

A TIME FOR SOBRIETY, COURAGE, AND UNITY

We, the undersigned business organizations, express our utmost respect and sympathies for the families of the gallant policemen of the PNP Special Action Force, as we extend our sympathies to the families of our brother Muslim Filipinos and the innocent civilians who perished as a result of the tragic encounter at Mamasapano, Maguindanao. We join the Filipino people in our grief over this tragedy and in the call for truth and accountability over this incident.

In the midst of national mourning, certain sectors and political players have openly called for all-out war in Mindanao, branded our brother and sister Muslim Filipinos as terrorists, cast doubt on the Bangsamoro Peace Process and the sincerity of the negotiators, and vigorously demanded the resignation of the President.

As members of the Philippine business community we do not and will not support such calls. WE CALL INSTEAD FOR SOBRIETY, COURAGE, AND UNITY.

The Philippines has achieved much under the stewardship of President Aquino and his government: The administration's credible campaign to restore integrity and good governance has gained traction and the respect not only of Philippine business but also the international investment community. Our conduct of international diplomacy and our insistence on the settlement of disputes through the rule of law have gained for our country unprecedented admiration and respect in the community of nations. From being Asia's perpetual laggard in the last decade, we are now among the region's fastest growing countries and our rapidly expanding economy is now the envy of our neighbors. Once ignored by international investors and tourists, we have re-established ourselves as an attractive business and leisure destination. From a people cynical and lethargic at our lack of progress and purpose, Filipinos are once again vigilant and assertive in national discourse.

We must not allow political manipulation to take advantage of legitimate emotion and grief to the point of trumping reason and endangering the gains we have made over the last few years. Rather than foster division among ourselves, we must channel our energies and efforts towards unity, reconciliation, and a genuine search for the truth, fully insulated from selfish political agendas.

We reaffirm our support for the Aquino administration and the Bangsamoro Peace Process. There is no other answer to the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people but total and lasting peace. It is in this context that we appeal to the Aquino administration and all parties involved to put the peace process back on track at the earliest time possible.

We fully realise, however, that the facts surrounding Mamasapano must still be satisfactorily established and justice must be dispensed where it is due. We therefore appeal to all the parties conducting inquiries— the PNP, the AFP, the MILF, the DOJ and both houses of Congress— to complete their inquiries at the earliest time possible and render their reports to the nation. Whether these inquiries will lead to clear conclusions and the satisfactory dispensation of justice, or simply add even more to the prevailing anger and confusion, only time will tell. It, however, seems inevitable that President Aquino, as Commander-in-Chief, ultimately will have no choice but to render a full accounting on Mamasapano to the Filipino people. Let the chips fall where they may, but too much is at stake for silence to be invoked for the protection of old friends and allies. Only with a full and satisfactory accounting will justice be possible, and only after justice has been satisfied can the peace process get back on track based on the trust and confidence that is needed of both parties.

At a critical juncture in our history, we have a golden opportunity to preserve our gains and use them as a platform to put the country on an irreversible path towards inclusive development and political maturity. We cannot afford to squander 56 months of institutionalizing reforms, weeding out corruption, and solidifying our economic and social foundations.

Let us move forward with sobriety and courage as one united Filipino nation in search of Justice and Peace.

Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation, Inc.
Employers Confederation of the Philippines
Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines
Makati Business Club
Management Association of the Philippines
Mindanao Business Council
Philippine Business for Social Progress

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