

Forum on Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

*Advancing Peace, Accountability, and Healing
in the Bangsamoro*



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Insights Report

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About the Forum

The peace process in the Bangsamoro has reached a critical juncture. With the transition to a functioning Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), greater attention must now be placed on addressing the legacies of historical injustice and conflict that have shaped the region for well over half a century.

The Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), established under the historic Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), laid out a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at addressing legitimate grievances, correcting historical injustices, responding to human rights violations and marginalization through land dispossession, and promoting healing and reconciliation. While these recommendations are widely recognized as essential to sustaining peace, their implementation has remained uneven, as attention and resources have largely been focused on regional governance, the decommissioning of combatants, and the delivery of socio-economic dividends.

In a landmark development, the Bangsamoro Parliament enacted a regional law on Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) in early 2026, marking the country's first concrete legislative effort to institutionalize TJRC principles for the Bangsamoro. This achievement is both a milestone and a reminder: National legislation and policy are still needed to fully implement the TJR commitments under the CAB.

Against this backdrop, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI) organized the Forum to provide a platform for constructive discussion on ongoing efforts and remaining gaps in the implementation of the CAB's TJR provisions; initiate conversations between national government and BARMM officials on strengthening cooperation toward the goals of TJR; and generate broader support for the full implementation of the CAB's TJR mandate.

The event brought together representatives of the national and BARMM governments, including members of the Bangsamoro Parliament and the Philippine Congress; representatives of the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace implementing panels and mechanisms; the diplomatic community; non-government organizations; and civil society.

Disclaimer

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) provided funding for the forum. The content of this report and the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Swiss FDFA, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, or the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute.

Karen Tañada

Executive Director, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute

Magandang umaga. Good morning to all. On behalf of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, warmest greetings to our valued guests.

We have here a long list of distinguished friends of the peace process, deeply committed to sustaining the peace. Your presence today indicates a significant boost to future TJR efforts. However, we are well aware that 10 years since the launch of the TJRC Report presented then by Ms. Mo Bleeker and other members of the TJR Commission—the reality is that not much has happened on implementation of the report. This is so especially on the major recommendations, particularly the call to create a national mechanism that will pursue the actions on dealing with the past.

Perhaps the most significant step achieved at this time has been the passage by the BTA of the BTJRC that we will discuss today. Our forum today will still be mainly to share information and updates on policy efforts, the regional law enacted and the National bills that have been filed. We will learn the updates on the roadmap and plans for implementation, and also importantly, the initiatives of civil society as major stakeholders.

Transitional justice must be part of the unfolding of Philippine story, but admittedly it has been a difficult pathway for the country. On transitional justice, with regard to the historical injustices of the Martial law under the Marcos dictatorship, only about 30-40% (about P170 Billion) of stolen wealth is said to have been recovered. The Human Rights Victims' Claims Board (HRVCB) provided reparations to 11,103 claimants but no one has been prosecuted for those human rights violations—the killings, tortures, disappearances.

The late Jesuit educator and historian Fr. John J. Carroll had written that the failure to pursue justice on ML may be traced to the failure also to attain justice for the atrocities of World War II. He reflected that the by choosing to forget that painful history including the horrific massacres we instead perpetuated injustices of war, including structural inequality and impunity, violence and poverty. Today as we hold this forum on TJ, other major developments are unfolding that may shape our possibilities of seeking truth and justice. An impeachment court has convened in the Senate. We have our first case of a former President charged at the International Criminal Court (ICC). A civilian truth commission on extrajudicial killings (EJKs) has also been launched and intends to soon present testimonies by the families of the drug war victims.

It is important to note that these other movements on truth and accountability have begun and that they may be in the process of achieving their purpose. We should also recognize and honor the courage of the Malaya Lolas, the “comfort women” or victim-survivors of sexual slavery by Japanese occupation forces, who eventually found their voice to speak of unspeakable sexual violence and who have persisted when many Filipinos chose to forget. In 2023, the UN CEDAW declared that the Philippine state should provide full reparation to the Malaya Lolas including acknowledgement of and official apology for the discrimination and damages they have suffered; provide restitution, rehabilitation and satisfaction measures aimed at restoring their dignity and reputation and providing financial compensation.

This victory of the Malaya Lolas shows that it is never too late to pursue transitional justice. But we must begin now to walk that “roadmap” on the Bangsamoro TJR. Or beyond the roadmap, as the saying goes—“there was no path, we made the path by walking.” We do this because we know that there can be no sustainable or enduring peace without truth and justice.

We hope that today’s forum will be a step taken by many journeying together. Again welcome at maraming salamat sa inyong pakiki-isa.

Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento

Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity

First and foremost, allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our peace partners for joining us today in this important Forum. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, and the Swiss Government, for bringing together this community of peace champions, and for your steadfast partnership with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity.

It is a privilege to be with many of the individuals who helped shape the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Your courage, wisdom, and perseverance transformed years of difficult negotiations into an agreement that continues to inspire hope, not only for the Bangsamoro, but for the entire nation. Today, we gather not simply to look back on our journey, but to determine how to move forward together. This Forum comes at an important moment in the implementation of the CAB.

Much has been achieved, yet we all recognize that building peace is a continuing journey. Every milestone we celebrate brings with it an even greater responsibility to sustain the gains we have worked so hard to achieve.

When I assumed office as Presidential Peace Adviser, one of the clear marching orders of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., was to sustain the gains of the peace process and deepen reconciliation. That directive continues to guide our work today. For this reason, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) remains one of our highest priorities.

Transitional justice is often misunderstood as simply revisiting the painful chapters of our past. In reality, it is about building a better future. It allows us to confront historical injustices with honesty; restore dignity to those who have suffered; strengthen accountability; promote healing; and ensure that future generations will never again experience the violence, exclusion, and neglect that mark so much of our history.

This vision is no longer just an aspiration; we are steadily translating it into concrete action. The Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have jointly adopted the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Roadmap as our common guide in implementing this vital component of the CAB.

At the same time, important legislative and institutional milestones continue to move forward. The enactment of the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation (BTJR) Act establishes a strong regional mechanism while efforts continue toward the passage of a National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission for the Bangsamoro (NTJRCB). Together, these initiatives strengthen the institutional foundations needed to deliver justice, healing, and reconciliation in a more meaningful and sustainable way.

These accomplishments remind us that peace agreements do not end with signatures. They are fulfilled through faithful implementation, sustained political will, and enduring partnerships.

The next phase of our work is perhaps the most important. The challenge before us is no longer whether transitional justice should happen. It is in ensuring that its promise reaches every Bangsamoro family and every community affected by conflict. Our success will not be measured by the number of laws enacted or meetings convened, but by lives transformed, communities healed, institutions trusted, and opportunities created.

This requires a whole-government and a whole-of-society approach. Government cannot accomplish this alone. The Bangsamoro Government, the MILF, local government units, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, women, youth, indigenous peoples, our international development partners, and our local communities all have indispensable roles to play. Peace becomes sustainable only when it is owned and protected by the people themselves.

For our part, OPAPRU remains fully committed to working with all stakeholders in advancing the transitional justice agenda and fulfilling our commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. We will continue supporting both the legislative process and the implementation of programs that bring justice, reconciliation, and inclusive development closer to the communities that need them most.

Ultimately, transitional justice is bigger than any institution or administration. It is a national commitment that transcends political transitions because it is rooted in our shared responsibility to build a more peaceful and united Philippines. The progress we celebrate today belongs to everyone who chose dialogue over violence, partnership over division, and hope over fear. It is the product of years of sacrifice, trust, and perseverance by so many individuals and institutions represented in this room.

