

MESSAGE OF

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Chairperson/ Commissioner representing Lanao Del Sur Province with Marawi City

**on B3C First Graduation Ceremony
January 30, 2021**

My warmest greetings to all the participants joining today's B3C Graduation Ceremony of Impl. Project Philippines, a project funded by USAID – Plan International under your Marawi Response Project. Thank you for inviting me to join you on this happy occasion. Greetings as well to all our guests, especially those from the local government of Butig, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, and the 51B of the Philippine Army in Butig.

I would like to thank Impl. Project Philippines not just for organizing this occasion, but also for going deep into the root causes of the problems being experienced by our communities, and making corresponding efforts to address and respond to these problems. B3C, or the Butig Community Construction Cooperative, is just one way we can help address longstanding problems with new innovations on one hand and old-fashioned solidarity and togetherness on the other. And indeed it is very interesting to see how you harnessed data to zero in on the needs of our communities in Butig, and then came up with this effort to provide trainings on the three construction skills of carpentry, masonry, and electrical installation and maintenance to empower out-of-school youths and their communities.

And of course I would like to congratulate the 103 graduating students of the B3C skills training. Alhamdulillah! I am proud of all of you for completing your five-month training—especially since you undertook when the COVID-19 pandemic was still raging around the world. With economies around the world now trying to gradually recover from the impact of the virus, it is very timely that you grab opportunities like this to help start rebuilding, and help your families better prepare for what the future may bring.

And while this ceremony might feel very different because we still have to observe physical distancing and health protocols, that does not make the occasion any less joyful. Nor does it lessen the meaning of what you achieved; in fact, your dedication, your hard work, your perseverance were not diminished but were instead highlighted even more by the circumstances in which you reached this milestone. Doing so only makes it more admirable, and more praiseworthy. Kaya, muli, congratulations sa inyong lahat.

But we also know that acquiring skills will ultimately be useless if you will not have the opportunity to use them—that means fostering a region, an economy, where livelihood can flourish, where the Bangsamoro can truly develop and reach their full potential.

That is what we're trying to build in this crucial transition period, and we are working hard at the Bangsamoro Youth Commission to help realize this vision. The same dream animates the by the Bangsamoro Youth Transition Priority Agenda that we developed, as well as its priority areas of Health, Education, Peace-building and Security, Governance, and Active Citizenship.

I hope it gives you the tools to build better lives not just for yourselves and your families, but also for the communities you belong to. Because that is the call of the Bangsamoro Struggle today. Where it once used to call for warriors in the battlefield, the Bangsamoro Struggle now calls for builders, for makers, for cultivators—for young people like you, who will build a stronger, more peaceful, more prosperous homeland now and in the years ahead.

And as we do all this, we remind ourselves of why we do what we do. We are reminded that, indeed, as it was written, and I quote: "Work, for Allah will see your deeds, and [so will] His

Messenger and the believers.” (Quran 9:105.) We are called to give our all in our work, refusing to give in to frustration and despair by seeking help from Allah; we are reminded of the example of the Prophet (PBUH), who is perhaps our best exemplar of hard work. As it was said, even in the depth of his prophethood: *“The Prophet was a man among men. He would remove fleas from his clothes, milk his sheep, and serve himself.”* (Musnad Ahmad 25662.)

So as you go forth and practice what you learned in your five months of training, I hope you carry these reminders with you. They will be as helpful and as indispensable as the tools you have, as the lessons you have learned and now keep in mind. If you do this, I am sure: as long as you put all your effort and hard work into something, Allah will take care of the rest, according to His will.

To the 103 participants graduating today, may this day not be an end, but a start—a start of better things, of brighter futures, of more comfortable lives, of more empowered communities. May you be blessed with strength, with courage, with wisdom as you meet the challenges of tomorrow. And of course, I wish you all the greatest success as you work to turn your learnings into livelihoods.

Always remember that the BYC will always be here, ready and eager to help young people like you in whatever ways we can—and I’m sure I can speak as well for the BTA and the entire Bangsamoro Government when I say that they too will always be here to help make the path for you more comfortable, more rewarding, and more fulfilling. After all, it is for you that we fought and worked hard to make the BARMM a reality. Please do not hesitate to reach out and let us know how we can better serve you, and your fellow young Bangsamoro. We are all aware of the simple truth: if we want to empower the Bangsamoro, we have to empower the youth.

In the meantime, hone your craft. Always seek ways to learn more and improve your skills. Be good, be kind, be fair, be honest. And never forget that you are not alone in building the future we dream of—a future that is more peaceful, more prosperous, where everyone can thrive under a stronger, more autonomous, more beautiful homeland.

Again, to all the graduates, congratulations. I wish you all the best. Thank you, and mabuhay.