

A Statement from United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)
Issued on 4th of July 2016 in Cotabato City, Philippines
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BBL Deserves our Much-Needed Critical Support and Political Awareness under the new Presidential Administration!

We, the Bangsamoro youth, strongly believe that Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) remains to be our most viable option for the cessation of conflict-related violence in Mindanao. It is the consummation of the already signed Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). As stated in the 2016 report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), it is a political framework, which shall enable the practice of good governance, the development of the Bangsamoro region and people, and the possibility for them to proudly assert their identity, and constructively engage with their own multi-ethnic constituency. It is also a result of massive consultation and inclusive discourses among various sectors and stakeholders.

We also believe that the BBL deserves critical support, which means informing our understanding of the real historical cause of the Mindanao armed conflict, and the roadmap for political transition to bring such conflict to its ultimate end, so that we are able to make informed decisions to urge our new President and policy makers for the passage of BBL. The much-needed support also means honoring BBL as a product not of an overnight speedy process but of decades-long painstaking and genuine efforts to build the most comprehensive formula for viable peace in conflict-stricken regions of Mindanao.

With our critical support and political awareness, we, the mass constituents, have all the power to push for an important legislative measure that paves the way for inclusive peace and sustainable development in the entire country.

Even church leaders and constitutional experts pinned their faith on the BBL. The renowned Jesuit priest, Fr. Joel Tabora, himself urged that we pass BBL as an organic law for genuine political autonomy in Muslim Mindanao. Atty. Soliman Santos, a staunch peace advocate and human rights lawyer, contends that the proposed BBL is the best or at least most feasible legislative measure to address the Bangsamoro problem and secure peace in Muslim Mindanao. Atty. Christian Monsod, one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution, opined that the BBL does not claim excessive powers and that we should look at it in its core principle in addressing the marginalization and exclusion of the Bangsamoro people.

We therefore remain firm and committed in our position: **PASS THE BBL IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM.**

With this, we earnestly appeal to the following:

To President Rody Duterte:

You have finally sworn in as the 16th President of the Philippines after your landslide victory in the recent national elections. You have categorically stated in your inauguration speech that your administration is committed to implement all signed peace agreements. You also committed to restore faith and trust in the government. With your public pronouncements, we rely on your strong political leadership to urge popular support for the passage of the original version of the BBL. We are hopeful that the roadmap for political transition for Bangsamoro autonomy, as stipulated in CAB, will be accomplished during your term. We also depend on you that your plans for federalization will affirm but not affect the Bangsamoro roadmap. Most all, we trust that your administration will save the gains of the peace process and continue the search for sustainable peace in Mindanao.

To the Seventeenth (17th) Congress of the Philippines:

You have been entrusted to reflect the voices and the aspirations of the marginalized population in your legislative actions. We strongly challenge you to set aside your personal political interests and rather listen to our endless stories of systematic discrimination, exclusion, and neglect. This way you will understand that every decision you make in the area of legislation strongly affects our well-being and our chance for a sustainable future. We urge you to pass the BBL and let the concerned constituents decide its fate through a plebiscite upon which we can meaningfully exercise our democratic right to make our choice whether or not to be included under the proposed Bangsamoro political autonomy. The choices of the people whom you represent should be considered and respected.

To the Bangsamoro People, especially our fellow Youth:

Let us continue to work for peace. Let us follow not the path towards radicalization of the means for our struggle for liberation, but the one which uses peaceful methods for the resolution of the armed conflict in Mindanao. Let us also not allow other people's ignorance of our way of life, beliefs, and attitudes to increase religious intolerance and hinder intercultural understanding, and instead, we should work hand in hand to celebrate our cultural diversity.

To the entire Filipino nation:

The fate of the BBL also lies in your trust. Your support benefits not only the Bangsamoro, but also the Filipinos all over the nation. Your solidarity towards our cause will greatly help in generating massive support to encourage policy reforms. Your understanding of our struggles contributes to the healing of the wounds of the past and in promoting reconciliation. Please help us advocate for the passage of BBL! Please help us urge our national policy makers to allow the roadmap for the political transition for Bangsamoro! This is our best chance for a genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao!