

MESSAGE OF

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AKIC Graduation Day

Theme: RC-AKIC Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic: Transcending the New Normal through Resilience and Innovation

Recorded, Online Graduation

December 28, 2020

Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

My warmest greetings to everyone especially to the graduating students of Al Khwarizmi International College! Congratulations to all of you, and to all your friends, families, and everyone who supported you along the way.

I know the past couple of months have not been easy to all of us—but I also know that it has been especially difficult for students. The pandemic brought many changes, and that forced us to make many adjustments in our daily lives. All these caused deep uncertainties: paano kaya ang klase kung bawal pumasok sa eskuwelahan? Kakayanin ba pag online ginawa ang klase? Gra-graduate pa kaya ako? Matatapos pa ba itong pandemya?

We all had so many questions. Pero sa harap ng napakaraming pagsubok, nakakatuwang makita na lahat, nakaya ninyong lagpasan. I know it was not easy especially this year, and that is why I am so proud of each and every one of you. You are here today, heads held high, and ready to face the world after school. Celebrate this moment. Physically distanced man ang kasiyahan, hindi nito mababawasan ang tuwa ng selebrasyon natin ngayon araw. Hindi nito nababawasan ang halaga ng na-achieve ninyo ngayon; kung tutuusin, dumadagdag pa nga ito.

I remember being as young as you are; this should be one of the greatest and happiest days of your lives. I know we all would have wanted to be together under better circumstances. I know we also had to postpone this gathering already. But after all, *Qadarallahu wa ma sha'a fa'ala*; Allah has decreed, and whatever He wills, He does. So I am glad that here we finally are, and that I am able to take part in this milestone of your life, even if virtually; and I take comfort in knowing that all this is part of a greater and grander plan—His plan.

Ito siguro 'yung mensahe na sana tandaan ninyo sa araw na ito. This is exactly what we need if we are to transcend the New Normal through resilience and innovation, as your theme calls on us to do.

I understand that our impulse may be to meet radical change with radical change. But while there are indeed many different changes we have to undergo to build a new normal, it is also helpful to return to the things that have given us a sense of stability for so long; to the old truths that could allow us to face the future with a little bit more strength and certainty—like the certainty that everything is as Allah wills it, and that everything is part of his plan. But this is not to say that we should sit back and do nothing. The same hadith tells us the way: to strive for that which will benefit

us, to seek the help of Allah, to not feel hopeless.¹ There is a greater plan for us—and it is up to us to be active agents in fulfilling this divine plan to improve the lives, whether physical, spiritual, or social, of the communities we belong to.

If we choose to be good and to do good, if we continue working together in service of this divine plan, I have faith that we can overcome whatever crisis comes our way. I am confident that we will remain resilient; that we will always find ways to innovate in order to adapt to the new challenges of the world; that we will always be reminded that we are all together in facing the difficulties ahead, whether it's COVID or anything else. Sa ganitong pag-iisip, nagiging mas malinaw na magkakatulung tayo; na lahat tayo may importanteng papel sa lipunan; na ang bawat hamong dumarating, pagkakataong maging mabuti at gumawa ng kabutihan.

Our greatest challenge in the meantime, of course, is still COVID. We've already had the longest lockdown in the world. Richer countries are already rolling out vaccines, while we're still waiting in line—and in the meantime, a new strain of the virus has just appeared in the UK. We will need more of us to have the same mindset if we are to succeed in defeating the virus. If we do this, I know we will be able to transcend the new normal.

As graduates, the world you go out into today is so different from the one you know when you started your studies. I wish you strength, courage, and intellectual and moral clarity as you face the unprecedented challenges it will bring your way—especially because you all have a sacred duty and responsibility to the Bangsamoro community. Many of us, in generations past and even today, did not have the privilege and opportunities you have. So please use this to empower your fellow Bangsamoro—especially the youth. We need all hands on deck, especially including our young people, if we want to overcome the pandemic, transcend the new normal, and ignite genuine and lasting change in the region.

I hope what you have learned and gained the past few years and what you achieve here today all equip you to serve your communities better. I hope it shows you the way to contribute to our region, our country, and our world. I hope it gives you not just knowledge but wisdom, because we all depend on you—not just because you are the future of the Bangsamoro, but because you are already its present.

Again, congratulations to all of you, your parents, your families, your friends, and your loved ones. I'm excited to see your own professional successes and whatever advocacies you will have in your own communities. Kami naman sa BYC, we are always ready to engage and support you, especially in these advocacies. Our thrust has always been to help shape the values, commitment, and competencies of our young people because we know that even as early as today, young people like you can and are indeed moving the Bangsamoro forward—forward to a stronger, more peaceful, more sustainable, more prosperous Bangsamoro.

May Allah bless you and guide you in your endeavors, and in everything you undertake to be better servants for a better Bangsamoro.

Thank you.

¹ <https://sunnah.com/urn/1250790>