

Message of Dr. Saffrullah M. Dipatuan, BDA Chairman, during the Grant Contract Signing of the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) under the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD), Alnor Hotel and Convention Center, Cotabato City, March 14, 2016



H.E. Kazuhide Ishikawa, Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, Secretary Senen Bacani of the GPH Peace Negotiating Panel, Commissioner Abdulla Camlian of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and the MILF Peace Negotiating Panel, representatives of recipient Cooperatives and Foundations, other distinguished guests and personalities, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and Assalamo alaikom wa rahmatollahi wa barakatoho.

The peace process between the Philippine government (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is currently facing a very serious challenge brought about by the non-passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. It is unfortunate that we are almost on the brink of putting an end to the several decades of bloody conflict in Mindanao but we missed that once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity because unjust biases and prejudices and dirty politicking got in the way when the government failed to stop lawmakers from mocking the fruit of the more than 17 years of peace negotiations through the sheer tyranny of numbers and irresponsible absences of



legislators in Congress leading to lack of necessary quorums for BBL deliberations.

This failure could be very tragic and costly as it could result to outbreak of more bloody encounters between government law enforcers and radicalized groups that are disgruntled by the way the government handled its peace process with the MILF. This was quite evident when tens of thousands of angry and furious Bangsamoro Meranaws converged in Marawi City on March 1, 2016 to express their disgust and dismay on the non-passage of BBL to the extent of blaming even the President himself. As if this was not enough, this disgust once again resurfaced with its ugly face in the recent bloody encounter between a small armed group and the Philippine Armed Forces in Butig, Lanao del Sur that resulted to heavy casualties on both sides and the displacement of thousands of innocent civilians. Although this group is being labelled as a terrorist group, I fully agree with the statement of the MILF's 1st Vice Chairman Gazzali Jaafar when he said that the members of this group are not really terrorists but rather idealistic youths who are disgruntled by the unfortunate fate of BBL.

It is in the context of these current realities and challenges that we view the unrelenting support of the Japanese Government thru the Embassy of Japan (EOJ) in Manila and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a ray of hope in our efforts to hold on to the gains of the almost two decades of GPH-MILF peace negotiations such as the FAB and the CAB and prevent the unacceptable possibility of a relapse into violent conflict. All of us believe that there are no real victors in war and that everybody is a winner in the ushering in of a meaningful, principled and just peace.

I therefore take this opportunity to, once again, express our recognition and sincere appreciation of the unwavering effort of the International Community, in general, and the Government of Japan, in particular, for their continuing assistance to peace-building and development initiatives in Bangsamoro communities in order to ensure that an environment conducive to our joint peace efforts is sustained. We owe it to the future generations of Bangsamoro and Filipino people to pave the way for them to enjoy a peaceful environment that we ourselves in the current generation are deprived of.

This Grant Contract Signing of the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) under the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) is a continuing manifestation of



Japan's unique way of demonstrating its solid commitment to peace and development in Mindanao, particularly, in Bangsamoro communities. We are confident that the grant that will be awarded to the recipient organizations will touch the lives of their direct beneficiaries and make a difference in the lives of striving families in our poor communities.

Finally, I congratulate the five recipient organizations for the grants that they will be receiving today. You are indeed lucky and I challenge you to implement your proposed projects taking into account maximum transparency and inclusiveness to ensure that as many stakeholders of your community as possible are able to benefit from them. These grants constitute "Amanah" or TRUST from the Almighty Allah. Make sure that when the time comes that you are required to account them, you will be able to do it very easily. Thank you.