To all our peace partners, thank you for walking this journey with us. Your unwavering support has strengthened the peace process at every stage, and your continued partnership gives us confidence that together we can overcome the challenges that remain. As we move forward, let us remember that the passage of important laws and the creation of institutions are not the finish line. They are the beginning of a new chapter.

Our task is to ensure that these reforms produce real improvements in the daily lives of our people. Let us continue building institutions that are fair and responsive. Let us strengthen trust between communities and government. Let us create opportunities for those who have long been left behind. And let us ensure that future generations inherit not the burdens of conflict, but the blessings of peace.

The framers of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro showed us that even the deepest divisions can be overcome through courage, patience, and dialogue. It is now our responsibility to honor that legacy, not simply by preserving what has been achieved, but by carrying it forward with renewed determination.

Every generation is given a defining responsibility. Ours is to transform the hard-earned peace of yesterday into lasting prosperity, justice, and reconciliation for tomorrow. If we remain united in purpose, steadfast in our commitments, and faithful to the principles that brought us together, I have no doubt that we will fulfill the promise of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and build a just, resilient, and enduring peace that future generations of Filipinos will proudly inherit.

Maraming salamat po. Mabuhay ang Bangsamoro. Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas.

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Transitional justice is bigger than any institution or administration. It is a national commitment that transcends political transitions because it is rooted in our shared responsibility to build a more peaceful and united Philippines.”

Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento



A Decade in the Making: From TJRC Report to Regional Law

GZO Peace Institute Executive Director Karen Tañada set the tone in her welcome remarks by pointing out the long gap between recommendation and implementation: Ten years after the TJRC report was launched, she noted, "the reality is that not much has happened on implementation... especially on the major recommendations, particularly the call to create a national mechanism."

Tañada described Bangsamoro Autonomy Act (BAA) 89, or the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act of 2025, as "perhaps the most significant step achieved at this time." She situated its passage alongside several developments at the national level—the Senate impeachment court, the first case involving a former Philippine president before the International Criminal Court (ICC), a new civilian Truth Commission on extrajudicial killings, and the 2023 UN CEDAW ruling in favor of the Malaya Lolas—as evidence that "it is never too late to pursue transitional justice."

Atty. Mohammad Al-Amin Julkipli, Assistant Attorney General of BARMM and a former alternate member of the TJRC, walked participants through the key provisions of BAA 89. The law establishes the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Program, to be implemented by the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (or BTJRC). The Program intends to help in "addressing the legitimate grievances, human rights violations, and marginalization arising from land dispossession and in correcting the historical injustices suffered by the Bangsamoro people and other indigenous peoples in the region," and mandates the Bangsamoro Government to adopt measures that would "guarantee their non-recurrence." BAA operationalizes the TJRC's recommendations "without prejudice to the obligations of the National Government."

BAA 89 at a Glance

- **Purpose:** Establish a regional TJR Program for the Bangsamoro and create an independent Bangsamoro Regional Transitional Justice Commission (BTJRC) that will design, formulate, and supervise the implementation of the Program
- **Components:** (1) Human rights violations; (2) Land dispossession; (3) History, memory, and truth
- **The BTJRC's membership:** Five commissioners, including the Chair. They should include at least two women, two lawyers, two residents of the island provinces, one non-Moro IP representative, one religious/Sharia scholar, and one representative from the civil society, vetted through a dedicated selection committee.
- **Term:** To exist for seven years from constitution, with possibility of extension of up to three years
- **Initial Funding:** ₱150 million from the contingent fund of the BARMM's Office of the Chief Minister

Powers and Functions of the Bangsamoro TJR Commission

Coordinate and Collaborate

Establish strong coordination mechanisms with the Philippine Government to jointly pursue collaboration in the implementation of the BTJR Program

Information and Education

Conduct information, education, and communication programs for popularization through physical and digital means

Investigate

Investigate, study, and recommend measures to the appropriate agencies for the resolution of cases of individuals and communities adversely affected

Contempt Powers

Take testimony or receive evidence, administer oaths, summon witnesses, and require the production of documents through subpoena; exercise the power of contempt

Dismantling Impunity

Determine the factors that contribute to impunity in the perpetration of human rights violations, land dispossession, and other historical injustices, and recommend appropriate actions

Mental and Psychosocial Interventions

Ensure the delivery of necessary interventions for mental health and psychosocial support for individuals and communities, with priority given to minors, who have directly experienced or suffered the adverse effects of armed conflict, human rights violations, including gender-based violence

Call Upon Powers

Call upon Bangsamoro ministries, offices, and agencies to provide support necessary to carry out the mandates of the BTJRC and to implement the BTJR Program
Call upon civil society, development partners, humanitarian organizations, and the academe

Private Sector Engagement

Coordinate with the public and private sectors in the formulation of short, medium, and long- term programs toward a comprehensive approach to transitional justice and reconciliation

Document and Archive

Establish and maintain an archive of official records composed of documents, testimonies, artifacts, and other materials generated through studies and investigations during the course of program; materials may be made accessible to the public in a secure and controlled manner, subject to security and confidentiality requirements

Report and Publish

Publish periodic thematic reports, as well as a terminal report covering its findings and recommendations

Source: Julkipli, M.A. (2025). Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 89: "Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act of 2025" (slides 18-19).

One structural feature of the law drew particular attention during the discussions: BAA 89 explicitly provides that it "shall not be a replacement" for a national transitional justice program; instead, its findings are to be transmitted to a future National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission on the Bangsamoro (NTJRCB) once one is constituted. HD Philippines Country Representative Iona Jalijali notes that BAA 89 provides for a regional commission with significant but limited powers; it cannot, however, replace national legislation meant to establish a national TJR program for the Bangsamoro. The regional law, in other words, advances transitional justice in a manner that respects the authority granted to the BARMM, while underscoring the need for action at the national level. In this manner, it respects the recommendations of the TJRC and the intent of the CAB.

Asked about the status of implementation, Atty. Julkipli confirmed that the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) remain in development and are already behind schedule. The BARMM Attorney General's Office is supporting the Office of the Chief Minister's Technical Management Service in drafting the IRR, which will establish the administrative framework, while the substance of BTJRC programs will be defined once the commission itself is constituted.

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The Bangsamoro TJR program shall not be a replacement, shall not supplant, but will form part of the national program for Transitional Justice.”

Atty. Mohammad Al-Amin Julkipli



L-R: Atty. Mohammad Al-Amin Julkipli, Ms. Maria Carmen “Ica” Fernandez, and Prof. Maria Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza during the plenary discussion on the Bangsamoro TJR situationer.

The TJRC's Unfinished Business

Atty. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, a former TJRC Commissioner and international human rights lawyer, revisited the Commission's 2016–2017 work, which consisted of a listening process spanning 211 communities and more than 3,000 participants, and more than 90 specific recommendations organized around the four classical pillars of transitional justice: truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence. The Commission also produced a standalone report on land, developed with the World Bank and International Organization for Migration (IOM), titled *Land, Territory, Domain and Identity*.

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Transitional justice and reconciliation issues in the Bangsamoro is actually an opportunity, as well for the Philippines, to champion the protection of diversity and of our territorial integrity.”

Atty. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary

Atty. Jimenez-Damary summarized the TJRC's core diagnosis as three mutually reinforcing phenomena—violence, impunity, and neglect—rooted in the historical imposition of a monolithic Filipino identity on pre-existing Bangsamoro and indigenous nations. She urged participants to see TJR not only as a response to historical grievances, but as what she described as “the Bangsamoro opportunity”: a chance to model the peaceful political management of plural identities for the benefit of the entire country, beyond the Bangsamoro alone.

A decade later, however, Atty. Jimenez-Damary observed how the TJRC's core recommendation of creating a National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission on the Bangsamoro (NTJRCB) remains unfulfilled. While bills have been filed in both chambers of Congress across multiple legislative terms, none has made significant progress. Atty. Jimenez-Damary stressed that national legislation must now be prioritized.

