

**A Speech delivered during the High Level Seminar on Peace Building,
National Reconciliation and Democratization in Asia.**

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Honored guests, fellow participants, friends, ladies and gentlemen Good Morning and Assalamu Alaykum.

Every revolution is waged to achieve the great goal of a just and lasting peace. We find meaning in peace, reconciliation and democratization only because we have seriously struggled and pursued justice.

At the outset, let me express our profoundest gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan for inviting us to this High Level Seminar on Peace Building, National Reconciliation and Democratization in Asia.

Let me convey the heartfelt gratitude of the Bangsamoro people and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to the Japanese Government and its people for its unwavering support to the GPH-MILF Peace Process as well as the development of the Bangsamoro.

Japan occupies a unique and outstanding position in the GPH-MILF Peace Process, as it is the only country, which is a member both of the International Contact Group and the International Monitoring Team. It is also a country that leads in the development effort in the Bangsamoro through its J-BIRD program.

We are very grateful that the recent state visit of our President, His Excellency Benigno Aquino III in Japan early this month was very fruitful. His meeting with His Excellency the Prime Minister of Japan brought about numerous agreements on many important political, social, economic and other aspects of agreements beneficial to the two countries and the Region of Asia-Pacific. Among these relevant to the Bangsamoro, is the assurance of Japan to continue her development efforts in the Bangsamoro through the continuation of J-BIRD program or J-BIRD 2.

Today, I do not wish to speak as a lecturer on the all-important issue of peace building, reconciliation, and democratization in Asia. Rather, today, I wish to share with you our arduous journey to peace, our dream of development, our desire for reconciliation and our vision of democracy.

Nearly 18 years ago, the leadership of the MILF, upon the invitation of the Philippine government, entered into peace negotiations. Among the earliest documents signed between the parties was the Agreement on Ceasefire and the Cessation of Hostilities and the creation of the Committee on Ceasefire and the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH). You would note that unlike other rebel organization that views ceasefire as among the ends of negotiation or the product of a peace agreement, the MILF views the same as an important component of the peace process, and if honestly implemented would serve to prepare the ground for a better atmosphere for a peace talk to succeed. In our case, though there have been several violations of the ceasefire agreement, the continued existence of the mechanisms to enforce the agreement on the ceasefire

and the cessation of hostilities has greatly contributed to the achievement of the process and the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).

If we were to assess the peace process we have undertaken for more than seventeen years, one of the main factor that contributed to achieving the level where we are now is the numerous structures, institutions and mechanisms we have established as we go along the process. Aside from the CCCH we also established the International Monitoring Team (IMT) composed of the government of Malaysia, Japan, Brunei, Libya, Indonesia, Norway and the European Union (EU) to strengthen the mechanism of the Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities.

The role of Malaysia as third party facilitator was further strengthened by the creation of an International Contact Group (ICG) composed of United Kingdom, Japan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia supported by various International Non-Government Organizations, local NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations. These Countries and Organizations effectively played in influencing both party to move forward in the peace process especially when difficulties arise in the negotiation. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) served as Observer to the process.

We also believe that development is essential for the Bangsamoro and the peace process itself. In 2002, while we were still negotiating, we already signed with the government of the Philippines the establishment of a development arm of the MILF, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) tasked to determine, lead and manage development programs in the conflict affected areas of the Bangsamoro. This agency, in partnership with donor agencies and countries including Japan through JAICA, has undertaken various community based development projects ranging from school buildings, water supply, community centers to roads and others. Recently, BDA completed and launched the Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP), a comprehensive development blueprint for the rehabilitation and development of the war ravaged territory of the Bangsamoro. The Plan outlines the goals, lays out the strategies to achieve the goals, identifies the programs and priorities, and estimates the costs for rehabilitating and developing the Bangsamoro area which has been ravaged by decades of conflict and neglect by government. This Plan, will hopefully guide the development effort of the Bangsamoro Government when it is established. We believe that a judicious use of resources, an inspired mobilization of our people, a focused and determined leadership, and the partnership and cooperation of the international community will provide our people with the quick dividends of peace.

Under the Implementation and Normalization stages we also established structures and mechanism such as Joint Normalization Committee (JNC), Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB), a Study Group on Policing, and a Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Committee (TJRC) to recommend measures to address human rights abuses and injustices committed before and during the conflict.

The Normalization Process also entails several tracks of joint cooperation. This includes decommissioning of the MILF combatants, reciprocated with socio-economic programs, organization of an effective Police for the Bangsamoro, addressing the issue of Private Armies, redeployment of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and removal of its temporary installations and the declaration of General Amnesty.

We understand the enormous challenges we will be facing once the Bangsamoro government will be in place. We recognize the reality that it is not the end of the struggle but rather the beginning of another level of struggle more complex and more difficult. We will be faced with the great challenges of rebuilding our homeland, which was ravaged by more than four decades of war and conflict. Thus, we are continuously appealing to the international community, the different countries supportive of peace and development including the private sectors to continue to journey with us towards the realization of our vision and aspiration to develop our people and homeland. We recognize the important role the International Community and private sectors can play during this stage of our struggle. We need more development, more investments to create job for our people and give them a chance to live a normal and prosperous lives.

Meanwhile, I am sure you are all aware of the difficulties we are still facing in the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. The faith of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) the document that will translate the CAB to law in order to be implemented in the ground remains uncertain. The spoilers of peace are leaving no stone unturned against this noble undertaking of finally bringing peace to Mindanao and the Philippines as a whole.

However, with the manifestation of strong commitment of the President and his allies in the Philippine government and the support of the International Community as well as the peace loving people both in the country and the world we are still looking forward to the future of the process as both the Philippine, the MILF and the International Community have invested much efforts and resources in this process.

On our part we have demonstrated commitment and great courage in undertaking the symbolic decommissioning of our weapons and combatants last June 16, 2015 despite the uncertainties we encounter in the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. We have repeatedly demonstrated our commitment to peace and our faithfulness to the agreements we signed with the government of the Philippines.

We always thrust and pray to ALLAH (SWT) for His promise that "after hardship cometh ease." Thank you and good day. Wassalu alaykum Warrahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.