

Honorable Nabil Tan [Deputy Presidential Peace Adviser]

Honorable Mohagher Iqbal [Chairman of Moro Islamic Liberation Front Peace Implementing Panel]

Ms. Lotta Sylwander [United Nations Regional Coordinator At Interim]

Colleagues from diplomatic missions and international organizations in Manila,

Friends and partners of the Mindanao Peace Process

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

アッサラーム アレイクム
Good morning. / *Assalaam Alaikum.*

I am very pleased to welcome you all to the Bangsamoro Forum.

First of all, I would like to thank the United Nations Regional Coordinator's office for co-hosting this Forum. I also thank JICA for its support by making its facility available today for this event.

The Mindanao Peace Process is now at a critical juncture. The historic Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) enacted in July is now in full swing of implementation. We are already in the campaign period for the plebiscite on January 21st next year. The plebiscite will be followed by the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA), which will replace the existing ARMM government and govern the transition process toward the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government in 2022. Preparation for the so-called normalization process, aimed at enabling ex-combatants to get back to their normal livelihood while ensuring security and stability in the region, is also under way. Thus, the next couple of years are very crucial for the success of the Mindanao Peace Process.

Given that backdrop, I think that it is the right time now for all of us here, who have been involved in the Mindanao Peace Process one way or another, to get together

to compare notes on the current situation in considering support for the future. Today we have the pleasure of having distinguished speakers from various organizations, including Deputy Presidential Peace Adviser Nabil Tan of OPAPP and Chairman Iqbal of MILF Peace Implementing Panel, who would share with us the latest situation regarding the implementation of BOL from various aspects. Their presentations would be very valuable for all of us to understand where we are and consider how best we can support.

For Japan, supporting the Mindanao peace process has been a high priority for more than a decade. Many Japanese experts have been working in Mindanao together with our friends and partners on the ground. Under the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development, or J-BIRD, we have so far provided a total of about 13 billion pesos or 260 million US dollars worth of assistance since 2006 to the Bangsamoro region. Japan wishes to continue to support the Mindanao peace process in a comprehensive manner, fully taking into account new circumstances after the passage of BOL.

In considering our future support to the Mindanao peace process, I think that there are a couple of key aspects that need our attention and will be dealt with in discussion at the forum today.

First, smooth operation of the upcoming plebiscite for the ratification of the BOL is a very crucial first step for the process that follows. The international community could play a role to support this event, and Japan is considering its possible involvement.

Second, the new Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) that will replace the ARMM government needs to be well supported financially and in terms of capacity building.

Japan is considering to modify its existing support to the ARMM government so that it would fit well with the new BTA.

Third, the normalization process, namely decommissioning of MILF combatants and improvement of their livelihood is a key pillar to the success of the peace process. Emerging mechanism such as the Independent Decommissioning Body and Joint Peace and Security Teams would play a critical role, and their operations should be well coordinated with socio-economic activities for camp transformation. Japan is considering to expand its involvement in this increasingly important area, drawing on our experience of existing assistance for livelihood improvement and provision of social infrastructure in the region.

Of course, all these issues would be primarily taken care of by the robust ownership of the Government of the Philippines, in which I have full confidence. But international friends and partners, including Japan, should be well prepared to offer support, if requested by our Filipino friends, to their historic endeavors. I sincerely hope that the forum today will make some contribution to that end, benefiting all of us.

The day after tomorrow, I will visit Cotabato for a signing ceremony of 4 grant contracts of Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) in the areas of education, social welfare, water, and capacity building. I look forward to seeing participants from Cotabato again there.

ダグハン サラマット アット マブハイ
Thank you again for your participation today. Daghang salamat a t mabuhay.