She grounded the case for national legislation on three principles:

- **Solidarity and accountability beyond BARMM's borders.** Human rights violations suffered by the Bangsamoro should not be treated as a lesser or separate category from violations experienced elsewhere in the country, including those committed during the Martial Law era and more commonly discussed in Manila.
- **The bilateral and mutual character of the peace process.** The CAB requires implementation by both parties, rather than mere unilateral action by the BARMM. This principle is reinforced procedurally by Executive Order No. 79 (2019) (Implementing the Annex on Normalization under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro), and Executive Order No. 6 (2022) (Amending the Composition of the Inter-Cabinet Cluster Mechanism on Normalization).
- **A constituency for transitional justice beyond the formal peace process.** Advancing TJR will require engagement from academia, civil society, and other sectors capable of broadening public understanding and support. As Atty. Jimenez-Damary put it in her closing appeal: “Let a hundred flowers bloom.”

Land as the Beating Heart of TJR

Independent consultant Maria Carmen Fernandez presented the preliminary results of the DAR-OPAPRU Parcellary Inventory Project. Undertaken through a partnership between the Department of Agrarian Reform and the OPAPRU, it is the first government-funded and implemented land documentation and mapping initiative designed to assist the implementation of the CAB. The project comes ten years after the TJRC first recommended such an undertaking, and five years after the recommendation secured government approval and funding.

The first phase mapped seven of 36 priority barangays across the six acknowledged MILF camps, covering 155 sitios and roughly 2,300 combatants and their families who agreed to have their households geotagged. The project also documented genealogies of displacement stretching back generations.

What emerged was a picture not only of the land itself, but of the institutional fragmentation that surrounded it. Most camp stakeholders lack secure tenure, with some holding only decades-old tax declarations or survey plans. Land records maintained by national, BARMM, and local authorities diverge and remain largely undigitized. Many decommissioned combatants (DCs) live outside the camps, further complicating programming. Multiple households and overlapping claims—including customary sultanate grants alongside formal titles—create policy dilemmas that cut across both statutory and customary systems. The camps themselves differ sharply in their security profiles, exposure to climate risk, and openness to mapping. Camp Bushra, for instance, was the most cooperative and, at the time of the inventory, the only camp with officially named roads and sitios.

Fernandez emphasized that the pilot could not have proceeded without an explicit political decision by all parties involved. DAR, OPAPRU, and the MILF each had to choose to allow, in her words, "a bunch of outsiders" to map sensitive, conflict-affected land. She identified two pivotal enabling moments: OPAPRU's funding commitment, and the MILF's decision to grant the project access.

At the same time, Fernandez cautioned against treating the seven mapped camp barangays as representative of the wider Bangsamoro land question. Beyond the camps lie Marawi's urban land disputes, the particular circumstances of the BASULTA island provinces, ancestral domain overlaps involving non-Moro indigenous peoples, and even questions of aquatic and marine property rights in the Sulu Sea—issues flagged repeatedly by other participants throughout the day. The complexity of the wider landscape led Fernandez to suggest that land issues in the camps may be among the "easiest" to resolve. Her recommendation was pragmatic: address these questions now, while the more difficult ones are worked out in parallel.

The project's next steps also reflect an effort to ensure that the information gathered does not simply flow upward into government. Its findings are intended for turnover to the communities themselves—an effort targeted for October 2026, pending reconstitution of the Peace Implementing Panels—so that communities do not experience the process as one in which information is extracted from them, for use only elsewhere. The underlying datasets, including maps and hard drives, will be handed to the Inter-Cabinet Cluster Mechanism on Normalization (ICCMN) and joint mechanisms for action. More broadly, the project results can potentially provide guidance for how the land components of both the BTJRC and a future NTJRC could operate.



Att. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary



Ms. Karen Tañada



Att. Mohammad Al-Amin Julkipli



Maria Carmen "Ica" Fernandez

The Roadmap: Two Tracks, Uneven Progress

Executive Director Cesar De Mesa, GPH Chair of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on TJR, presented the jointly approved GPH-MILF TJR Roadmap, which charts parallel pathways for establishing TJR mechanisms and advancing concrete policies and programs.

Developed between 2019 and 2021, the roadmap underwent successive rounds of consultation with BARMM ministries and civil society through 2024. It was jointly approved by the Peace Implementing Panels in Davao City on 31 January 2025, and formally launched on 9 December 2025 at Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte.

The roadmap advances TJR along two tracks:

- **Track One: Establishing national and regional TJR mechanisms.** At the national level, four largely identical NTJRCB bills are currently pending in the 20th Congress. In parallel, the GPH-MILF TWG has been undertaking a structured enhancement process led by Atty. Anna Tarhata Basman since mid-2025. Roundtable discussions have focused on five areas: articulating guiding principles; defining the scope and coverage of TJR; expanding civil society's role in the Commission's structure; clarifying the relationship between the BTJRC-NTJRCB; and detailing the functions of proposed sub-commissions.
- **Track Two: Advancing policies and programs under the four TJR pillars.** These measures are guided by cross-cutting commitments to conflict sensitivity, gender integration, and strategic communications. The Parcellary Inventory Project is the track's most visible accomplishment to date.

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TJR is a foreign concept. There is a need to further increase understanding of the TJR framework concept across the national and existing programs, where it is already integrated but not fully recognized.”

Executive Director Cesar De Mesa



While the completion and joint approval of the roadmap by the Parties was an achievement in itself, progress on its implementation remains slow. De Mesa was direct about the obstacles to implementation: TJR, he said, remains "a foreign concept" that requires continued popularization even within government agencies already undertaking TJR-adjacent work without labelling it as such. Insufficient funding and competing agency priorities have also hampered implementation under Track Two, while sustained advocacy remains necessary to keep the NTJRCB bills moving through the legislative process.

There are, however, signs of growing traction: CSO participation in roadmap briefings has increased significantly since the earlier consultations. Meanwhile, a dedicated TJR cluster has been constituted within the ICCMN, and BARMM ministries continue to pursue TJR-relevant programs within their existing mandates, even in the absence of a national law.

GPH-MILF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION (TJR) ROADMAP
(Jointly approved on 31 January 2025 in Davao City)

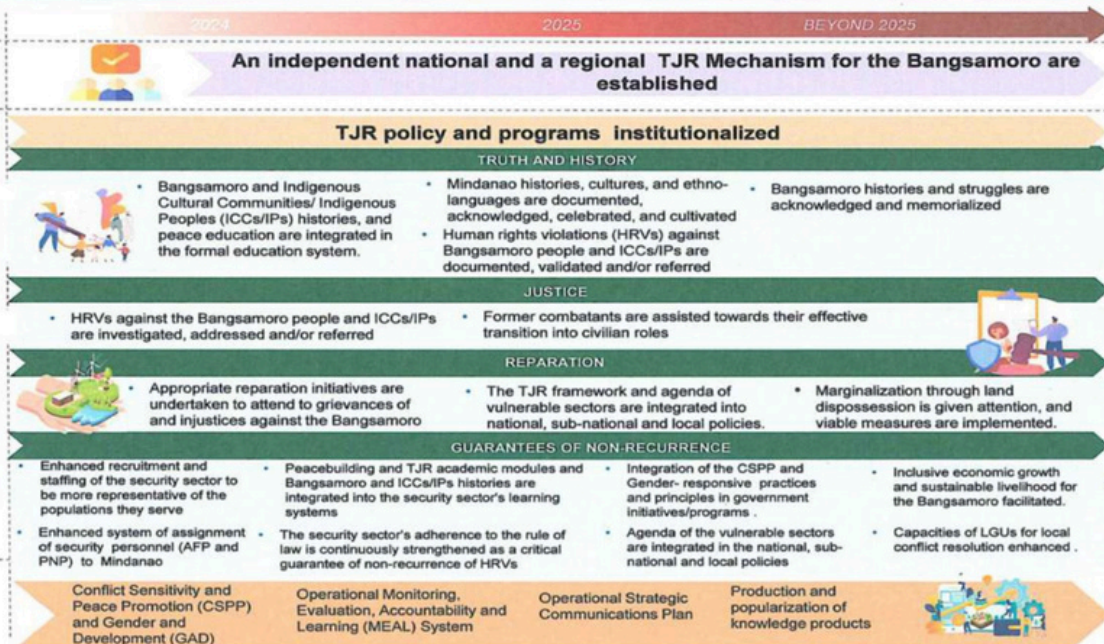
GPH-MILF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION (TJR) ROADMAP

