

MESSAGE OF

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**Marawi Cultural Youth Event: Driving Marawi's Rehabilitation through IDP Support,
Community Development, and Peaceful Transitional Action**

January 26, 2021

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem Assalamu Alaykum Wa Rahmahtullahi Taala Wa Barakatuh.

First of all, let me express my gratitude to the International Organization for Migration for holding this activity, and for everything you do to help us preserve, enrich, and advance our Maranao culture. This, indeed, is a critical component for the successful rehabilitation of Marawi.

Perhaps all of you know this already: Marawi City is Kilometer Zero of Mindanao. And that, I think, accurately symbolizes what the culture and heritage of its people means. Marawi is the center of many different things—of culture, of commerce, of religion, of education both Western and Islamic. As the country's lone Islamic city, many of our Muslim brothers and sisters look to Marawi City.

This act of reliving and revitalizing our heritage and culture is so important, because it illuminates the past and prepares us for the future. In highlighting our history, we get a better sense not just of what challenges we faced back then, but how we triumphed over them. Because here what is passed down is so much more than beautiful clothes, food, songs or bayok, speech or pananaroon, dances, and instruments; what is passed down, and what we receive, is the wisdom of the ages. And this is where we find the strength to face whatever challenges still wait for us ahead.

And it is important because it brings us closer together—as one people, as one community. Knowing our heritage, our people, our story gives us a wider and deeper understanding of our shared history—it reminds us of what binds us together, what dreams we hold in common, and what aspirations we share. That is what enables solidarity, collective action, and cooperation—and these are precisely what we need if we are to succeed in the rehabilitation of Marawi.

And that is why I wholeheartedly commend all the Maranao youth joining this program. I look forward to seeing all your presentations of our traditions—whether that's by doing demonstrations of time-honored practices, or by finding new and innovative ways to showcase the treasures of the past. I do hope you find ways to make sure that the important work you do here reaches more Maranao people and youth, even beyond the duration of this program. Rest assured that the Bangsamoro Youth Commission's doors will always be open to you, and we will always be ready to explore ways we can work together not just to put the city of Marawi back on its feet, but to put it back in its place as the center of commerce, of innovation, of beauty, of culture, or progress here in our region and beyond.

To all the participants, thank you, congratulations, and I wish you all the best. It really is encouraging to see young people like you who are active and engaged in this arena. Because of you, I have faith that Maranao culture and heritage will not just survive; Insha Allah, it will thrive and bloom again, more beautiful than ever before. Thank you.