Leader’s remarks in a meeting with laborers from across the country on the occasion of the Workers’ Day - 29 /Apr/ 2015

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

First of all, I welcome all of you, dear brethren and sisters, and congratulate you in advance on the occasion of birthday of Imam Ali (PBUH), the symbol of justice and the shining face of all human history. I also congratulate the birthday anniversary of Imam Javad (PBUH) which is today. The blessings of the month of Rajab are not limited to these births. I recommend myself and you to take advantage of the blessings of the month of Rajab by strengthening [our] spiritual tie and relation with Almighty God. If all of us, strengthen our relation with God, many problems, dilemmas, disorders, and abnormalities will be eliminated automatically. I also thank the esteemed minister [of labor]’s remarks, which contained accurate and good points that are also confirmed by me. And I ask all officials – both in the Ministry of Labor and in other sectors of the administration, because some of this issues [you mentioned here] are not directly related to your ministry and are related to other sectors – to try and follow these very clear lines.

We must work. Well, we have said good things frequently, [we] have repeated [them], and we have made good decisions, [but] what affects people’s lives and in reality, is our work and activity, is our work, is the realization of these things [that we say], which God willing, Almighty God will help you, us, everybody to be able to move in full.

Today, my meeting with you, a group of dear workers from across the country is, in fact, the symbol of my respect for the working class. I have said, and continue to say a lot [in this regard], and I will posit [certain] matters today. However, the main goal is that I want to laud the worker and the work through this meeting. I want to further highlight the importance of labor in my own mind and in the minds of all Iranian people. [The goal is] to pay attention that all great achievements are made possible through work in its general sense. Work has value; [and] the worker enjoys a high value in the society because of the value of labor. This [story] which is famous and they have said that the Great Prophet of Islam (PBUH) kissed the hand of a worker is not a simple compliment; it is a lesson. Therefore, I want to laud the work, to laud the worker, to draw attention of officials to issues related to workers, [to] the resolution of issues of labor environments and labor community. There are issues; the issue of delays [in payment], layoffs, the issue of livelihood and the likes of them. These are issues that exist across the country and among the labor community and are workers’ problems. Officials should pay more attention to these issues than before; these are the [main] goals of these meetings.

What I feel is that the working class, since the beginning of the [Islamic] Revolution up to the present day, has been truly and fairly doing a valuable job for the country. Firstly, the value of work and worker, secondly, [their] presence in difficult arenas of the country during these long years, and thirdly, not being tempted by temptations of those who wanted to pit the labor community against the revolution from the outset. Workers did this great sacrifice while working problems, [and problems with the] livelihood of workers have existed in different periods of time. However, the labor community has passed its test.

As I said before, there are problems, which firstly cannot be solved through words and [empty] talk; [they need] action and initiative and [practical] measures [to be solved]. Secondly, [the solution] to problems of the country’s economy should be found inside the country. The spine [of the economy] is production; the spine of resistance economy that I said is to strengthen domestic production. If this goal is achieved and attention is paid to this issue, problems [related to] working [class] will be gradually solved; labor will become valuable; workers will become valuable; employment will become general; unemployment, which is a social malady will gradually decrease and will

be done away with. The foundation of the work is the issue of production.

Perhaps some people may say that this issue of production that you keep repeating – and I always emphasize on the issue of production, both in public speeches and in meetings with officials – has requisites. Under the present situation which sanctions exist and international pressures exist, prosperity of production and strengthening of production cannot be achieved. I do not deny that these unjust sanctions that the enemies of the Iranian nation and the enemies of the revolution have imposed on the Iranian nation are effective; undoubtedly they are not ineffective. However, I deny that these sanctions can prevent a general, organized, planned effort for prosperity of production; I don't accept this. I look across the country and see in various sectors – in some of which the pressure of enemies and sanctions and things like that happen to be more severe – production has continued thanks to determination of officials and workers and interested youth. I am observing and seeing this; it is right before the eyes of everybody. Take the military industry as an example; you compare today's situation with 15 years ago or 20 years ago or even ten years ago; you would see we have made great advances; [we have made] strange advances in the field of military production. This is while enemies' sanctions have been stricter with regard to military issues; this is not about this year or past year; such sanctions – with greater pressure – existed since a long time ago, but we made advances.

Or with regard to biosciences, [and] biotechnology, we have made great advances while the same restrictions, the same sanctions have been in place. Even in some famous universities of the world, Iranian students were not allowed to study these fields, do research, [and] progress. However, [our] country has made very prominent and obvious advances in these sciences and everybody observes this. [For] those who are informed and are willing to be informed, [these issues] are not secret things; they can be informed about this. Or in some of new sciences like nanotechnology – which are among modern technologies of the world – nobody in the world helps us in these fields and has not helped us and will not help us after this; yet we are progressing. Our people, our youth, our researchers, our scientists are working in these fields, [are] endeavoring, [and] have made remarkable advances. Take knowledge-based industries as an example. In this very Hosseiniyeh (center) they held an exhibition and I was closely introduced to young people who are interested in this work and different sectors of knowledge-based companies. Of course, I had a report [on these companies]; I was informed, but I also came to know them up-close; they are working, are endeavoring, [and] are moving ahead.