COMPONENTS

TRACK I
National and regional
TJR Body/ Mechanism
for the Bangsamoro

TRACK II
TJR Program and
Policy Measures

**CROSS-CUTTING
ACCOMPANIMENT
TO THE ROADMAP**



The Long, Uncertain Road to National Legislation

The panel on national TJR bills was among the Forum's most candid sessions, laying bare both the practical obstacles to passing a national law and the substantive questions that remain unresolved.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Dadah Kiram Ismula, one of the principal authors of House Bill No. 935 in the 20th Congress, filed in July 2025, laid out the bill's salient points: It proposes a national TJR Commission under the Office of the President, with four sub-commissions covering the TJRC pillars of truth and historical memory, impunity, land dispossession, and healing and reconciliation; it mandates women's representation and grassroots and civil society consultation in the selection of commissioners; and it provides an initial budget of ₱100 million for a six-year term. Rep. Ismula acknowledged that only four legislators have filed or co-authored the bill, and without presidential certification through the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), she warned, "it's just going to die." She also noted that the House Committee on Peace and Reconciliation, chaired by Rep. Samier Tan, had until recently lacked a secretariat and was therefore unable to organize consultations or hearings on the bill. With a secretariat now in place, the Committee has committed to convening after the President's State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Atty. Glenda Rumohr, Supervising Undersecretary of the LEDAC Secretariat, offered participants a concrete, near-term lever for advancing the measure. The bill already meets one of LEDAC's four inclusion criteria, as it appears in the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028. She walked through the formal process for a bill to secure its place on the Common Legislative Agenda (CLA): a letter of request signed by a head of agency; the draft bill; and statements of support from at least two implementing agencies. The measure had, in fact, already been endorsed once at a previous LEDAC meeting, but remains stalled pending concurrence from the DND, DILG, and DOJ—a process she identified for OPAPRU to lead.

Beyond the legislative hurdles, the discussion surfaced an unresolved question about the scope of a future national law: How far into the recent past should a transitional justice program reach? The 2017 Marawi Siege brought this question into sharp relief. Prof. Tirmizy Abdullah, speaking as an internally displaced person from Marawi, challenged the room to reconcile TJR's framing as "dealing with the past" with the continuing reality of displacement in Marawi: "If those issues being addressed by the TJR is not just part of the past, but is a current reality in Marawi, how would you reconcile (them with each other)?"

Prof. Abdullah added that the existing Marawi Compensation Law is *kapos*—insufficient—arguing that its emphasis on infrastructure and property does not adequately address the plight of people affected by displacement and human rights violations. He stressed that TJR principles should address these continuing harms.

Atty. Anna Tarhata Basman, speaking as part of the audience, confirmed that the timeline to be covered under the national law remains undecided, with advocates split between ending coverage at the 2014 CAB signing or extending it further to include Marawi.

Another intervention tested the case from a different direction. Garry Lazaro, from the staff of Senator Risa Hontiveros, asked whether a national law remained necessary given that a detailed, comprehensive regional law exists, and whether BAA 89 might first serve as a "proof of concept" before a national law is contemplated. Lazaro also raised that land policy discussions had so far overlooked resource-based conflict between non-Moro settlers, indigenous peoples, and Bangsamoro communities in agrarian reform contexts.

Former OPAPP Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles responded firmly by underscoring the limits inherent in any regional law, however comprehensive. BARMM cannot mandate changes to a national curriculum to adequately include and acknowledge Bangsamoro history; it cannot require reparations from the national government; it cannot bind agencies beyond its jurisdiction. MILF Chief Negotiator Mohagher Iqbal reinforced the point, estimating that roughly 90% of TJR-related issues fall outside BARMM's boundaries, and that "an exit agreement cannot happen unless and until the deliverables under the normalization process is settled," identifying the passage of a national TJR law as the single most important outstanding component of that process.

From the audience, Atty. Camilo Miguel "Bong" Montesa reframed the discussion in more fundamental terms: TJR, he argued, should not be assessed as ordinary legislation; rather, it should be viewed as part of the State's commitment to "how we end wars"—alongside autonomy, decommissioning, and community transformation. Programs and projects alone, he warned, will not result in durable peace if the Bangsamoro people continue to carry a sense of moral injustice. The failure to deliver the promise of the peace process risks driving "young Moros in the future to continue this war."



L-R: Akbayan Partylist Representative Dadah Kiram Ismula and Prof. Tirmizy Abdullah during the plenary discussion on the national TJR Bills.



L-R: Mohagher Iqbal, Chair of the MILF Peace Implementing Panel; Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento, Chair of the GPH Peace Implementing Panel



Civil Society as the Backbone of TJR

Panelists Yasmin Busran-Lao (WEAct 1325), Prof. Rufa Guiam (Mindanao State University), and Sabina Kaqinari (forumZFD) traced the role of civil society across four key functions, later summarized by moderator Prof. Vene Rallonza: centering victims' voices in truth-telling; bridging communities and government in both directions; localizing TJR through a continuous, adaptive listening process rather than one-time consultations; and building the political constituency without which legislation "will just die."

Concrete results were cited in detail. WEAct 1325 has engaged in direct lobbying since 2017 through position papers, testimony before House and Senate committees, and outreach to both allied and non-allied legislators, including Senator Imee Marcos. These efforts have helped secure specific gender provisions in national TJR bills, including explicit reference to gender-based violence in the grievances clause, sensitivity to gender-based and sexual violence in fact-finding, and mandated representation of at least two women commissioners and one woman among civil-society ex-officio members. First adopted in a 19th Congress Senate committee report, this language has been carried forward into bills filed by Senators Loren Legarda and Jinggoy Estrada in the 20th Congress. Efforts are also underway to build a broader and more coordinated civil society constituency for TJR: Over the past year, forumZFD convened a platform of more than 25 member organizations across the Bangsamoro, Mindanao, and national levels, seeking to bring previously siloed advocacy into alignment in terms of strategy and an evidence base that can engage TJR institutions directly.

Guiam illustrated the "translation challenge" that civil society faces at the grassroots. During the original 211-community listening process, it was discovered that concepts such as "legitimate grievances," for instance, had no direct equivalent in local Bangsamoro languages such as Yakan, Maguindanaon, Teduray, or Blaan. Working with 33 trained local facilitators, such concepts had to be explained and articulated in ways that can be understood community by community. Guiam also described civil society's contribution to shaping the implementing rules and regulations for the BARMM Indigenous Peoples' Code.

Kaqinari identified sustainability as a central constraint. CSOs, she argued, need "more flexible, open opportunities for funding" that recognize TJR as a long process rather than a fundable deliverable with a fixed end date. She stressed that community trust-building, including embedding psychosocial support for survivors and their descendants, has to precede rather than follow formal TJR interventions.

