execute its new mandate.

Today, I wish to emphasize the indispensable role of the employers' group—shipowners, shipping companies, and manning agencies—in achieving the goals of RA No. 12021 and its IRR.

You serve as the vital bridge between Filipino seafarers and the global maritime industry. As enablers of opportunity, your leadership and commitment are key to shaping the industry's future. I urge you to:

- 1. Forge Stronger Partnerships with Maritime Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs):** These partnerships are essential to address cadet placement shortages and ensure quality onboard training. Together, we can better prepare future seafarers for real-world challenges.

2. **Invest in Innovation and Emerging Technologies:** Explore training programs on alternative fuels, green technologies, and advanced simulation tools. Equipping our seafarers with these skills will prepare them for a sustainable, technology-driven maritime landscape.

3. **Champion Professionalism and Integrity:** Uphold the highest standards in recruitment, training, and welfare. By doing so, you strengthen the global reputation of Filipino seafarers as the finest in the world.

To our seafarers—the heart and soul of this industry—you inspire us every day. Your unwavering dedication and resilience drive our mission to create an environment where your welfare, growth, and dignity are paramount.

Let us work together—government, industry, and seafarers alike—to make the Philippine maritime industry a global benchmark for excellence, innovation, and sustainability.

Thank you, and good afternoon.