

MESSAGE OF CHAIRMAN AL HAJ MURAD EBRAHIM ON THE OCCASION
OF THE CLOSING OF WORLD BANK ADMINISTERED MINDANAO TRUST
FUND.

April 18,2017, Davao City

Greetings and salutations to present VIPs

Assalamu alaykum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

I am honored today to join the international donor community, government officials, community leaders, beneficiaries and fellow revolutionaries now working for peace, on this auspicious occasion of closing another chapter in our continuing partnership for peace and development in the Bangsamoro. The closing of the Mindanao Trust Fund today marks another milestone in the ongoing GPH-MILF Peace Process.

The Mindanao Trust fund or MTF is a multi-donor grant facility established in 2005 on the basis of the 2001 Tripoli Agreement of Peace. The facility, administered by the World Bank, aimed to consolidate international development assistance for socio-economic recovery of conflict-affected communities in Mindanao.

I recall that in 2001, as chairman then of the MILF Negotiating Peace Panel, I, together with Secretary Jess Dureza as our counterpart, or perhaps more appropriately now- as our partner, signed in Tripoli, Libya the 2001 Tripoli Agreement of Peace that laid the foundation for the pursuit of rehabilitation and development in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. This agreement birthed the Bangsamoro Development Agency or BDA of the MILF mandated to determine, led and manage the rehabilitation and development activities in the conflict affected area as component of the peace process. This pioneering agreement was both pregnant with possibilities and fraught with danger, as it

marked our first foray into the then uncharted territory of development work, for which we have not been trained. You will note that initially, as guerilla freedom fighters we have been trained to fight and as a consequence to destroy things. The world of rehabilitation and development is the exact opposite of this as it aims to build and nurture communities. We have been trained to search and destroy enemy positions and at times infrastructure to win a battle. We have not been trained to plan and build communities to win peace. In a situation where a peace agreement between a rebel organization and a government has not yet been signed, it is almost unthinkable for any rebel organization to agree to cooperate, much less, sign an agreement with the government it has been fighting for to undertake development and rehabilitation in its communities. This is so because, more often than not, it has been used by many governments as a counter-insurgency measure. However, in our case we have been firm despite the many challenges, that the aim of our struggle is not just the liberation of our people but also the development of our communities. We have been clear from the very beginning of the war that we are not just fighting government for the sake of fighting but that we were fighting oppression and injustice. This was the reason why we agreed to cooperate and partner with government in rehabilitation and development despite the fact that we were still far from signing a peace agreement with government then. This was the reason why we were eager to step into the then unknown world of development and learn new skills.

Today, as we close the facility, I look back with pride and satisfaction with what has been achieved by this pioneering partnership between the MILF, the government and the international donor community. As we relish in the sight of new, albeit small, infrastructures in our communities, we should reflect upon the smiles of children and of mothers as they carry potable water, cross bridges, traverse pathways, or meet and converse in multi-purpose halls across the different

conflict-affected communities that have been served by this facility. We should reflect upon the lessons learned in managing the challenges of pursuing development during conflict and while negotiations for a peace agreement is still ongoing. We should reflect upon the new skills that rebel fighters have gained in planning and managing development in their communities. We should reflect upon the power and potential of achieving peace and development through the partnership of rebel organization, government and the international donor community.

From these reflections, I wish to draw your attention into four key points that we must all take forward in our continuing work for peace and development. First, we must put people at the center of any development effort. Second, development must empower people. And third, partnership and cooperation must be the mechanism for the pursuit of peace and of development. And Finally, development should always serve as support to peace building measures in the ground complementary and parallel to the political track of the peace process.

In closing, let me reiterate the profoundest gratitude of the MILF and of the Bangsamoro people to the World Bank as the MTF administrator and its contributing donors such as the European Union, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States of America. In behalf of our people, we thank you very much. It is my prayer that our collective achievement will encourage you to accompany us into the next phase of our journey. And as the old adage would have it, as we close the door of the MTF, I hope that we open another- one that is more robust and in step with stage of our peace process, which is now post peace agreement.

Thank you and wassalam.