Interventions from the floor pointed to complementary CSO-government initiatives already underway. These include quarterly civil-society monitoring of normalization commitments by forumZFD and eleven partner organizations, as well as a community-based rehabilitation and psychosocial support program for Sulu-based orphans and widows of former violent extremists, run in partnership with OPAPRU's SHAPE (Social Healing and Peacebuilding) program.



Top: Ms. Yasmin Busran-Lao; L-R. Prof. Rufa C. Guiam and Ms. Sabina Kaqinari during the plenary discussion on civil society initiatives on TJR.

Institutional Coordination: Bridging Commitment and Implementation

Several exchanges focused on the institutional machinery needed to translate the TJR roadmap and proposed legislation into action. Engr. Macmod Pasawilan of the Mindanao Development Authority asked whether a functioning digital monitoring and evaluation system exists to track the actual status of TJR implementation. Dir. Jana Gallardo confirmed that a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system is planned for both Track One and Track Two, with monitoring already assigned as one of the functions of the Joint TWG for TJR. De Mesa added that a forthcoming multi-year TJR Roadmap investment plan, modeled after the Camp Transformation Investment Programme, would generate the concrete project list against which implementation could be tracked.

Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer asked how duplication between a future NTJRCB and the existing BTJRC could be avoided, and whether a law is truly necessary given the possibility of creating a national mechanism through an Executive Order (EO), as the Aquino administration had considered. EDir. De Mesa and Atty. Jimenez-Damary both argued an EO would be structurally weaker and have limited ability to create sub-commissions; it would also lack the autonomy and independence envisioned for a national commission.

Former peace adviser Teresita Quintos Deles provided historical context to the discussions: The Aquino administration, she recalled, took the TJRC report seriously and had begun work on its recommendations, including the crafting of a Department of Education syllabus for teaching Bangsamoro history in Grades 4 and 5, which was turned over to the succeeding administration. It ultimately decided against creating a national commission through an EO after being advised that such an instrument could not establish a truly independent body. In hindsight, she suggested, even a non-independent commission by EO might still have been better than having no national mechanism at all.

Gus Miclat from the Initiatives for International Dialogue proposed from the floor a concrete two-pronged approach: OPAPRU could formally endorse the national bill to accelerate its inclusion in the LEDAC's CLA, while advocates continue engaging Congress directly—"like a pincer movement." Dir. Gallardo confirmed that OPAPRU had already made one attempt at endorsement, but the measure remains stalled pending concurrence from other national agencies. Securing that concurrence, she suggested, is therefore the next concrete target for advocacy.



*Mr. Gus Miclat,
Initiatives for International Dialogue*

The Unresolved Question of Indigenous Peoples' Inclusion

The relationship between Bangsamoro TJR and the TJR concerns of non-Moro indigenous peoples (NMIPs) surfaced repeatedly throughout the Forum. During the land presentation, Deles noted that at least two of the six acknowledged MILF camps, Bilal and Bushra, sit on land also claimed as IP ancestral domain. She raised the concern that the original inhabitants of those areas risk permanent displacement as future programs move forward. Fernandez confirmed that a parallel track exists under the NCIP and BARMM's Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (MIPA), with the parcellary data, including documented customary arrangements between camp residents and original IP inhabitants, to be turned over to these bodies.

The question resurfaced during the panel on national legislation, when Miclat asked directly whether IP concerns were being deliberately embedded in the process rather than treated as an afterthought. Rep. Dadah Kiram Ismula, speaking from her own experience as an indigenous person from an ancestral domain in Zamboanga City recently awarded a CADT despite ongoing land-grabbing pressure, committed to inviting DAR, NCIP, and DENR as resource persons during House committee deliberations. Prof. Tirmizy Abdullah, also identifying as an indigenous person, argued that "no TJR [can be] successful or complete without, in every step, our indigenous people, brothers and sisters," invoking the genealogical Mamalu-Tabunaway narrative shared by Moro and IP communities. This relates to a point raised by Prof. Guiam during the civil society panel, when she narrated how ideations of TJR concerns often emanate from land-based groups and tend to focus on land, while sea-faring ethnic groups such as the Sama, for whom solutions revolving around land issues do not provide any benefit or relief, are often left out of the conversation.

Fernandez later described an unintended dichotomy in the way discussions are sometimes framed as an issue between "non-Moro indigenous peoples versus Bangsamoro peoples," even though, in her words, "people are indigenous, they happen to just have different particular religions." Atty. Jimenez-Damary traced some of the tension to the ground-level history of MIPA, including debates over whether to use "IPs" or "non-Moro IPs" (NMIPs)" at all. She noted that more than 100 IP leaders have been killed in BARMM in recent years.

HD Country Representative for the Philippines Iona Jalijali connected the question of inclusion to the limits of regional authority. Even where the regional law's work of recovering and recognizing historical narratives extends in principle beyond BARMM's borders, its jurisdiction does not: It cannot compel national agencies like DepEd or CHED to adopt Bangsamoro or IP histories into its curricula, nor can it require them to deliver reparations. This, she noted, reinforces the case for a national law with broader jurisdiction.

Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer raised a related, structural concern from the floor: BAA 89 mandates the BTJRC to adopt an "official" Bangsamoro narrative, which, by definition, privileges one account over the diverse and sometimes conflicting narratives of different communities and sectors. Atty. Julkipli acknowledged the difficulty directly, describing the BTJRC's task as reconciling "a multitude of versions... maybe even (if they are) opposing," into something that can still be deemed official without erasing the plurality it is meant to represent.

MNLF and Sulu: Widening the Circle

BARMM Deputy Minister Nur-Ainee Tan-Lim, representing the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), affirmed the organization's full support for the CAB's TJR provisions and MILF's leadership within BARMM. She described the ongoing work between government and MNLF through a joint Peace Implementing Committee with its own healing and reconciliation subcommittee. As one concrete, if under-recognized, expression of TJR already underway, she cited the Senior Mujahideen pension program for combatants aged 63 and above. A brief but pointed exchange followed on terminology: EDir. De Mesa explained that OPAPRU refers to its Sulu-focused work as "healing and reconciliation" rather than TJR, noting that the concept originated from the Swiss "dealing with the past" framework and that Sulu falls outside BARMM's TJR jurisdiction.

Deles and Atty. Jimenez-Damary challenged this distinction. TJR, they argued, is now a well-established international framework whose relevance need not end at the BARMM's jurisdictional boundaries, particularly when addressing the experiences of Bangsamoro people wherever they may live. Moderator Prof. Vene Rallonza noted the point for the Forum's consideration.

Warina Sushil Jukuy, a 26-year civil society organizer speaking in her personal capacity, widened the frame further: Transitional justice for the Bangsamoro, she argued, must explicitly include Sulu and the Sulu Sea, encompassing aquatic and marine dispossession alongside dispossession from land. She further stressed that it must be pursued not only with political will, but more importantly, with "political sincerity," and welcomed the appearance of "Mindanao and Sulu" together on one presentation slide as a meaningful distinction, and a sign that the wider frame was not being overlooked.

“

...let true conversations, and not merely political will but political sincerity, resonate throughout the national map of peace consciousness. And let it not just involve those residents of the Bangsamoro or the BARMM territory, but please include, in the continuum of transitional justice, Sulu.”

Ms. Warina Sushil Jukuy



Deputy Minister Nur-Ainee Tan-Lim,
Ministry of Social Services and Development-BARMM



Ms. Warina Sushil Jukuy,
National Commission on Muslim Filipinos



Director Jana Gallardo, OPAPRU Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Office



Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, former Chair of the GPH Peace Panel



Teresita "Ging" Quintos Deles, former Presidential Adviser on Peace Process

Momentum Amid Uncertainty: The Normalization Pause and Closing Reflections



Mr. Ammier Dodo, MILF Co-Chair of the Joint TWG on TJR

The Forum unfolded against the backdrop of a formally acknowledged, temporary pause in GPH-MILF engagement. Jalijali asked Chair Iqbal directly how civil society could continue supporting the peace process during the temporary pause, and whether the anticipated appointment of a new government Peace Panel Chair could bring it to an end.

