

SPEECH OF MILF CHAIRMAN AL HAJ MURAD EBRAHIM
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BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHEEM

Excellencies, the Foreign Ministers of the Muslim Countries constituting the OIC, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah, the sitting Chairman of this 42nd CFM session, His Excellency, the OIC Secretary General, Distinguished Guests, brothers and sisters,

Assalamu Alaykum Warhmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Indeed, I am deeply honored to stand before this august body of the World's largest organization of Muslim States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

I address you today not only as Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation (MILF) but mainly in behalf of the Bangsamoro Coordinating Forum (BCF), a forum designed by the OIC for coordination of the MILF and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and for the purpose of achieving unity in our struggle. We thank the OIC Secretary General and His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah for facilitating our participation in this auspicious occasion and for allowing us to represent the Bangsamoro through the BCF.

It should be recalled that the BCF was established in compliance with Resolution No. 36/2-MM of the 36th CFM Session urging the two Moro Fronts, the MILF and MNLF to unite their efforts and enhance their cooperation and coordination to achieve peace and development to the Bangsamoro people in the Southern Philippines.

The good office of the OIC Secretary General initiated series of Meetings between representatives of the two fronts starting at the sidelines of the OIC-CFM in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan on the 18th of May 2010 culminating in the signing of an agreement between the Chairmen of the two fronts for the establishment of a Mechanism of coordination and subsequently the creation of the BCF officially activated and its term of reference adopted in October 14, 2014 in Manila, Philippines. Since then, the coordination between the MILF and the MNLF was formalized and strengthened significantly resulting in closer cooperation in the different fields of the Bangsamoro Struggle.

Meanwhile, as we speak here today, the Congress of the Philippines is deliberating on the Basic Law, the process by which the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed on 27 March 2015 by the Moro

Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Philippines (GPh) will be translated into Law to pave the way for the establishment of a government for our people, the Bangsamoro. A rare moment in history unfolds, as we step out of the past and embrace the promise of dawn, when we bid farewell to war and strife, and when the struggle of our people finally finds a measure of success in the building of an institution that allows them to shape their future and partake of the resources that Allah endowed them.

In the course of our long struggle, we have witnessed death, destruction, and despair. We, too, have been witnessed to the enduring care, concern and concerted effort of the Muslim world to help and assist the struggle of minorities in the different parts of the world- from Palestine, Kashmir, Kosovo, Myanmar, to the Bangsamoro. We feel grateful that in this age, we still live by the tradition of our Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, that the Muslim Ummah is like a human body; the whole body feels the sickness and pain of its smallest part. It is this feeling of gratitude that inspired us when the OIC took notice of our struggle in the Bangsamoro in 1975 and brokered the negotiations between our then united front, the MNLF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and produced the 1976 Tripoli Agreement which was unfortunately never implemented.

Moved by our desire for the liberation of our people, we continued the struggle under the banner of the MILF and last year, with the assistance of the OIC as observer in the MILF-GPh Peace Talks and the generous help of OIC member states such as Malaysia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Brunei and Indonesia, we have successfully concluded the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. This agreement recognizes and addresses the legitimate grievances of the Bangsamoro including the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government in its traditional homeland and the formation of mechanisms to address historical injustices committed against the Bangsamoro including marginalization through land dispossession. More importantly, this agreement acknowledges and built on the gains of previous agreements signed by the Bangsamoro with the Government of the Philippines. In particular, the Annex on Power Sharing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro provides:

“All other powers granted to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which are relevant to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro shall be transferred to the Bangsamoro Government.

As part of the Philippine Government commitment in other peace agreements involving the Bangsamoro, the Bangsamoro Basic Law may adopt specific powers contained in these agreements and in the ARMM Organic Law, as amended.”

Bangsamoro’s destiny has not changed since 1976 until now. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) established in 1989 and later strengthened in 1996 has failed to address the root causes of our grievances. The

Bangsamoro remain neglected since the ARMM does not enjoy genuine autonomy as opposed to what its name suggested. Major decision making powers continue to be at the central government's disposal. These weaknesses have been addressed in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB), CAB and the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). The passage of an undiluted BBL *InshaAllah* will create a better tomorrow for the Bangsamoro.

As we march towards the fulfillment of the implementation of the agreements we signed with the Government of the Philippines, we urge you to journey with us until we successfully implement all the agreements we signed with them. We ask you to continue to urge the Philippine Government to faithfully implement the CAB and pave the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government. If, by the grace of Allah, the Bangsamoro Government is established, we strongly appeal to you to help us rebuild our communities that have been ravaged by decades of war. We ask you to welcome us in the community of Muslims, establishing relations and building cultural links to our cities and your countries.

The Muslims in Mindanao has long craved for development, physically and mentally. And it is hoped that it will be delivered in the form of peace dividends as the fruits of the current peace process. We, the Bangsamoro have always recognized the importance of economic developments and political stability as the pillars to a sustainable development. In order to achieve that, we will have to make sure that situation is conducive for future investments and businesses. There is no alternative to that since failure to do so would mean the failure of the Bangsamoro and the Muslims.

It is undeniable that the development work in the Bangsamoro would require a huge amount of money since it will have to start almost from zero. Despite our tireless efforts, the Bangsamoro will remain as just another dream if it is not supported with equal financial commitments. Unfortunately, it is an area which we are very much lacking. Although the government has pledged to provide the necessary funding but we fully understand the financial constraints that they face since we are talking about an amount that could reach hundreds of billions of dollars. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to humbly request the OIC member states and affiliated institutions to help us. We would welcome any kind of financial assistances and investments. And on our part, we will give our level best to live up to your expectations.

As you are all aware, we the Bangsamoro are on the verge of opening a new chapter in our history. It is only made possible with the signing of the CAB in 2014 in partnership with the current administration of President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, President of the Philippines. However, the peace agreement would be meaningless if there is no peace dividend delivered. The period from 1976 until now has been a very good lesson for us to realize that peace agreement not truthfully implemented and no immediate benefits for the conflict-affected communities will be in vein. The previous failures have created radical groups

and spur extremism in Mindanao. That has made us realized that without thorough development, conflicts will continue to prevail and the Bangsamoro will forever be at the losing end. We would like to reverse the scenario by making sure that the letter and spirit of the CAB is duly implemented and create a developed and prosperous Bangsamoro.

In closing, let me express the profoundest gratitude of our people and our organizations, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) for the untiring support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in finding solution to the Bangsamoro Question.

We express our gratitude to the OIC for the many assistance it has contributed to our struggle and for its active participation and the participation of its member states in the MILF-GPh peace process.

Finally, we express our deepest gratitude to the Secretary General for his timely visit to the Philippines and Mindanao and for his very strong expression of support to the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law that will pave the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government. We are truly indebted to you.

We pray that Allah heals the wound of the Muslim World. Thank you Excellencies and *Wassalamu alaykum Warahmatuulahi Wabarakatu.*