Today in the field of knowledge-based companies we have greatly progressed [compared to] 10 years ago and 15 years ago; [and] all these happened in spite of the sanctions. Yes, if there were not for the enemies' unjust sanctions, we might have progressed more in these fields; I don't deny that. Of course, it was also possible that we might have paid no attention [to these fields] did not look at the needs of the country and allocated the money of oil [exports] and imports and things like that to issues, which would have led to no progress for the country; this was also possible. We must really pay some attention to this [issue] that some of our advances were result of the bans [imposed on us] from the outside; we must value this. They didn't give us and we had to do it ourselves. When the door is opened to unlimited imports and you bring [into country] whatever you need, human's interest in doing easy things will draw people toward laziness and idleness. This is another side of this issue. Therefore, if I emphasize on the issue of production it should not be answered that production is not possible under conditions of strict sanctions; no, it is quite possible. Everything that you decide to do, persevere for, bring your forces into the arena, ask Almighty God for help, for guidance, it can be done; we have tried this.

At present, in some domestic industries we have the first say in the world. Take dam building as an example. Who helped us in the world that we could bring dam construction to this point? Today, Iran is among pioneer countries in building dams. In some other countries, dams are built at a very high cost [by] some Western countries and the likes of them. If Iranian youth had their way, perhaps they would have built them in a much better way at lower prices. This is a work that [in which] we have progressed. Who helped us during these long years? It is the same with regard to nuclear issues; it is the same with regard to other different issues.

I believe that economic problems of the country, some of the most important of them are workers' problems, are the

issue of livelihood, [and] the issue of laying off workers. Reports are received and one sees these reports [and] if attention is paid to the issue of production, [these problems] will be solved. It creates jobs, creates sense of dignity, [and] creates sense of needlessness. When a country relies on its internal force, it will feel needless [of foreigners]. Perhaps one is willing to solve ten issues with the world, but it is quite different when you want to solve a problem, [and] sit at the negotiating table when you feel powerful or [when you] feel weak. When one feels powerful, one negotiates in one way, when they feel weak and in need, negotiate in another way. If internal structure of power in the country in all fields, including and especially in economic field, is a strong structure, all issues can be negotiated with various parties. However, [in this state] one negotiates from a position of power, not a position of need, not a position of wanting, which will embolden the enemy [to] constantly set conditions, constantly make absurd remarks. In my view, this is the solution, I say – and I said this on the first day of the year – that everybody should focus their efforts in various and different sectors on the issue of production.

Of course, this has requirements. Both the investor, and worker, and consumer and relevant state organs, all have duties. This job is not one-dimensional; everybody should [cooperate] with one another. When I say empathy and rapport between people and government, this is what I mean. That is, everybody should work together to lift this big rock, to remove this big rock [which is] on the way of the country's movement.

Investors and those who can, should invest. I knew people who could take their money to more profitable sectors which have nothing to do with production [and] spend it there; but [they] did not [do that]. They said 'we won't [do this]. We want to serve the country'. They invested in production with lower profit, lower revenue because they understood that the country needs it. Well, this is [a kind of] worship. The investor who thinks about the need of the country and does not invest his money in brokering and profitable activities that are harmful to the country and spends [his money] in investment, his work is a good deed. Therefore, investor plays a role.

A good-working laborer also plays a role. The worker who puts up with the difficulties of the work – work is difficult anyway; physical work is one of the difficult things in life – the worker who spends his life, his time and his force to do a good job, is also worshipping [God]; this is a good deed. In my meetings with you dear ones, I have frequently narrated this hadith from the Grand Prophet [of Islam] (PBUH), who said, "God bless that person who when does anything, strengthens it." Both in industrial work, and in agricultural work and in different labor fields, when the job is done with due care and strength, the product will be acceptable, will be strong; this is the worker's role; this is also worship.

A fair consumer, [and] a conscientious consumer can also help production in the country. [They can do this] by not going after name and fame, not going after brands – this word that they keep repeating: brand, brand – do not care for marks; care for expediency [of the country]. Expediency of the country is to consume domestic production, to help the Iranian workers. There are people who are even ready to chant slogans in favor of workers, they show a lot of zeal and chant slogans, but in practice, they kick the Iranian workers. Kicking Iranian workers is not to use what this worker has manufactured and go after its foreign counterpart; sometimes even at higher prices! In some industries in our country, we are among the world pioneers [but] in the same fields they go and bring things from outside into [the country]. And this is everybody's duty, including a duty for the administration. The esteemed labor minister is present here; I ask you to raise [this issue] in the cabinet, insist and push [this issue that] things that are consumed by the administration should absolutely not come from outside [of the country]. This is a major issue, a big issue because the administration with its vast domain is number one consumer. Don't say that we want a certain thing, we need it now, but it is not produced domestically, so we have to bring it from outside.

