



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 17th CONGRESS, SECOND REGULAR SESSION
House of Representatives

Vol. 3

Monday, October 2, 2017

No. 31

CALL TO ORDER

At 4:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Linabelle Ruth R. Villarica called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The session is called to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Everybody is requested to rise for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please remain standing for the Invocation to be delivered by Congresswoman Juliette T. Uy from the Second District of Misamis Oriental.

Everybody remained standing for the Invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. UY (J.). Let us put ourselves in the presence of the Lord Almighty.

Our dear Father God, we are most grateful to be able to come into Your presence in a dynamic and democratic country such as ours.

We, as Representatives of the Filipino people, ask that You bless this great nation.

We beseech You to lend us Your wisdom and knowledge to everyone hearing the various voices of peace, justice, love and welfare of the people that we each represent in this Chamber.

We ask that You bless today's proceedings and the work of our minds and our hands.

We ask all of these in Jesus' mighty name and for the sake of our beloved country.

Amen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

ROLL CALL

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we call the roll of Members.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is as follows, per Journal No. 31, dated October 2, 2017:

PRESENT

Abayon	Bataoil
Abu	Belaro
Abueg	Belmonte (F.)
Acharon	Belmonte (J.C.)
Acop	Belmonte (R.)
Acosta-Alba	Bertiz
Advincula	Billones
Agarao	Bolilia
Aggabao	Bondoc
Aglipay-Villar	Bordado
Albano	Bravo (A.)
Alejano	Brosas
Almario	Calderon
Almonte	Calixto-Rubiano
Alvarez (F.)	Campos
Alvarez (P.)	Canama
Amatong	Cari
Andaya	Casilao
Angara-Castillo	Castelo
Antonio	Castro (F.L.)
Aquino-Magsaysay	Castro (F.H.)
Aragones	Cayetano
Arcillas	Cerifica
Arenas	Cerilles
Atienza	Chavez
Bag-ao	Chipeco
Bagatsing	Co
Baguilat	Cojuangco
Barzaga	Collantes

Cortes	Lacson	Roque (R.)	Turabin-Hataman
Cortuna	Lagman	Sacdalán	Ty
Cosalán	Lanete	Salimbangon	Umali
Crisologo	Laogan	Salo	Unabia
Cua	Leachon	Salon	Ungab
Cuaresma	Lee	Sambar	Unico
Cueva	Limkaichong	Sandoval	Uy (J.)
Dalipe	Lobregat	Santos-Recto	Uy (R.)
Datol	Lopez (B.)	Sarmiento (C.)	Uybarreta
Daza	Lopez (C.)	Sarmiento (E.M.)	Vargas
De Jesus	Lopez (M.L.)	Savellano	Vargas-Alfonso
De Venecia	Loyola	Siao	Velarde
De Vera	Maceda	Silverio	Velasco
Defensor	Madrona	Singson	Velasco-Catera
Del Mar	Malapitan	Suansing (E.)	Veloso
Del Rosario	Manalo	Suansing (H.)	Vergara
Deloso-Montalla	Mangaoang	Suarez	Villanueva
Dimaporo (A.)	Mangudadatu (Z.)	Sy-Alvarado	Villaraza-Suarez
Dimaporo (M.K.)	Marcos	Tambunting	Villarica
Durano	Marquez	Tan (A.)	Villarin
Dy	Martinez	Teves	Violago
Enverga	Matugas	Tiangco	Yap (A.)
Eriguel	Mellana	Ting	Yap (V.)
Ermita-Buhain	Mending	Tinio	Yu
Escudero	Mercado	Tolentino	Zamora (R.)
Espina	Mirasol	Treñas	Zarate
Espino	Montoro	Tugna	Zubiri
Estrella	Nava	Tupas	
Eusebio	Nieto		
Evardone	Noel		
Fariñas	Nolasco		
Fernando	Núñez-Malanyaon		
Ferrer (J.)	Ocampo		
Ferrer (L.)	Ong (E.)		
Ferriol-Pascual	Ong (H.)		
Flores	Ortega (P.)		
Fortuno	Ortega (V.N.)		
Garbin	Pacquiao		
Garcia (G.)	Paduano		
Garcia (J.E.)	Palma		
Garcia-Albano	Pancho		
Garin (R.)	Panganiban		
Garin (S.)	Panotes		
Gasataya	Pichay		
Gatchalian	Pimentel		
Geron	Pineda		
Go (A.C.)	Primicias-Agabas		
Go (M.)	Quimbo		
Gonzales (A.P.)	Radaza		
Gonzales (A.D.)	Ramirez-Sato		
Gonzalez	Ramos		
Gullas	Revilla		
Hernandez	Roa-Puno		
Herrera-Dy	Rocamora		
Hofer	Rodriguez (I.)		
Jalosjos	Romualdo		
Labadlabad	Roque (H.)		

