



MESSAGE OF THE MILF CHAIRMAN ON THE CONVERSATION WITH DONORS ON THE NECESSARY ACTIONS TOWARDS PEACE AND STABILITY

Shangri-La, Makati
December 11, 2018

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Excellencies of the diplomatic corps, partners from the development world, government officials, friends, ladies and gentlemen:

Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh! Good morning to all of you!

Last October 10, 2018, I was privileged to have met most of you during a maiden conversation with development partners hosted by the UN in Davao City. Today, I am happy that from that small initial step that we started, and with the encouragement of our partners from government, most notable the OPAPP, we are now gathered here again to exchange views and update one another as well to further explore areas of cooperation and partnership between us and the envisioned Bangsamoro Government. Indeed, your keen interest in the progress of our efforts to bring peace in Mindanao as well as your continuing support and enthusiasm in bringing about a successful conclusion to this peace agreement through the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law is very encouraging.

As a way of starting this conversation, let me update you on the development in the Bangsamoro. Just yesterday, together with the government, we have officially launched in Cotabato City the start of the campaign for the plebiscite to ratify the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro. In this launching, an overwhelming number of our people showed up to express their support for the Bangsamoro Organic Law. With this event, we have formally commenced the campaign for the ratification of

the law. We ask that everyone supports our effort to inform and allow our people, for many of them for the first time, to vote and participate in a democratic process. We have made every effort to allow our people to register and to participate in this plebiscite. However, we are saddened by the action of some local politicians in Cotabato City who have taken every possible means to deprive our people of their right to vote by blocking their registration by raising flimsy issues such as identification cards and certificate of residency from barangay officials who have previously been instructed to deny our people such certification. Even in the event yesterday, a consistent effort in Cotabato City has been waged by those who are against the BOL to prevent our people from participating in this democratic process of attending a peaceful rally to express their support to the BOL. Many of the delegates from the plebiscite areas in Maguindanao, North Cotabato, the two Lanaos were subjected to the unreasonable requirement of having to produce an Identification Card before they will be allowed to enter Cotabato City. I am not aware that the constitutional right of citizens in this country to travel can be abridged by the flimsy ground of a lack of identification card. Despite these, we still managed to gather around three hundred thousand (300,000) people in Cotabato City to officially launch the plebiscite campaign to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Despite, all the challenges in the plebiscite, we feel confident that our people will ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

On the security front, we have commenced the joint training in Camp Parang of the contingents from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces that will constitute the Joint Peace and Security Teams. After this training, they will be deployed to areas that have previously been agreed so that they can help in addressing peace and order issues in these areas.

We are also happy to note that the petition filed by a politician from Sulu in the Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law has been raffled and notices have been issued to the respondents but that no Temporary Restraining Order has been issued by the Supreme Court. At least, for now, we are confident that there will not be a repeat of the 2008 MOA AD debacle when the the Supreme Court issued a TRO against the MOA AD. We are confident that the Supreme Court will be mindful of the sensitivity of this issue

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and that it will be guided by the best interest of this republic, and which is to be able to enjoy the benefit of peace with justice.

During the conversation in Davao, I have outlined 10 Priorities in the BTA. Let me recall them here, viz:

1. Enactment of legislations mandated under the Organic Law. There are at least five priority legislations such as the Electoral Code, Civil Service Code, Administrative Code and other legislations that need to be enacted during the BTA.
2. Review and integration of different plans such as the Bangsamoro Development Plan, The Regional Development Plan of ARMM, the Camp Transformation Plan and other plans. These plans must be reviewed to ensure that we build upon the earlier works that have been done over the years while being conscious of the need to update and make them responsive to current needs.
3. Careful study and design of the appropriate bureaucracy for the Bangsamoro Government to ensure that we achieve the right balance between the size of the bureaucracy and the services that need to be delivered as well as the appropriate skills required of people in the bureaucracy.
4. Immediate programs that will respond to the pressing social and economic challenges in the Bangsamoro such as poverty, education, health, access to clean water and electricity, job opportunity, agricultural productivity, and access to capital market. This must be complemented with responsive strategic infrastructure in the region such as ports, road network, flood control, and logistics and communication facilities.
5. Special programs for transitioning combatants and their families apart from regular programs of the government like 4Ps, Philhealth, among others to ensure that these programs are tailored-fit to their needs so that they will become productive members of the society.

6. Rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi. Marawi must be quickly rehabilitated and reconstructed as every delay is an opportunity for violent extremism to use it for propaganda and recruitment. Besides, immediate rehabilitation of Marawi is both the right and just thing to do.
7. Developing policy environment on transparency, accountability, and prudent fiscal policy as well as improvement on revenue generation.
8. Energy development and power generation improvement to support the development of industries that will generate jobs and other opportunities.
9. Enhancing security by maximizing the utilization of available legitimate forces on the ground and leveraging on the network of the MILF in the Bangsamoro communities by deploying such joint forces such as the JPSTs.
10. Ensuring a productive partnership between the Bangsamoro Government and development partners as well as the national government to ensure complementation of programs to maximize results.

As I have said in my remarks during the Davao conversation, the aforesaid list is far from being exhaustive and comprehensive. In the course of our exchanges, we have further identified some areas where donor intervention may be appropriate. In fact some of you have already discussed extensively with us areas of cooperation such as strategic infrastructures which we have discussed with JICA. Among the strategic infrastructures we have discussed are the Peace Bridges in the western side of the city that will link Cotabato City to both Datu Odin Sinsuat and Sultan Kudarat and the coastal road that will link it to Polloc. Also the circumferential road around the Liguasan marsh. In our effort to transition from a rebel organization into a social movement and a political party, we have asked the UNDP to facilitate the exchanges between our combatants and the former rebels from Aceh in Indonesia. In the course of these exchanges we have asked the UNDP to look into the possibility of replicating the School of Peace and Democracy in Aceh and for us to set up an institute for peace and democracy that will initially cater to the needs of our combatants for very specific trainings on transitioning from combatants to democracy workers. Other development partners are also working on very important areas such as education, capacity building and others. I hope that many of you will continue to engage with us so

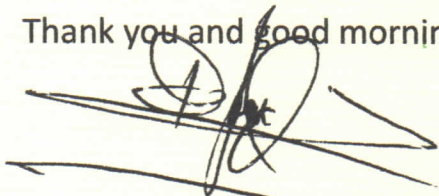
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that together, we can achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of our people.

As we prepare for the plebiscite, may I solicit your help in ensuring that all our efforts in the negotiation and peace making are not put to waste.

In closing, let me join all of you in thanking the Japanese government for their generosity in hosting this event. May I also ask all of you to join me in greeting the Japanese people and in wishing them all the best on the auspicious occasion of the celebration of the birth of their Emperor. May he live a long and fruitful life.

Thank you and good morning!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Al Haj Murad Ebrahim', written over a horizontal line.

AL HAJ MURAD EBRAHIM
Chairman