Well, don't you have planning? If you need it today, why say it today? It would be better you said that two years ago, so that, domestic producer would have opportunity to plan, to manufacture, to test, to experience; so that, it would be available to you today. These are important issues; these are not small matters. The administration should decide that anything it consumes, from pen and paper on the table to construction of buildings to other things; whatever can be produced inside [the country], ban its foreign counterpart, [and] ban it for itself. [They should prevent the]

willingness toward easiness and facility – facility is just the good part of this issue – and, God forbid, abuse; state officials should prevent all of these.

And we have experienced it, tested it and have seen it in some places. Once a job was being done – this is about many years ago – they were making something, I summoned concerned officials and told them in this job that you are doing try not to use any foreign item. They promised and lived up to their word. At the end, when I asked for report and investigated, it became clear that they had been able to procure about 98 percent of [needed] material from inside the country; one or two percent were things that did not exist in the country and were brought from outside. Well, these things can be done. So, consumer is one of the pillars of bolstering and promoting domestic production.

Another pillar, is the organ that fights corruption. The issue of fighting against smuggling on which I have put so much emphasis. Various administrations have come and gone since many years ago. Well, this is something that should be realized and this is possible; don't say it is not possible, it is quite possible. Stand firm against smuggling. Sometime I said don't look for smuggling only on the border. Today in the country billions of dollars – since they give different figures on this, I cannot determine its quantity, but very big numbers are given – is being spent on smuggled goods. Follow smuggling from the border and before the border up to inside the shops. This is a very important item; it is very important. And those people who do this, they are also endeavoring [for God], they are also worshipping [God]; this is also a good deed.

Another pillar is those organs that are in charge of imports. These organs should also look. There are some things that are out of the administration's hand; the private sector is active and there is no choice. However, state organs can guide [them] through supervision; do something so that imports would not harm domestic production.

Another [issue] is the issue of the responsibility of publicity organs and media. It is also true about media; the IRIB and others. They should work on the issue of domestic consumption and domestic production in true sense of the word. These are effective.

Another issue is the issue of stability in laws, for which the Majlis [parliament] is responsible. They should take care not to change laws related to economic issues, including issues related to labor, every day, so that, those who want to make plans, [can] make [their] plans.

At any rate, cultural officials of the country should plan for cultural efforts to scorn idleness and work evasion and shunning hard labor. Hey Mr.! Hard labor should be accepted. If we do not impose hard labor on ourselves, do not accept [it], we would get nowhere. You cannot only go after easy work; one should also accept hard labor; wherever it is. Those people who managed to reach the peaks in industry, in technology, [and] in scientific issues, imposed hard labor on themselves. This needs building [suitable] culture. If we only look for easy work, no progress would be achieved.

Those responsible for fighting corruption also play a role in this regard. Now, corruption is frequently talked about. Talking about corruption has no benefit. By shouting 'Stop Thief! Stop Thief!' the thief will not quit stealing. You must go, must engage [this issue]. State officials are not like newspapers to just talk about corruption. Yes, newspaper may talk about corruption, but I and you, who have responsibility, should take action. What more there is to say? Engage [this issue]; if we know, [we must] take action and prevent corruption in the true sense of the word.

These are our duties. These are duties for our various sectors. This is a cure for economic problem of the country that if the economic problem is going to be solved, the focus should be on production. Everybody is responsible in this way that I said. Of course, some responsibilities are heavier and some are lighter. However, everybody is somehow responsible. The key to economic problems of Iran is not in Lausanne and Geneva and New York; it is inside the country. Everybody should endeavor, everybody should persevere [and] God willing, [the problems] will

be solved. The Iranian nation and state officials have done bigger jobs during these years and it has been possible. The problem with production can be also solved. The incumbent administration is, thanks God, working and interested; and there are informed people within the administration; they [should] endeavor, should work, should follow up, and God willing, solve problems.

Of course, our labor community is truly and fairly a modest community. Our labor community is a modest community. I was informed of efforts that were made and instigation that aimed to pit the labor community against the revolution since the first day of the revolution [and] even before categorical victory of the revolution – during the time of demonstrations and strange commotion in the country in [13]57 (1979). I knew [those efforts], I saw [them]. I have observed and seen some [of those efforts] up-close. It has been the same during these long years. During my tenure as president and later on there were always people who wanted to pit the labor community against the Islamic Establishment. [However,] the country's labor community has put up with problems and stood up with full force, with stable steps, [and] with modesty. This is very valuable. Officials should know the value of this big labor community that tolerates problems and works. The reward for this modesty is that everybody should try to, God willing, solve these problems. Undoubtedly, Almighty God will help those people who have good intentions and want to do good things and move toward good goals.

I hope Almighty God would extend his blessing and mercy to all you dear ones and dear workers and different officials of this sector; resurrect the martyrs of labor community with Prophet (PBUH); and resurrect our great Imam [Khomeini], who opened this way for us, with Prophet (PBUH).

Peace be unto you and so may the mercy of Allah and His blessings.