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mme. Speaker, the roll call shows that 227 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). With 227 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, considering that copies of Journal of the previous session had been distributed to the Members, I move that we approve Journal No. 30 dated September 27, 2017.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Journal of September 27 is hereby approved.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now proceed to the Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, Message from the President, Communications and Committee Reports, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6476, entitled:

“AN ACT ADOPTING INNOVATION AS VITAL COMPONENT OF THE COUNTRY’S DEVELOPMENT POLICIES TO DRIVE INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, PROMOTE THE GROWTH AND NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Yap (A.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 6477, entitled:

“AN ACT IMPLEMENTING BASIC JOURNALISM COURSE AS MANDATORY SUBJECT IN THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, TO STRENGTHEN THE JOURNALISM SKILLS OF THE YOUTH AS A BASIC TOOL TO PRESERVE OUR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AS PART OF DEMOCRACY, AND PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COUNTRY, UNDER TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Sy-Alvarado

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 1338, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNTRY’S RADIO FREQUENCY SPECTRUM BY THE

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION”

By Representative Yap (V.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1339, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE INVESTIGATION BY THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NTC) ON THE BILLING CHARGE BEING PROMULGATED BY THE VARIOUS TELECOMMUNICATION ENTITIES”

By Representative Lee

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1340, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE A BIENNIAL OFW SUMMIT IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO SERVE AS VENUE TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF OUR OFWs REGARDING THEIR RIGHTS AND WELFARE”

By Representative Batocabe

TO THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS

House Resolution No. 1341, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING JIU-JITSU FIGHTERS MARGARITA OCHOA AND ANNIE RAMIREZ FOR WINNING TWO GOLD MEDALS FOR THE PHILIPPINES IN THE FIFTH EDITION OF THE ASIAN INDOOR AND MARTIAL ARTS GAMES HELD IN ASHGABAT, TURKMENISTAN FROM SEPTEMBER 17 TO 27, 2017”

By Representative Estrella

TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 1342, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE PHILIPPINE TEAM WHO WON GOLD MEDALS IN THE NINTH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) PARALYMPIC GAMES HELD IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA FROM SEPTEMBER 17 TO 23, 2017”

By Representative Estrella

TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 1343, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPRESSING

WARM FELICITATIONS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FILIPINO ATHLETES FOR BRINGING PRIDE AND HONOR TO OUR COUNTRY IN 29TH SOUTHEAST ASIAN GAMES 2017”

By Representative Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 1344, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPRESSING WARM FELICITATIONS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. ARTHUS BUCAY FOR WINNING PHILIPPINES’ FIRST MEDAL IN ASEAN PARAGAMES 2017”

By Representative Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 1345, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED ATTACKS ON STUDENTS’ DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN THE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

20 September 2017

SPEAKER PANTALEON D. ALVAREZ
House Speaker
House of Representatives
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Mr. Speaker,

Pursuant to the provisions of Article VI, Section 26 (2) of the 1987 Constitution, I hereby certify to the necessity of the immediate enactment of Senate Bill No. 1584, entitled:

“AN ACT POSTPONING THE OCTOBER 2017 BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN ELECTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT 9164, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9340, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10656, AND

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10923, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

in connection with the previously scheduled 2017 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections.