Iqbal clarified there are, in fact, two distinct dimensions to the pause. The first is a voluntary halt in the decommissioning of MILF weapons and combatants, prompted by the significant gaps between the pace of decommissioning and the parallel implementation of other normalization deliverables; he estimated the disparity at roughly 80% complete on decommissioning against far less on other fronts. The second, separate dimension arose simply because of the absence of a government panel chair with whom the MILF panel can engage. Iqbal stressed that both dimensions are deliberately temporary and partial: Normalization work involving the international community continues, as do MNLF-related activities. In the meantime, he offered personal access to those who would wish to support the process.

In his synthesis, Mr. Ammier Dodo, MILF Co-Chair of the Joint TWG on TJR, distilled the day's discussion into three pillars: executing the regional law, securing national legislation, and sustaining the work of civil society. He noted, with cautious optimism, that "we are gaining momentum... the community of TJR advocates is steadily growing," while identifying a handful of unresolved risks: funding constraints, a lack of clarity in the succession plan from the TWG to the eventual commission, and the difficulty of discussing historical human rights violations without those discussions being understood as accusations against any single actor.

Livia Meisser, chargée d'affaires of the Embassy of Switzerland, closed the Forum by placing the Bangsamoro experience within an international context. Durable peace, she argued, depends on a society's willingness to confront painful histories, and the Bangsamoro process has already become "an important source of inspiration internationally" precisely because it demonstrates that dialogue can succeed where violence has failed. She framed the day's discussions not as an endpoint, but as "the beginning of a new phase."

Emerging Tensions and Remaining Questions

Where does TJR's timeline begin and end?

BAA 89 covers the period up to the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. The question of whether a national law should encompass more recent events—including the 2017 Marawi Siege and its continuing aftermath—was raised but unresolved. The issue of whether present-day displacement can even be framed as a matter of "dealing with the past" remains open.

Regional or national-- or both, and in what order?

Some participants questioned the wisdom of pursuing a national law at all while the newer, more detailed regional law remains unimplemented, suggesting instead that BARMM might first serve as a "proof of concept." MILF and former OPAPP leadership pushed back on this position, arguing that the two mechanisms do not substitute for each other. The dynamics and intersections between the regional and national mechanisms, however, remain to be fully defined.

Whose history becomes "official"?

BAA 89 tasks the BTJRC with developing an official Bangsamoro historical narrative for use in curricula and public education. A fundamental question was raised from the floor: How can an official narrative accommodate multiple and sometimes competing community narratives? How can they avoid privileging one account over a plurality of voices? These questions are particularly consequential for the histories of non-Moro IPs, whose experience must be incorporated without being subordinated to a single, dominant narrative.

Moro and non-Moro indigenous peoples: partners or parallel tracks?

Multiple camps overlap with IP ancestral domain claims; multiple speakers named an unintentional but real dichotomy in how "Bangsamoro TJR" and "IP TJR" are discussed and institutionalized. No shared mechanism has yet been established to reconcile these concerns.

Law or executive order?

Citing the Aquino administration's own aborted attempt to create a national body by executive order, panelists agreed an EO would be faster but structurally weaker—dependent on the Office of the President, and without guaranteed independence. The discussions favored legislation, but with the recognition that this entails a slower, more uncertain path.

How far should truth-telling go, and how soon?

Deles argued that a credible TJR process cannot avoid naming specific atrocities. She cited the Palimbang and Jolo massacres and the Jabidah killings, even as other participants acknowledged the political difficulty of pursuing such truth-telling under the current political dispensation.

Is the funding adequate to the mandate?

Both the BTJRC's ₱150 million first-year appropriation and the proposed NTJRCB's ₱100 million starting budget were flagged by participants, including a Senate legislative staffer, as likely insufficient for the breadth of the work envisioned, which spans truth-telling, land, reparations, and institutional reform. The question, ultimately, is whether the resources provided can match the ambition of the mandate.

What happens to the Technical Working Group once a commission exists, or if the law never passes?

Participants noted that the Joint TWG's mandate is tied to the peace panels themselves and would end with an eventual exit agreement, whether or not a national law is in place. This leaves an important question unresolved: If legislation stalls, who carries the roadmap forward?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **A regional milestone, not a resolution.** BAA 89 and the BTJRC represent the most concrete TJR achievement to date, but the law was deliberately designed in anticipation of, and not as a substitute for, a national mechanism to which it will defer, and which does not yet exist. Meanwhile, the development of its own Implementing Rules and Regulations has been experiencing delays.
- ✓ **Land is the most complex, and most human, pillar of TJR.** The Parcellary Inventory Project proved that politically sensitive land mapping is possible with the commitment of all parties commit. But it also exposed fragmented and largely undigitized land records, overlapping claims, and the limited reach of existing data. The camps represent only a small fraction of much wider question that covers Marawi, BASULTA, non-Moro indigenous ancestral domains, and the Sulu Sea.
- ✓ **National legislation is stalled by politics, not by design.** Ten years since the initial recommendations, the technical case for a National TJRC has been extensively discussed and developed. What remains lacking is presidential certification, LEDAC inclusion, and a broader base of champions beyond the current four to move the measure through the legislative process.
- ✓ **LEDAC inclusion is the clearest near-term pathway, and it is already partially cleared.** The pending national bill already satisfies one of the four LEDAC criteria through its inclusion in the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028, and OPAPRU has already previously sought its endorsement. The immediate task is to secure concurrence from DND, DILG, and DOJ.
- ✓ **The institutional machinery matters as much as the mandate.** Plumbing-monitoring systems, coordination mechanisms between BTJRC and a future NTJRCB, and financing plans are as urgent as the underlying legislation, and largely still undesigned.
- ✓ **Civil society is the connective tissue of the entire TJR effort.** CSOs translate concepts across languages, communities, geographies, and generations; they sustain momentum between legislative cycles, and help build the constituency needed for political action. Despite this, their work remains chronically underfunded.
- ✓ **Indigenous peoples' inclusion is a genuine, unresolved structural gap.** A clear consensus acknowledges the need for an institutional architecture that incorporates non-Moro indigenous peoples into Bangsamoro TJR.
- ✓ **TJR's geographic and definitional boundaries remain unsettled.** Questions persist over how the framework could encompass Sulu and the MNLF, the continuing consequences of the Marawi siege, and even by what name it should be referred.
- ✓ **MILF leadership frames TJR as inseparable from the peace process itself.** It is not a discrete deliverable, and this is a framing with direct bearing on the pace and shape of an eventual exit agreement.
- ✓ **The Forum demonstrated the value of keeping dialogue alive amid political uncertainty.** Held during a temporary, partial pause in formal GPH-MILF engagement, it created space for government, peace process actors, civil society, and other stakeholders to sustain their work of coordination, truth-telling, and constituency-building, rather than wait for a political transition to resolve itself.



*Gen. Tan Sri Zulkifli Bin Zainal Abidin (Ret.),
Malaysian Facilitator, GPH-MILF Peace Process*



*Ms. Myla Leguro,
Catholic Relief Services*



*Mr. Garry Lazaro,
Office of Senator Risa Hontiveros*



L-R: Mr. Louie Montalbo, former member of the GPH Technical Working Group (TWG) on Normalization; MGen. Ariel Francisco Felicidadario III (Ret.), Co-Chair of the GPH Joint Peace and Security Committee; Ms. Zenonida Brosas, former member of the GPH TWG on Normalization; Atty. Anna Tarhata Basman, former head of legal for the GPH Peace Negotiating Panel; Gen. Lina Sarmiento (Ret.), former Chair of the Human Rights Victims' Claims Board; and Ms. Iona Gracia Jalijali, HD Philippines Country Representative and former head of secretariat for the GPH Peace Negotiating Panel.

