

Assalamualaikum. Good afternoon to you all.

It is a great honor to join you all on this partnership supporting “Informed Voting in BARMM”. I am truly grateful for the presence of our esteemed partners—the COMELEC, ministries of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, and the UNDP. Your continued support has made this program possible here in the BARMM.

For years, Japan has remained committed to supporting the peace process in Mindanao and economic development in the BARMM. Throughout our long journey with the peace process, we have always endeavored to promote peace and stability. We have done so by investing in the people and institutions in the region.

As the region approaches its first election, we now invest in the voices of the people—their ability to shape the future. Our efforts take shape through “The Project for Raising Voters’ Awareness and Promoting Digitalization of Electoral Process in Bangsamoro”.

As a fellow democracy, Japan respects the power of the ballot. Its mechanisms ensure that a nation’s path reflects the will of its citizens. But, before the votes are cast, voters need to understand the system, and only then can they discern and express their will and know the paths they would like to take.

For this reason, we embrace voters’ education as our mode of support. It empowers voters to value the weight of their choices. And, with the essential knowledge on the Bangsamoro Parliamentary Election, they can gain a deeper stake in their future—as proud members of the BARMM.

To that end, this project will aim to provide clear and timely information in a voter-friendly manner, through the various languages spoken in the region. Diverse media platforms will also ensure broader access: through radio, app and digital kiosks. Aided by technology, we can reach voters in far-flung communities with greater efficiency.

Through multilingual radio dramas, we aim to share strategic messages that appeal to voters' interests. In effect, they will shape the region's own future. A future which will sustain the dividends of peace for generations to come.

Through the education app developed under this project, we aim to help voters enhance their understanding of the BARMM's electoral process. We trust its contents will herald more choices for the prosperity of BARMM communities.

We will aim for an election that will facilitate discussions among, rather than alienate, the region's diverse voices. While the decisions are made on the majority vote, the legitimate rights of the minority have to be guaranteed. Exercise of power by elected officials must follow established rules to ensure fairness and predictability.

This extensive voters' education roll-out has been realized through the unique strengths of each organization: the COMELEC's electoral expertise and guidance, BARMM's leadership in ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevance, and UNDP's experience in supporting governance and electoral reforms.

I once again thank all our valued stakeholders for their meaningful contributions. Without your collective efforts, this project could never have reached this scale.

As we stand side-by-side in this first-ever Bangsamoro Parliament Election, may each ballot be a building block of the BARMM's progress. Let these elections lead to a bright future—one that firmly carries the hopes and aspirations of the Bangsamoro.

Thank you all very much for your continued support.

Maraming salamat po.

Shukran jazilan.