Best regards.

Very truly yours,

(SGD.) RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE

Copy Furnished:

Sen. Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III
Senate President
The Philippine Senate
Pasay City

Sec. Adelino B. Sitoy
Head
Presidential Legislative Liaison Office
2/F New Executive Bldg.
Malacañang, Manila

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated August 3, 2017 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the 2016 Consolidated Annual Audit Reports (CAARs)/ Individual Annual Audit Reports (IAARs)/ Management Letter on the following government agencies:

- A. Consolidated Annual Audit Reports (CAARs)
 - 1. Department of Agriculture (DA);
 - 2. Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR);
 - 3. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); and
 - 4. Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).
- B. Individual Annual Audit Reports (IAARs)
 - 1. Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC);
 - 2. Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA);
 - 3. Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF);
 - 4. National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS);
 - 5. National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA);
 - 6. National Water Resources Board (NWRB);
 - 7. Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC);
 - 8. Board of Investments (BOI);
 - 9. Philippine Trade Training Center (PTTC);

10. Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL); and

11. Design Center of the Philippines (DCP).

C. Management Letters

1. Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines (CIAP);

2. Environmental Management Bureau (EMB);

3. Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB); and

4. Department of Trade and Industry.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

2016 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

1. Malungon Water District, Malungon, Sarangani Province;

2. General Santos City Water District, General Santos City;

3. Glan Water District, Glan, Sarangani Province;

4. Maasim Water District, Maasim, Sarangani Province;

5. Sto. Niño Water District, Sto. Niño, South Cotabato;

6. Banga Water District, Banga, South Cotabato;

7. City of Koronadal Water District, City of Koronadal, South Cotabato;

8. Tupi Water District, Tupi, South Cotabato;

9. Polomolok Water District, Polomolok, South Cotabato;

10. Kabacan Water District, Kabacan, Cotabato;

11. Mlang Water District, Mlang, Cotabato;

12. Sultan Kudarat Water District, Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat;

13. Kalamansig Water District, Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat;

14. Pikit Water District, Pikit, Cotabato;

15. Antipas Water District, Antipas, Cotabato;

16. Surallah Water District, Surallah, South Cotabato; and

17. Metro Kidapawan Water District, Kidapawan City.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

2016 Annual Audit Reports on the following water districts:

1. Norala Water District, Norala, South Cotabato;

2. Lebak Water District, Lebak, Sultan Kudarat;

3. Metro Midsayap Water District, Midsayap, Cotabato;

4. Pigcawayan Water District, Pigcawayan, Cotabato;

5. Tulunan Water District, Tulunan, Cotabato; and

6. Metro Cotabato Water District, Cotabato City.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated August 30, 2017 of Catalino S. Cuy, Officer-in-Charge, Department of the Interior and Local Government, submitting to the House of Representatives the following documents/reports, to wit:

1. Quarterly Physical Report of Operations as of June 30, 2017;

2. Narrative Highlights of Accomplishments as of 1st Semester 2017;

3. Major Programs/Projects for 2017;

4. Quarter 2 Accomplishment Report FY 2017 for the Assistance to Municipalities – Empowerment Fund;

5. Quarter 2 Accomplishment Report FY 2017 for the Bottom-up Budgeting – Empowerment Fund Status of Trust Fund; and

6. Narrative Accomplishment Report for the 1st Semester FY 2017 of the Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities and Bottom-up Budgeting.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Letter dated 4 September 2017 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives copies of the 2016 Consolidated Annual Audit Reports/ Individual Annual Audit Reports on the following government agencies:

