

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE PEACE OFFERING CEREMONY**

Municipality of Sumisip, Basilan
March 2, 2024

[00:00:05]

Thank you to the Special Assistant, Secretary Anton Lagdameo.

Please take your seats.

The distinguished guests, ambassadors, partners from the Diplomatic Corps and the other NGO agencies who have joined us here today in commemoration for all of the assistances that they have provided in making BARMM a success and in bringing peace to this area.

National Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro; National Security Council Secretary, Secretary Ed Año; the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, Secretary Charlie Galvez; BARMM Chief Minister Al-hajj Murad Ebrahim; and of course, Basilan Governor Hadjiman Hataman Salliman; and other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; mga kasamahan ko sa pamahalaan; ang aking mga kababayan. Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat. Good morning and assalamu alaikum!

I am very happy to be here in beautiful, bountiful and breathtaking Basilan. Our presence in today's event reaffirms the truth that what was once a ground zero of war, is now turned into an epicenter of peace. [applause]

A province that was once tainted by violence and terrorism is now a zone of peace, made possible not by military might but more so by a people saying no to violence. [applause]

Peace is more than just the cessation of hostilities. It is about the creation of a social order that values human dignity, improves lives and promotes progress. Peace is totally achieved not when the sound of gunfire has ended. It is when the clamor for better lives has been met.

This is the kind of peace that we see the dawned of here in Basilan. [applause]

[00:02:28]

This is the kind of peace where the depressing tally of the casualties of war has been replaced by the statistics of human development.

The kind of peace that endures because it uproots the causes of people's discontent that purveyors of violence may want to exploit. This is the kind of peace that draws strength from the free will of the people instead of commanding their allegiance by force.

Basilan has arrived at this junction of its proud history because it refused to continue to be a place of violence. [applause]

Like its ancestors who fended off colonizers, the Yakans, the Tausugs, the Chavakanos repudiated modern-day terrorism that was trying to enslave them by enchanting them with lies. Attacked and threatened, the people of Basilan stood their ground, again and again and again. They never ceded their communities, never surrendered their future to an ideology that clashes with the values they hold dear.

Kasama rin ang mga mamamayang Kristiyano ng Basilan na nanindigan sapagkat ang Kristiyanismo at Islam ay parehong nakapundar sa malalim sa pananalig na "salam."

This is the kind of peace that we are witnessing in Basilan, [applause] of various faiths working together, because people chose not to let diversity be a cause of division, but used it as a source of strength and solidarity.

So, amidst these triumphs, it is just fitting that a year ago, you unveiled the Kasanyangan Monument. Not just a memorial of the hard road to peace or a manifesto of never going back to the path of violence but a reminder of the long journey ahead that we have yet to undertake.

But by your actions, you have honored the ideals that this monument stands for.

Through your Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Assistance for Security, Peace, Integration and Recovery for Advanced Human Security in BARMM (ASPIRE), these programs, the province of Basilan and its partners have facilitated the surrender of more than 400 firearms in exchange for livelihood opportunities, the documentation of more than 4,000 high-powered and small weapons and the processing of almost 200 license to own and possess firearms.

You have also facilitated the surrender of former ASG members. You have established greater control over the use and movement of weapons, fostering peace and order in the province. For that is how peace is strengthened, by

disarmament, by decommissioning, by demobilization in a society which has rejected arms as tools for political ends.

[00:05:31]

I recognize our public servants in the Provincial Government of Basilan, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), the AFP, the PNP and the community and religious leaders, including the volunteers for going above and beyond your call of duty. And, of course, the political leadership, the governors here of the BARMM provinces, who are joining us in this important day. [applause]

I also want to thank our international partners and our allies, particularly the UN, the EU and the governments of Japan and Australia for your unending support to our pursuit of a just and amicable peace. It must be woven now into the fabric of social life.

In the case of Basilan, the harnessing of its potentials --- a land blessed with resources and a people rich in talent --- is the key to enduring peace, one that is based on common progress and shared prosperity.

Basilan's new role is now the war against hunger. You have a land area twice the size of Singapore, blessed with a rich soil, above all, more or less typhoon-free, which makes you an ideal bulwark in our fight for food security.

Ang kailangan lang ay tulungan ang Basilan para maging isang lubos na food and fisheries production center. [applause] Kasama niyo ang pambansang pamahalaan sa bagong hamon na hinaharap ninyong ito. [applause]

When these agri-fisheries' potentials will be unlocked, the whole country, not only Basilan, not only BARMM, but the whole country will benefit. This makes Basilan no longer an island far south, but a very, very strategic island in the front and center of our national goals and our transformation. [applause]

Your future and fate are therefore intertwined with the nation's. Please be assured that we will play our role as the partner of Basilan's great leap forward. May the hope that we feel today sustain what we have already achieved in Basilan, and power us towards a Bagong Pilipinas.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay tayong lahat at magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat! [applause]

[00:08:07]