Hon. Mohagher Iqbal

Chair, MILF Peace Implementing Panel

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Allow me first to thank the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue for continuously and consistently supporting our work in the Bangsamoro Peace Process, especially on transitional justice. This is not the first time the Centre for Humanitarian has provided a platform for us to hold conversations, including difficult ones, and I know that this will not be the last.

Operationalizing a transitional justice and reconciliation, or TJ program, is one of the aspects of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro or CAB, particularly when it comes to normalization that has sorrowfully lagged behind. It remains to me the heart and soul of the peace process. And as we are witnessing now, without it, without our North Star, there is a higher chance that we find ourselves straying from our path to peace. Absent it, we continue to inherit and, worse, compound upon the divisions within our society. In default of an intentional nationwide process of coming to terms with our dark past, we repeat mistakes that should no longer be part of the national discourse, strategy, or even options.

And the parties, both the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, were much cognizant of this fact. Many peace processes in other jurisdictions, despite substantive implementation of their peace pact, did not result in a more cohesive society because, among others, of a failure to embark on this meaningful, albeit arduous, process. Thus, in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, signed more than a decade ago, we committed to ensuring that this is undertaken alongside all the other expected aspects of the peace deal.

We were all too aware that ending hostilities and healing from our history of oppression is essential to bringing reconciliation in an otherwise divided society, and we thought that there was no better way and no better time to go about it than as part of our peace building for Bangsamoro.

It was such a noble concept at the time that we deemed it better to be more conservative in our language in the peace agreement and allow an initial study through the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission to guide us through how to proceed with the TJR process. What emerged was a report arrived at after engaging thousands of stakeholders, from victims themselves and their communities, civil society, subject matter experts, who all provided input from domestic and international experiences. Hence, in 2016, we received a comprehensive report with a long list of recommendations which the parties agreed to implement.

However, while the initial processes, propelled perhaps by the momentum of political investment and public interest in the Bangsamoro peace process, proceeded quite efficiently, that vigor was unfortunately not sustained. Until now, after 10 years, we have barely made progress on the implementation of an honest-to-goodness TJR program in the manner envisioned by the parties. Yes, Alhamdulillah, there are initiatives just like the one that we are having today, and we thank all those who made it their mission to contribute to the TJR within the broader space of the Bangsamoro peace process, especially the civil society and our other partners.

Regrettably, this falls short of what is expected and committed by the signatories of the time: a comprehensive whole of nation and government approach to healing and reconciliation. Admittedly, in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, we stood by our position that any TJR process should be initiated at the national level, consistent with the belief that it is not just the Bangsamoro region or people that need and should undergo it.

However, not wanting the transition period to end with barely any progress on TJR, we decided to enact the regional mechanism as provided in the Bangsamoro Organic Law, with functions and authorities that maximize what can be done by a regional body. It was no easy feat. Amid all that needed and still needs to be accomplished by the transition government and all the issues and instability in the region and the peace process itself, the BTA or Bangsamoro Transition Authority took the time to revisit the TJR law, embark on more updated consultations with the stakeholders, and find a way to juxtapose people's expectation with the extent of commitment a regional entity can take on.

Now we have the regional law on the Bangsamoro Transition of Justice and Reconciliation Commission. It is now the national Congress' turn to deliver on this mutual promise and to contribute to bringing the Bangsamoro peace process back on track. If we are of the common belief that the peace agreement is not just about creating the Bangsamoro political entity, not just about electing its first regional leaders, and not limited to bringing normalcy to the local peace and order situation by managing the arms and combatants that abound in these areas, then we must deliver on this commitment as well. No normalization is complete without addressing the horrors of our past and ensuring we put in place whatever needs to be in place so that the same is not repeated and institutionalized. I have full confidence that Congress appreciates this, and hope that we will be able to pass the national law as counterpart of regional TJR mechanism.

A greater challenge to this administration as far as the Bangsamoro peace process is concerned is to ensure that it is always moving forward and not backsliding; that the gains, whether material in the form of peace dividends received by sectors and communities, or symbolic such as the trust and confidence or mutual esteem that has kept this process going, are not lost. Almost two decades ago, we were saying that ARMM was a failed experiment and the status quo was unacceptable. I venture to add that this is not only true for the region, but for the entire country. As things stand, especially as we are in the midst of more turbulent political times in our nation, we are even more aware of the divisions that exist in our society that should not find relevance in political discourse in terms of geographic, socioeconomic, ethnolinguistic, or other standards. Brushing this aside and failing to get to the root of the partitions simply will not work, and it will take perhaps generations to set to right this current reality.

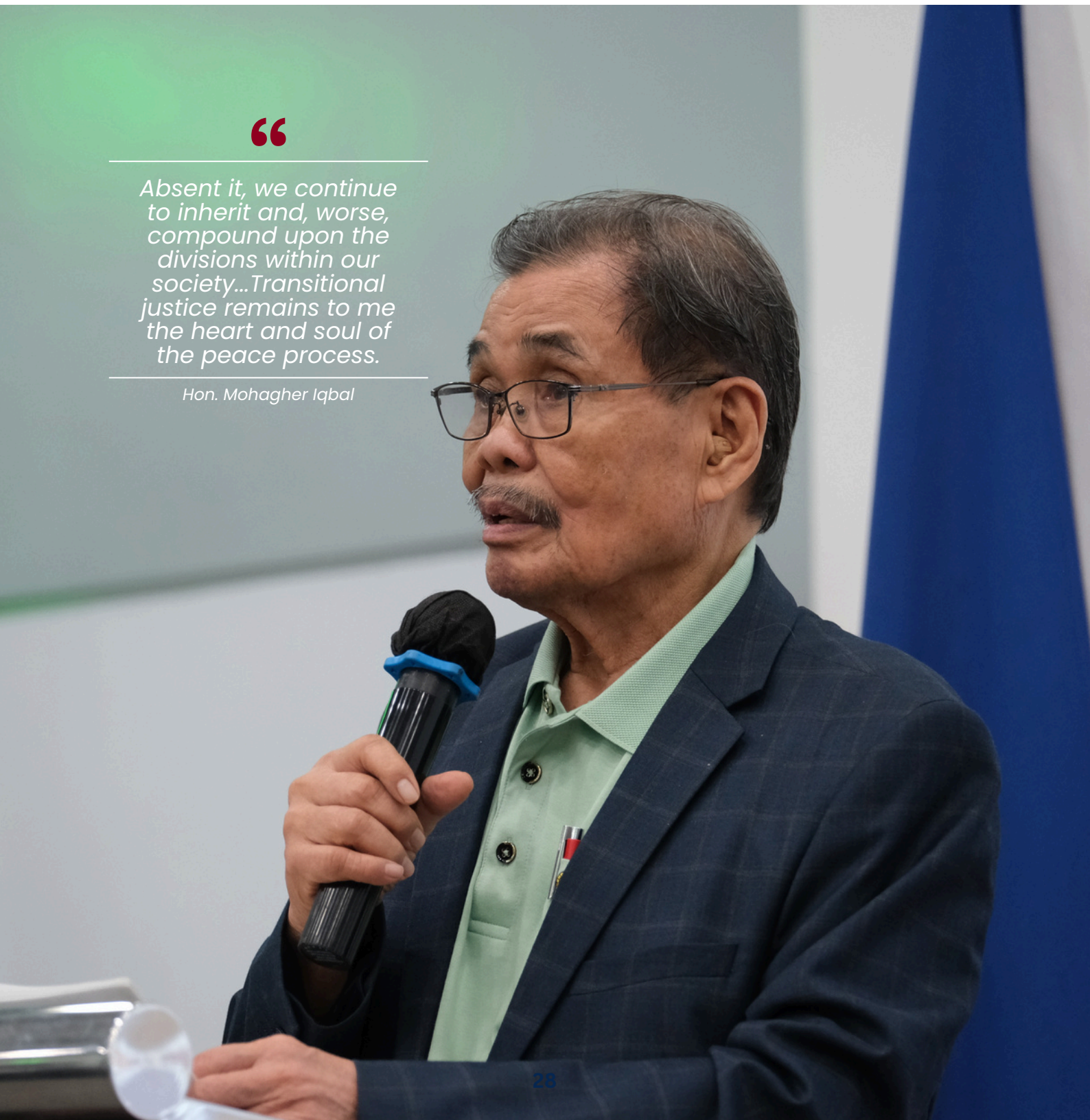
The CAB has offered a framework to make this happen. I urge us to try it according to the Bangsamoro Peace Process formula. Perhaps to see it succeed and explore how it can be replicated with all of the necessary nuances and adjustment across the country. It will not be a walk in the park. The work that we expect of the TJR process appears daunting, and I'm sure we will learn as we go through on our TJR journey. But the alternative-- a deepening divide that can be capitalized on by those with less intentions-- is much more frightening. We simply must choose to do right by our people.