A. Consolidated Annual Audit Reports

1. Department of Education;

2. National Conciliation and Mediation Board;

3. National Labor Relations Commission; and

4. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

B. Individual Annual Audit Reports

1. Philippine Overseas Employment Administration; and

2. Technological University of the Philippines System.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated 5 September 2017 of Marilou P. Mendoza, Chairperson, Tariff Commission, providing copies of the 2016 Annual Report of the Tariff Commission.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated September 6, 2017 of Mary D. Bacwaden, Assistant Regional Director, Officer-in-Charge, Cordillera Administrative Region, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the 2016 Annual Audit Reports on the following State Universities and Colleges in the Cordillera Administrative Region:

1. Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology;

2. Apayao State College;

3. Benguet State University;

4. Ifugao State University;
 5. Kalinga State University; and
 6. Mountain Province State Polytechnic College.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letters dated 22 September 2017 of Roger E. Dino, Deputy Director, Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), furnishing the House of Representatives with duly certified and authenticated BSP issuances, to wit:

1. Circular Letter No. CL-2017-053 dated 30 June 2017;
2. Circular Letter No. CL-2017-054 dated 15 September 2017;
3. Memorandum No. M-2017-027 dated 11 September 2017; and
4. Memorandum No. M-2017-028 dated 11 September 2017.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report by the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 397), re H.B. No. 1530, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO INDICATE THE BLOOD TYPE OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE IDENTIFICATION CARDS, CERTIFICATES AND LICENSES”

recommending its approval in consolidation with House Bills Numbered 2064 and 3157

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (A.), Gonzales (A.P.), Alejano and Nograles (K.A.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Ways and Means (Committee Report No. 398), re: Motu proprio investigation, in aid of legislation, on the alleged smuggling of high grade ‘shabu’ through the express lane of the Bureau of Customs.

informing the House of its findings and recommendations

Sponsor: Representative Cua

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Dangerous Drugs (Committee Report No. 399), re H.R. No. 1054, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE 6.4 BILLION PESO WORTH OF SHABU SEIZED BY THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS”;

and H.R. No. 1057, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ILLEGAL ENTRY, THROUGH THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS (‘BOC’) EXPRESS LANE, OF MORE THAN FIVE BILLION PESOS WORTH OF METHAMPHETAMINE HYDROCHLORIDE (‘SHABU’)”

