



STATEMENT OF MILF PIP CHAIRMAN MOHAGHER IQBAL ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BI-SMI LLĀHI R-RAĤMĀNI R-RAĤĪM

To my brothers and sisters in the Bangsamoro and the rest of the country:

It has been three weeks since the Government of the Philippines (GPH), the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Government, and our respective local government units (LGUs) impelled critical measures to contain the spread of the Coronavirus disease, also known as COVID-19. The urgency of the situation has obliged us to make adjustments in our daily lives, such as the closing of businesses, observance of physical distancing, postponement of social gatherings – including commemorations and activities related to the peace process – and the imposition of checkpoints, curfews and community quarantines.

Unfortunately, the threat of COVID-19 has also affected vital peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas, including those assisted by our longtime partners and friends in the Bangsamoro peace process. Despite the challenges and limitations brought by COVID-19, I want to assure the Bangsamoro people, especially my comrades in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), of our unwavering commitment to fulfill the obligations set in the signed peace agreements, particularly the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and its four (4) Annexes, and the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).

To ensure that the Bangsamoro remains on the path towards sustainable growth, peace, justice, healing, and reconciliation, the GPH and MILF peace implementing panels will work together in slowing the spread and flatten the curve of this pandemic. Along with the rest of the peace process architecture, we will seek innovative ways to deliver on our promises without compromising the well-being of our people. Furthermore, I call on the international community, the private sector, and various civil society groups to join our efforts to ameliorate the suffering of our most vulnerable populations by providing essential medical supplies and services.

Between the signing of the CAB and the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, or Republic Act No. 11054, the Bangsamoro peace process realized significant milestones, borne from the sacrifices made by the Bangsamoro people since the beginning of our struggle for the right to self-determination. Similarly, the sacrifices we are forced to make in these trying times will not be in vain. While we are coming to grips with this “new normal,” the Bangsamoro people – from public servants to front liners and volunteers – have demonstrated resilience, vigor, humility, generosity, and compassion.

Encouraged by this indomitable spirit and the support from the Bangsamoro people, I do not doubt that we will recover from this pandemic, Insha' Allah. I implore all believers to pray to the Almighty God to save our people and humanity from this scourge. There will be losses, but we will move forward with resolve to effectively address the needs, ideals, and aspirations of the people in the Bangsamoro.

Assalamualaykum Warahmantullahi Wabarakatuhu, and may all of you remain safe and protected.