Thank you and assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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Absent it, we continue to inherit and, worse, compound upon the divisions within our society...Transitional justice remains to me the heart and soul of the peace process.

Hon. Mohagher Iqbal



Livia Meisser

Deputy Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines

As we conclude this important forum, allow me first to express Switzerland's sincere appreciation to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute for bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders for a thoughtful and constructive discussion on transitional justice and reconciliation.

Today's conversations have reminded us of a fundamental truth: peace agreements are not only about ending conflict. They are about building a just and sustainable peace that can endure across generations. The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro has rightly been recognized as a landmark achievement. Yet, as many speakers have emphasized today, the true measure of success lies not only in the signing of agreements but in their full implementation.

In this regard, the recent enactment of the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act is a significant milestone. It demonstrates leadership, political will, and a commitment to addressing some of the root causes of conflict: historical injustices, exclusion, grievances over land, and unresolved legacies of violence. It is a remarkable achievement for the Bangsamoro Parliament and for all those who have worked tirelessly over many years to advance this agenda.

At the same time, today's discussions have made clear that this milestone is not the end of the journey. Rather, it marks the beginning of a new phase. The vision of a reconciled society and a lasting peace—achieved not only by ending conflict, but by addressing its root causes and legacies—laid out in the 2016 Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission report and reflected in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro extends beyond the scope of any single institution or level of government. Realizing that vision will require continued cooperation between the Bangsamoro Government, national institutions, MILF, and the Bangsamoro people, as well as sustained engagement from political leaders, both at the regional and national level, peace mechanisms, civil society, academia, and affected communities themselves.

I would therefore like to acknowledge all those who have contributed to this process: the Government and MILF Peace Implementing Panels; the Joint Technical Working Groups and peace mechanisms; members of Congress and the Bangsamoro Parliament; civil society organizations and community leaders; researchers and academics whose work deepens understanding and informs policy; and the many international partners who have accompanied this process over the years. The progress achieved today is the result of collective effort and shared commitment.



From Switzerland's perspective of supporting societies around the world resolve their conflicts, experience has shown that durable peace requires more than security arrangements and political institutions. Sustainable peace depends on whether societies are able to address painful histories, recognize legitimate grievances, acknowledge and repair harm, and create pathways toward reconciliation and inclusion. Transitional justice is therefore not an optional add-on to peacebuilding. It is often one of the key foundations upon which lasting peace is built.

For this reason, the implementation of the Bangsamoro transitional justice agenda matters not only to the Bangsamoro and the Philippines. It also carries significance beyond your borders. Around the world, many peace processes struggle with the challenge of transforming agreements into lasting realities. The Bangsamoro peace process has already become an important source of inspiration internationally because it demonstrates that dialogue, negotiation, and political courage can succeed where violence has failed.

Implementing concrete measures to complete the transitional justice commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro would send an equally powerful message: that peace is strengthened when societies confront difficult histories rather than leave them unresolved; that accountability, recognition, redress, and healing are not obstacles to peace but essential components of it; and that addressing historical injustices helps prevent future conflict.

This is why continued progress on transitional justice is not a trivial matter. It fulfills the rights of victims who have suffered significant losses from the conflict, and it is a strategic investment in stability, trust, and social cohesion. It is an investment in ensuring that future generations inherit not the grievances of the past, but the opportunities of a more peaceful future.

Switzerland remains deeply encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by Philippine and Bangsamoro stakeholders and by the commitment we have witnessed today. As a longstanding partner of the peace process, Switzerland has been honoured to support efforts that promote dialogue, trust-building, and transitional justice. We do so not because peace can be imposed from outside—it cannot—but because we believe that locally owned processes deserve steadfast international support.

The discussions today have shown that there is still work to be done. But they have also shown that there is expertise, commitment, and momentum. Most importantly, they have shown that there remains a shared belief that the promises made under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro should be fulfilled in full.

Let us therefore leave this forum not only with a clearer understanding of the challenges ahead, but also with renewed determination to work together to address them.

On behalf of Switzerland, I thank all of you for your engagement, your openness, and your dedication to advancing peace, accountability, healing, and reconciliation in the Bangsamoro.

Maraming salamat po, Shukran, and I wish you all a safe journey home.

An Invitation to Further Action

Ten years after the TJRC report, transitional justice in the Bangsamoro has begun to move from paper to practice: A regional law now stands, a joint roadmap is underway, and the community of advocates continues to grow. But as speakers throughout the Forum emphasized, laws and roadmaps are not the finish line. They merely signal the beginning of further, deeper work to fulfill the promise of transitional justice under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. The TJR Forum leaves behind a clearer outline of what remains to be done.

The Organizers therefore invite:

- Legislators and the national government to carry the momentum of BAA 89 forward by securing LEDAC inclusion, broadening co-authorship, and advancing the National TJRC bill through Congress—affirming that transitional justice is finally recognized not only as a regional concern, but a national responsibility.
- Government agencies and the Joint GPH-MILF Technical Working Group to close the institutional gaps identified throughout the Forum: a functioning monitoring system, a clear division of labor between the BTJRC and a future NTJRCB, and financing commensurate with the scale of their mandates. These components must be built early enough to prevent gaps from hardening into permanent overlap or neglect.
- Civil society, academe, and community leaders to continue the patient, ground-level work that no law can accomplish on its own: translating concepts across languages, holding space for painful histories, and building the constituency that allows legislation to pass and endure. Indigenous peoples, MNLF communities, and Sulu must remain fully and visibly within this circle.
- International partners to sustain the partnerships that make implementation of the peace agreement possible, including initiatives that foster collaboration, open communication, and an enabling environment, all of which stand as recognition that the Bangsamoro experience can provide an excellent example for peacemaking elsewhere.



About the Organizers

The **Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)** is a Swiss-based private diplomacy organization founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality, and independence. Its mission is to help prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation. It has been present in the Philippines since 2005, implementing various programs to promote peace and reduce violence, including on the island province of Sulu. It has been a member of the International Contact Group for the GPH-MILF Peace Process since 2009 and has implemented various projects and programs in support of the Parties' efforts to implement the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

The **Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI)** commits to provide, nurture, and shelter citizens' peace constituencies in the search for, creation of, and insistence on the peaceful settlement and transformation of conflicts, even as it continuously organizes a constituency committed to freedom and social justice. GZO Peace Institute also seeks to institutionalize the work of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, thus placing it within the mainstream of the efforts for social justice and development in the Philippines.

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