informing the House of its findings and recommendations

Sponsors: Representatives Barbers and Gatchalian
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of some guests in the gallery. We have the guests of the Hon. Francisco Gamboa Datol Jr., Representative of the Senior Citizens Party-List and they are Secretary General 7, Usec. Ace Millar, HUDCC; Usec. Josel Egco, Public Information Agency; Usec. Emily Padilla, DILG; Region III Senior Citizen’s President, Ret. Judge Ricardo Agapito; Region I, Asingan, Pangasinan Federation President, Norma Butuyan; some Senior Citizens Presidents of NCR—Manila, Caloocan, Parañaque, Quezon City, Pasig, Taguig, San Juan, Marikina, Pateros, Mandaluyong, Malabon, Makati, Pasay, Valenzuela and Navotas; some councilors of Quezon City; some barangay captains of Quezon City; Ms. Araceli Wong, former Governor of Catanduanes; and Senior Citizens Board of Directors— Amado M. Calderon, Marcelo Landicho, Efren T. Santos, Rogelio Galman and Erlinda Baniega.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, may we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Mohamad Khalid Q. Dimaporo: Vice Governor Maria Cristina N. Atay; from the First District: Board Member Moamar Jack S. Maruhom, Board Member Macarupung B. Dibratun, Board Member Reinario B. Bihag, Board Member Marivic D. Ramos and Board Member Gracielle Matalines; and from the Second District: Board Member Cesar Yap, Board Member Superman Usop, Board Member Abdul Harris Ali and Board Member Tawantawan Cauntongan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)
The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, we would also like to acknowledge the presence of guests of the Hon. Ruby M. Sahali, Representative from the Lone District of Tawi-Tawi: Ms. Fatimah-Sheridana L. Kadil of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and her fellow participants in the 2017 Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, may we also acknowledge the presence of the guests of the Hon. Jose “Lito” L. Atienza Jr., our Sr. Dep. Minority Leader and Representative from BUHAY Party-List: Ms. Araceli Ramiscal and officers of Mahal ko si Lolo, Mahal ko si Lola.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Tomasito “Tom” S. Villarain, Representative, AKBAYAN Party-List and they are from the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid as follows: Anafe Rangas, Elma Andaya, Arlene Palomata, Myra H. Daja, Perla Adolfo, Lita Amiano, Elena Garganera, Erlinda Cabasa, Regina Cisneros, Mercydita Abellon, Eliabeth Rit, Lucy Cervas, Asuncion Tica, Mary Ann Ramos, Rowena Paghiligan, Glenda Durante, Melina Alpay, Melba Hernandez, Marilyn Ranos, Jeana Catacio, Nonita Jomok, Ma. Florence Mendeja, Reynon Pimentel, Debbie Bartolo, Roy Calfofofo, Esmeralda Mendoza, and Debbie Bartolo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, today being a Monday and pursuant to our Rules, I move that we proceed to the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Chair declares a Privilege Hour.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the first Gentleman who will avail of the Privilege Hour, Rep. Francisco G. Datol Jr. of the Party-List Senior Citizens. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The honorable Rep. Francisco G. Datol Jr. of the Party-List Senior Citizens is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. DATOL

REP. DATOL. Mme. Speaker, honorable Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today is the Elderly Filipino Week or otherwise known as Senior Citizens Week. It is a celebration that is being held from 1 to 7 of October every year. This is a tribute to all senior citizens of the Philippines.

The amendment of Proclamation No. 1503, series of 1975, by former Pres. Fidel V. Ramos declared that the Elderly Filipino Week should be celebrated on the first week of October every year. The formation of events for the older community of the Philippines was in accordance with the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 37/51 of 3 December 1982 to pursue an International Plan of Action on Aging. Presidential Proclamation No. 470, on the other hand, mandates the annual celebration of the Elderly Filipino Week to give importance to the role of senior citizens in helping build the nation. It also aims to address the issues concerning the older people’s sector. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was first given the responsibility to develop a social welfare program designed to promote and enhance the well-being of senior citizens.

The proportion of elderly Filipinos in the general population is increasing in many countries and is predicted to rise still farther in the coming decades. The number and proportion of older people in the population are steadily growing because of decreasing birth rates and increasing life expectancy due to modern technology and other government programs for prolonging life, not to mention the rewards or incentives given to older people if they reach a certain age.

In the Philippines, there are about 10,500,000 senior Filipino citizens. The figure is still growing every year and is something to reckon with in terms of the number of electorates.

Let me refresh this august Body on how our Senior Citizens Party-List began to exist. It was first incorporated as a corporation before the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 2003. Our party was recognized and registered as one of the party-list organizations by the Abalos Commission on March 16, 2007 by virtue of COMELEC Resolution in SPP No. 06-026 (PL). Thereafter, we joined the 2007 election and it was only in 2009 that we were given one seat in this

House. In the 2010 national elections, we were lucky to have been given two seats in this House. We are again blessed in the 2013 elections and we were allotted two seats in the Sixteenth Congress. Unfortunately, due to an internal rift between contending factions, we were not able to occupy any seat in the Sixteenth Congress. Again, in the 2016 national elections, our party joined the said elections and we were allotted two seats in Congress. After about a year of internal skirmishes, this humble Representation and Rep. Milagros Aquino Magsaysay were proclaimed as Senior Citizens Party-List Representatives in the Seventeenth Congress. *(Applause)*

