

PRESS STATEMENT

MAKE PUBLIC THE BTC-SIGNED BANGSAMORO BASIC LAW; THE PEOPLE, NO LESS, DESERVE TO KNOW

The Mindanao Peoples Caucus along with kindred civil society organizations and grassroots communities in Mindanao strongly urge President Aquino to release to the public the signed BTC version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the comments thereon of the Malacanang legal team.

Invoking the acclaimed government policy on transparency and inclusiveness, it is high time that the draft BBL must be released to the public so that all stakeholders for peace will be assured that this remains faithful, compliant and consistent with the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

Unhealthy speculations are running high about the fate of the peace road map agreed upon by both the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in a bid to settle over four decades of Moro rebellion in Mindanao. The longer these speculations persist, the greater the chance of eroding the public's trust on the GPH-MILF peace process.

To be successful, the peace agreement that the parties forged through a 17-year negotiation must earn the widest public acclaim. We are therefore alarmed that the parties are seemingly doing nothing to stave off the erosion of public confidence on the viability of their political settlement.

We would like to emphasize here that the biggest stakeholders of the peace process are Mindanao's grassroots communities and peoples who have suffered the most during the long periods of war. Let us not fail their expectations of finally enjoying normalcy in their lives by showing our resolve to defend the gains of the peace process, particularly the integrity of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).

These unhealthy speculations are bred by the continuing unavailability to public scrutiny of the Bangsamoro Basic Law drafted by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC). We note that it has been more than two months since the BTC submitted the full text of the draft Basic Law to the Office of the President. And until today, the public is yet to know the contents of this historic document.

When enacted, the Basic Law will serve as charter of the new autonomous entity in Mindanao that expectedly embody the attributes of meaningful self-governance for the Moro people. As such, it will be among the principal measures that will make the letter and spirit of the CAB come to life.

In the process of writing the Basic Law, the BTC asked the public, especially the grassroots communities and sectors, to provide inputs and share their thoughts and sentiments. With the Basic Law now drafted by the BTC, the public deserves to know how much of their hopes and dreams for a fresh social order are embodied in that instrument. In light of this, we appeal to President Aquino to reveal to the public the full text of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

We feel that enough time has passed for a thorough review of the BTC draft; it is also about time to give the public, especially the Bangsamoro constituency, the opportunity to examine the document. In the spirit of transparency which is the avowed policy of the administration of President Aquino, we urge the BTC to release to the public the text of the Basic Law it drafted. We also urge the Office of the President to immediately release its comments to the BTC's draft Basic Law even before a 'revised' draft is submitted to Congress by July 28.

All these processes must be transparent to all stakeholders in Mindanao and the country. We trust that President Aquino heed this appeal in the greater interest of transparency and of maintaining public trust and confidence in the peace process.

MINDANAO PEOPLES CAUCUS

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