

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**SPEECH OF
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
DURING THE CEREMONIAL CONFIRMATION OF THE BANGSAMORO
ORGANIC LAW PLEBISCITE CANVASS RESULTS
AND
OATH-TAKING CEREMONY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BANGSAMORO
TRANSITION AUTHORITY**

[Delivered at Heroes Hall, Malacañan Palace | 22 February 2019]

Kindly sit down. Shukran.

Former President and House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo; excellencies of the diplomatic corps; Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea; Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. and the other members of the Cabinet; Senator Aquilino Pimentel III; Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri; the honorable members of the House of Representatives; the Commission on Election Chairman Sheriff Abas; officers and staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines led by Chief of Staff General Benjamin Madrigal Jr.; PNP Chief Police Director General Oscar Albayalde; the members of the Bangsamoro Transition; fellow workers in government; other guests and ladies and gentlemen.

Before I forget and maybe ramble on to some other things which are not included in the program, let me acknowledge the presence of the former Secretary on Peace Process Jesus Dureza [*applause*] who is here with us. May I call on you.

He's one of the pioneering spirit behind all the peace processes in the Philippines today. Unfortunately, he resigned for reasons I really do not know. Well, he never said it in his letter so I could say nothing.

On January 21 and February 6, an overwhelming majority of the registered voters of the proposed Bangsamoro territory went to their respective polling places not only to cast their ballots, but also to write a new chapter in the region's history.

Today, I am elated to accept the certification from the COMELEC declaring the ratification of the Organic Act for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in

Muslim Mindanao and the expansion of its territory to include Cotabato City and 63 barangays from the Province of North Cotabato. I am also pleased to announce the appointment of MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim as Interim Chief Minister of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority. *[applause]* Sir, congratulations.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is not just the fulfillment of a campaign promise. It will be the realization of our collective desire. It will be the realization of all our dreams and end long decades of armed struggle that hindered the growth of the region and I also consider my home.

Your courage and determination will never be put to waste. I guarantee that you and this administration will use all the resources within its disposal to ensure better governance and inclusive political empowerment in this new Bangsamoro region. *[applause]*

Indeed, the successful ratification of this Organic Law will enable us to create an environment that will be conducive to peaceful coexistence between the Muslims, Christians, Lumads, and all tribes of this planet as indigenous peoples and settlers who will consider Mindanao as their home.

As we welcome a new era of peace and development in the region, I pose this challenge to the members of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority: Always embody the dreams and aspirations of the great men and women who came before you and fought for the recognition of your right to determine your future. *[applause]*

As you lead this new region towards a brighter tomorrow, I ask you never to waver in your commitment to build an institution that is founded on the rule of law, the promotion of good governance, and the defense [of] our most cherished democratic values.

Always work for the best interest and welfare. But I need not really remind you. You know better than me. But for posterity and to put it on record that I was the one who said it at this time. Always work for the best interest and welfare, not only of the Bangsamoro people, but every Filipino who live in that region. *[applause]* I trust that you will oversee the transition period to the best of your abilities, especially in the decommissioning of firearms and former combatants.

The road to peace may be long and rough, but I am glad that we have finally reached its endpoint. My only hope is that we put to rest the bitter memories of the past so that we can build a new region that is bound, not by ethnic

or religious affiliation, but by a common aspiration for peaceful coexistence among our fellow Filipinos. *[applause]*

This is the penultimate parag --- it says "salamat" but before that may I be allowed to just to say a few words.

I would like to congratulate all of you, past and present, now here in this planet or have gone to the rest. They were great men fueled by great aspirations.

And as a Mindanaoan, as your neighbor, I am really overwhelmingly proud that you took our word for it in the so many late meetings that we had in my place, in your place just to talk about how to craft this new law.

Now that we have realized our aspirations, believe me, we in Mindanao share your values. *[applause]* We share your dreams and aspirations. We share all. But most of all, we would like to see an end of the violence that has rocked Mindanao and have cost so many lives for nothing.

For after all, we go to war and shoot each other, counter --- counting our victories, not by the progress or development of the place but by the dead bodies that were thrown around during the violent years.

If there is any problem at all or in the future, let me assure you that for the remaining years of my work as a government work here, here in this building, I assure you, Insha'Allah, I will always do what the law says and what is yours and what to --- to what extent that we can give you, not only comfort but happiness to the Muslims of Mindanao. *[applause]*

I gave you my word of honor. And in the past, because of the delays, many of our brothers and sisters raised their doubts. But few were determined enough to face me.

I said in the several meetings and the long nights that we talked and the --- all sorts of the issues. I assured you that there will be a --- there is a challenge that we will have to respond to and we will be successful.

Today, I thank Allah for his mercy and for his understanding of his people. And so every time I pray, I pray for my place, Mindanao, because we have suffered so many bombing so many lives lost, I said, for really nothing.

In the end, all the great revolutions the world has ever seen, all the great wars that we have undergone in --- well, of course I was not yet around. But violence visited us every now and then.

I hope that we can end this. And I assure you --- there is one contentious issue about your resources. It's all yours. Liguasan Marsh. *[applause]* Nobody. It belongs to the Mindanaoans. It belongs to where the people... *[applause]*

Do not be afraid that you will be deprived of this rich ever. It will always benefit the Mindanaoan and that is the purpose why we are here.

We do away with greed. We do away with oppression and especially we try. We can always try. Sometimes, it can be done. Sometimes it cannot be reached. But I pray that we will end the hate that pervaded our lives for so many years.

Thank you and may Allah bless us all. *[applause]*

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