

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE CEREMONIAL SIGNING
OF THE JOINT CIRCULAR PRESCRIBING THE GUIDELINES ON THE PETROLEUM
SERVICE CONTRACTS AND COAL OPERATING CONTRACTS IN THE BANGSAMORO
AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO**

[Delivered at the President's Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila| 06 July 2023]

Secretary Popo Lotilla; other members of the Cabinet; of course, our partner in the peace process Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim, Minister Akmad Brahim, and other ministers of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao; my fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

Today we gather for a momentous occasion as it is the ceremonial signing of the joint circular prescribing the guidelines on the joint award of Petroleum Service Contracts and Coal Operating Contracts in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The objectives of these guidelines are clear and they are resolute.

They aim to facilitate the robust growth of the energy sector in the BARMM and attract vital investments to the area.

In fostering a level playing field, we create an environment that encourages local and foreign investors to actively participate in the exploration and development of the BARMM's energy resources.

Through this, we promote economic growth, generate employment opportunities, and nurture a thriving business landscape in the region.

As conscientious custodians of our environment and natural heritage, we possess a profound awareness of the significance of safeguarding our invaluable natural resources and preserving the holistic well-being of our communities.

Therefore, it is essential to underscore that the guidelines shall also serve as a safeguard in ensuring the strict adherence of all exploration and development activities to rigorous regulations and industry-leading best practices.

These guidelines demonstrate our resolute commitment to responsible stewardship, ecological sustainability, and the cultivation of a vibrant energy sector.

As we uphold these principles, we forge a path towards a future where resource utilization is in harmony with environmental preservation, economic advancement, and social equity for all.

The National Government remains fully committed to working hand in hand with the Bangsamoro Government in its journey for sustained progress.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law empowers both the National and the Bangsamoro Government to jointly grant rights, privileges, and concessions for the exploration, development, and utilization of uranium and fossil fuels within BARMM.

This collaborative endeavor stands as an unwavering testament to our firm commitment to unity and unwavering cooperation with BARMM as we unlock the vast and untapped potential of the region.

Considering the challenges of the depleting Malampaya reservoir and volatile fossil fuel prices, it is crucial to take decisive action, reigniting petroleum exploration, and fostering the development of indigenous energy resources.

Ensuring security and self-sufficiency of our nation's energy supply is not an option; it is an imperative—a solemn duty to our people, our nation, and future generations.

And finally, we see very much that the autonomous regions of Muslim Mindanao are part of the development process of the Philippines. And we have heard the expression many, many times that Mindanao is the promise land, except for the peace and security situation that prevailed in the past.

Well, this is the beginning of that fulfillment of that promise. The reserves that have been identified in the area have been an enormous asset that we have been unable to exploit, not only for the Republic of the Philippines but certainly for the Autonomous Region.

And it did it... It was not an easy process. It took a great deal of hard work from both sides – from the national government and certainly from our Transition Authority in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. And the reason why this is is because in a very real sense we are inventing a new system of government between the national government and the Autonomous Region. And the relationship between the national government – in principle is quite clear.

However, how that translates down to the work of government and the different departments and agencies of the national government, together hand in hand with the agencies and the Autonomous Region, is something that we are only now beginning to define.

We had hoped to have it done by now but the pandemic intervened and pushed back all our schedules, at the very least, two years. But now, with again the hard work that has been put in and the sincere dedication and a commitment to true development in the Bangsamoro

Autonomous Region, I am very, very happy that we have arrived at this day so we begin to exploit the richest that truly belong to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and certainly to the national government.

By harnessing the enormous energy potential within BARMM, we will reduce our reliance on external sources, mitigate the detrimental impacts of price fluctuations, and build a solid foundation for our country's energy security.

Through the responsible and innovative utilization of abundant resources, we are determined to ignite profound and positive changes in the lives of our people, especially our sisters and brothers in the BARMM.

Let me note, however, that our partnership extends far beyond energy resource development. We will explore and seize every developmental opportunity that will empower the people of the BARMM and enhance their quality of life.

Let us, therefore, wholeheartedly embark on this journey with determination and goodwill. We must recognize that through our unity and our commitment—we wield the ability and the power to shape our nation's destiny.

May this [momentous] signing mark the dawning of a new era, where the BARMM becomes a shining beacon of sustainable development in Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay ang Bangsamoro, mabuhay ang Pilipinas!
[applause]

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