

Signing Ceremony of the Exchange of Notes
The Project for Supporting Management and Reduction of
Private SALWs in BARMM

Mr. Ali Salik,

Member of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority,

Senior Advisor Ariel Hernandez,

Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and
Unity,

Dr. Selva Ramachandran,

Resident Representative of the United Nations Development
Programme Philippines,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Magandang hapon. Assalamu alaikum.

It is my great pleasure to speak in front of all of you on this occasion of the signing ceremony for the Exchange of Notes for the “Project for Supporting Management and Reduction of Private SALWs in BARMM” between the Government of Japan and UNDP.

With Japan’s support, this project will establish a system for the management and reduction of SALWs, as well as support the socio-economic development of over 6,000 residents in target communities selected from both MILF base commands and private armed groups. I sincerely hope the success of this project will, through confidence-building among stakeholders and more comprehensive decommissioning and normalization, lead to the improvement of regional security and acceleration of the Peace Process.

Japan has been contributing to the Peace Process for more than two decades, with inputs totaling over USD 500 million for more than 100 projects in the region under the Japan-Bangsamoro

Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development, or J-BIRD. However, despite the progress of the Peace Process, including the decommissioning of MILF combatants, there have been sporadic incidents involving the use of private small arms and light weapons, or SALWs, that have led to continued insecurity in the vulnerable communities. Recognizing that the issue of SALWs has become a serious threat to the Peace Process, the Joint Normalization Committee (JNC) requested the Government of Japan for support in tackling this issue.

As this project will be a remarkable step for the Normalization, as the first large-scale and comprehensive project to tackle the issue of private SALWs, I am grateful that Japan can support it.

Moreover, it is encouraging to have UNDP as a partner in this project. UNDP has been deeply involved in the Peace Process, and has a wide-range of experiences with similar projects in other countries. Owing to this, I would like to renew my request to the

Philippine Government and BARMM for continuous support, since mutual confidence and consensus-building between stakeholders will be necessary for the success of this project.

Following its progress, the Peace Process is delivering a great message to the world by achieving peace through dialogue and mutual trust. It is also highly encouraging that the Marcos administration is prioritizing the Peace Process. With this, please rest assured that Japan remains committed to supporting the Peace Process and furthering development in Mindanao.

Maraming salamat po. Shukran jazilan.