The Senior Citizens Party-List is blessed with a big number of devoted and die-hard senior citizens. However, there are numerous senior citizens associations or organizations whose objectives and plans for senior citizens are virtually the same. It is, therefore, my intention to unify said various associations or organizations under one roof, that is, with the creation of a National Senior Citizens Commission which is now in a pending bill in this august Body. *(Applause)*

This Bill seeks to create a National Senior Citizens Commission that will be responsible for the effective implementation and monitoring of objectives of Republic Act No. 7432, known as “An Act to Maximize the Contribution of Senior Citizens to Nation Building, Grant Benefits and Special Privileges and for Other Purposes,” as amended by Republic Act No. 9257, otherwise known as the “Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003,” and further amended by Republic Act No. 9994, otherwise known as the “Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010.”

While the objectives of the law are quite clearly spelled out, which are 1) to establish mechanisms whereby the contributions of senior citizens are maximized; 2) to adopt measures whereby our senior citizens are assisted and appreciated by the community as a whole; 3) to establish a program beneficial to the senior citizens, their families and the rest of the community they serve; and 4) to establish community-based health and rehabilitation programs for all senior citizens in every political unit of society, but there is no national agency that is responsible for the overall implementation of these objectives.

At present, our senior citizens have to contend with the Office for Senior Citizen’s Affairs (OSCA) found in every city and municipality which is under the control and supervision of the respective local government units. Despite the services of the OSCA, the requirements and needs of the senior citizens have not been fully served and satisfied. In reality, the Office for Senior Citizen’s Affairs currently functions merely as liaison center for senior citizens and is mainly concerned with maintaining regular updates on the list of senior citizens and issuing individual national identification cards.

Across local government units, it has been observed that there is lack of cohesiveness in terms of services rendered and implemented, per senior citizens laws, by various Offices for Senior Citizen’s Affairs. There is a noticeable absence of cases filed for non-implementation of these laws and an apparent lack of proper implementation, monitoring and enforcement. We have heard numerous unfortunate stories of senior citizens whose benefits and special privileges granted by law were not honored, and their complaints against erring business establishments remained unacted. Likewise, there is a need to preserve and strengthen the integrity of the identification cards of senior citizens, the only tool which entitles them to the privileges they have been granted by law. There are persons who have not yet reached the age of 60 years old but were able to secure OSCA ID cards because of political accommodation or for a fee in order to avail of senior citizen’s discounts and benefits. A number of mayors are guilty of violations of the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 by omission. Under this Act, the OSCA head is appointed by the mayor for a period of three years only without reappointment. Some mayors do not appoint anymore a new OSCA head after a period of three years for reasons known only to them.

The would-be National Senior Citizens Commission is committed to correct this scheme and to curb unscrupulous and indiscriminate issuances of OSCA IDs that deprive our government of its much-needed revenues. The creation of a single cohesive agency that will address the needs of our senior citizens, implement and enforce the laws, and monitor compliance for the welfare and benefits of our 10,500,000 senior citizens throughout the country is of primordial importance. We have already established the National Youth Commission, Commission on Women, Poverty Commission, Commission for our brother Muslims and so, why not give the 10.5 million senior citizens their own commission, the National Senior Citizens Commission? *(Applause)*

Sa National Senior Citizens Commission, hindi na po kami manghihingi ng anumang pondo para palakarin ito. Ang pondo na magpapalakad sa aming Commission ay manggagaling sa one percent na manggagaling sa 42,036 barangays na hindi pinakikinabangan ng 10,500,000 senior citizens, kasama na dito ang one percent ng mga siyudad na kamukha ng Quezon City. Ang one percent every year, 170,000,000, at ganoon din iyong mga ibang siyudad sa buong kapuluan ng Pilipinas.

