

Full Text Of Najib's Speech At Signing Of Bangsamoro Peace Accord In Manila
Bernama
27 March, 2014

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Bernama) -- Following is the full text of the speech by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak at the signing of the historic Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that he witnessed in Manila Thursday:

"His Excellency Benigno S Aquino III, President of the Philippines

His Excellency Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

Her Excellency Teresita Quintos Deles, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Honourable Ministers,

Chairperson of the Philippines Peace Panel/Chairperson of the MILF Peace Panel

Distinguished Guests/Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, we witness the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. It is a peace deal decades in the making.

In signing this agreement, the two sides have looked not to the problems of the past, but to the promise of the future. After so many years of conflict, and so many lives lost, it is a momentous act of courage. And it will change their nation's history forever.

By engaging in the peace process, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front have repaid the trust placed in them by the people. By negotiating in good faith, the Government of the Philippines has affirmed the rights of the Bangsamoro to determine their own destiny.

Both sides have sacrificed, so that the people of the southern Philippines may live free; free from the violence which tore so many families apart. Free from the suffering caused by decades of conflict. Free from fear.

In the pages of this agreement, we see the promise of a better future.

A future where classrooms ring with laughter, not gunshots. Where young men fight poverty, not each other. Where people work hand-in-hand to build a new consensus, and a new identity: the Bangsamoro.

Unity cannot be decreed overnight. After so many years, there are no easy shortcuts. Much work remains, and there will be setbacks along the way. But the commitment to peace - the commitment I see in this room today - must not waver. We must be steadfast and resolute.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Both sides are leaving conflict behind, but we must steel ourselves for a new challenge. After the conflict, the difficult work of development begins. We must give new meaning to lives struck by violence.

Decades of fighting have robbed a generation of healthcare, of education, of income. With peace must come not just prosperity, but opportunity. Only then will Bangsamoro's future be assured.

Two years ago, I promised President Aquino that Malaysia would continue to assist with development. We are willing to help build institutions, strengthen education, improve agriculture. This promise stands, for as long as it is needed. Malaysia remains a partner for peace.

Our belief in co-operation across borders has been strengthened by tragedy. The loss of 239 people on board flight MH370 has been devastating.

Malaysia is grateful for the support of our friends and neighbours, including the Philippines, in the continuing search effort. At this difficult time, we draw strength from the compassionate response of our fellow nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This agreement secures the rights of the Bangsamoro people and the sovereignty of the Philippines. It is our hope that the people of the Bangsamoro will work alongside the Government of the Philippines and the MILF to ensure its success.

This commitment to peace is binding. It must be honoured and protected. All parties must stand by the spirit and letter of the agreement. We should work to ensure respect for religion, and live by the principle of non-violence. We should protect human rights, embrace the rule of law, and practice moderation.

Only through a negotiated settlement can lasting peace be achieved. And only good governance can secure the ambition we all share: a strong and prosperous Bangsamoro.

I am confident that the Government of the Philippines will continue to work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law. The support of all parties will be crucial if the law is to be passed by the Philippines Congress and a plebiscite in Bangsamoro.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to pay special tribute to President Aquino, for his unwavering commitment to peace in the southern Philippines.

I would like to congratulate His Excellency, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, for his strong leadership in the peace process.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the lead negotiators and their negotiating teams, especially Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer and Mr Mohagher Iqbal, as well as to the pivotal contribution of Tengku Dato' Ab Ghafar Tengku Mohamed, the Malaysian facilitator.

I would also like to commend all parties in the International Contact Group - representatives from Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Kingdom; and the International Non-Governmental Organisations' representatives from the Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue, Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah and the Asia Foundation, as well as the observer from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

I also wish to thank the Malaysian contingent of the International Monitoring Team, which has contributed to lasting peace in the Southern Philippines. Malaysia is honoured to have played its part in this process. We wish for nothing more than peace and prosperity for our brothers and sisters - in Bangsamoro, and in the Philippines.

This peace process has strengthened the bond of trust between our countries. As we look ahead to a brighter future for Bangsamoro, I pledge Malaysia's continued support. We will remain in our role as the Third Party Facilitator, and will continue working through the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to conclude by paying tribute to the extraordinary efforts which have made this agreement possible.

Throughout the peace process, both sides gave their all, so that the people of Bangsamoro may enjoy the boundless dividend of peace. That they may work, and learn, and live again.

Forty years ago, darkness came to Mindanao. In a struggle which bridged a generation, 150,000 lives were lost.

Today, we turn to face the light. Today belongs to the Philippines, and to the people of the Bangsamoro.

Thank you.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2014 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=1025515>