

THE PHILIPPINE BUSINESS COMMUNITY SUPPORTS THE SWIFT PASSAGE OF AN ACCEPTABLE AND MEANINGFUL BANGSAMORO BASIC LAW

We, the undersigned business organizations, cognizant of the imperative to ensure lasting peace in Mindanao, allow Muslim Filipinos to exercise their right to genuine autonomy and catch up with the socio-economic development in the rest of the country, and harness the potentials of the Bangsamoro region to be an indispensable part of the country's economic engine, affirm our unwavering support for the swift passage of an acceptable and meaningful Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

With the timetable tightening and with the Bill still in the period of interpellations in Congress, we respectfully call on our congressmen and senators to act with urgency to not only quickly enact the BBL, but also to pass a version that is consistent with the Constitution, adheres to the commitments contained in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, and truly embodies the dreams and aspirations of Muslim Filipinos.

We stand firm that, at the minimum, the BBL must be founded on the following:

- At its core, the BBL must **not diminish what was already given** to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The Expanded ARMM Organic Act should form the baseline from where an acceptable and meaningful BBL is to be crafted.
- While allowing the expansion of the Bangsamoro region after the BBL's enactment remains a contentious issue, at the very least, **the original core territory of the Bangsamoro should be retained**, consistent with the principle of not reducing what is already present in the ARMM.
- To allow the blossoming of genuine political parties and the exercise of true democracy, the original composition of the Bangsamoro Parliament of **reserving a greater number of seats to political party representatives** must be preserved.
- Given that the poorest and least developed provinces are found in the Bangsamoro, the grant of **full fiscal autonomy** is essential. Thus, guided by the aim to guarantee the Bangsamoro economy's stability and sustainability through the effective and responsible utilization of its resources, the Bangsamoro must have **power over inland waters and "strategic minerals" within its jurisdiction**.
- As a complement to other measures that will assure peace and security in the region, the **Shari'ah Court System** must be further strengthened through pertinent provisions in the BBL.

We believe that there is no other viable path to winning the peace in Mindanao's conflicted areas but the completion of the peace process, and it cannot and will not move forward if the BBL remains stalled in Congress. Never before has the peace process progressed to a stage where we are at the brink of ending decades of armed conflict, which has displaced and killed thousands of persons, mostly civilians.

We fully support the Aquino administration's commitment to lasting peace and development in Mindanao. It now falls on our congressmen and senators to follow through on that promise and choose lasting peace and sustainable development over war and the pervasive threat of extremism. It will be a shame if we waste all our efforts, now that we have come so far.

Thus, the business community reiterates its continuing support for the completion of the peace process and will accompany the government towards its fulfilment every step of the way. Let the achievement of peace in Mindanao be our enduring legacy for the succeeding generations of Filipinos.

**ARMM BUSINESS COUNCIL
ALYANSA AGRIKULTURA
BANGSAMORO BUSINESS CLUB
EMPLOYERS CONFEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
MAKATI BUSINESS CLUB
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
MINDANAO BUSINESS COUNCIL
PHILIPPINE BUSINESS FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS
AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EUROPEAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
JAPANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR INNOVATION, TRANSFORMATION AND EXCELLENCE IN
GOVERNANCE**

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