I strongly urge all Members of this prestigious House of Representatives to approve our bill on the creation of National Senior Citizens Commission for the unification and centralization of all programs, objectives and plans for all senior citizens in the Philippines and to give all senior citizens in the country equal treatment

of benefits intended for them, whether they are in the far-flung areas of Tawi-Tawi and Batanes or in the hinterlands of the 81 provinces.

I also urge my fellow Representatives to approve bills for the benefit of senior citizens, particularly the following:

AN ACT PROVIDING AS AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCE WHEN THE VICTIM OF A CRIME IS A SENIOR CITIZEN AND MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCE WHEN THE OFFENDER IS A SENIOR CITIZEN AND AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ACT NO. 3815 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE;

RESOLUTION TO CONDUCT AN OVERSIGHT INVESTIGATION OF THE PORTABILITY ACT IN RELATION WITH THE EXPANDED SENIOR CITIZENS ACT OF 2010 WITH THE PURPOSE OF GRANTING RETIREES/PENSIONERS UNDER THE PORTABILITY LAW EQUAL RIGHTS AND BENEFITS AS RETIREES UNDER OTHER LAWS; and

AN ACT INCREASING THE MONTHLY PENSION OF INDIGENT SENIOR CITIZEN FROM P500 TO P1,000. (*Applause*)

Pumaris po sana tayo sa ibang bansa na ang mga nakatatanda kapag naospital ay magagamot, at makapagtrabaho kahit ilang oras lang ang senior citizens, ang malalakas pa na senior citizens. Our party predecessors in Congress had not made any tangible progress in terms of giving benefits to their constituents. Your humble Representation is committed to correct this mistake by giving senior citizens good and valuable bills for other benefits that would primordially cater to their practical needs in the near and far future. Pursuant to this commitment, this Representation intends: a) to establish, build and create hospitals in various parts of the country for the exclusive use of qualified senior citizens free of charge; (*Applause*) b) to establish, build and create amusement centers in various parts of the country for the exclusive use of senior citizens; c) to make a bill providing that representation be given to senior citizens in provincial boards, municipal/city councils, as well as in barangay councils; (*Applause*) d) to increase the social pension for senior citizens every year to cope with inflation; e) to increase senior citizens' discount; f) to establish job opportunities for senior citizens who are still able to work; g) to expand senior citizens' discount to all goods in all groceries and supermarkets, electricity and water consumption without ceiling; h) to organize recreational programs, ballroom dancing and zumba for senior citizens; i) to provide ambulance services in all cities and municipalities for senior citizens; and j) to exempt senior citizens from number coding.

At present, senior citizens enjoy the following benefits: VAT exemption on medicines; monthly pension of P500; five-percent discount on MERALCO

and water bills; burial assistance of P2,000; free medical and dental diagnostic and laboratory services in government facilities; 25 percent discount on purchase of unbranded generic medicines; 20 percent discount on hotels, restaurants, recreation centers and others; 20 percent discount on medical and dental and laboratory, and PhilHealth exemption.

These are my intended legacies to all senior citizens of the Philippines, including senior citizens of this House and those Members who, sooner or later, will become senior citizens.

Napag-alaman ko po na sa aming mga Kongresista rito ay 82 ang senior citizens—pero ang iba ay hindi umaamin—at mayroon pa pong apat na magbe-birthday bago mag-Disyembre, kaya magiging 86 na rin po kaming lahat. Alam po ba ninyo, mga kapwa ko Kongresista, tatlo lang po ang kinakailangan ng mga nakatatanda, iyong tatlong K: 1) Kalusugan - magkaroon ng sariling ospital; 2) Kabuhayan - livelihood, iyong para sa puwede pang magtrabaho; at iyong 3) Kasayahan. Ang tatlo pong iyan, kapag ibinigay sa amin ng kapwa naming Kongresista rito, ay magkakaroon na po ng kaligayahan ang sampung milyon at limandaang libong senior citizens. (*Applause*)

On October 20, 2017, we will be choosing, recognizing and awarding Ten Outstanding Senior Citizens in Mindanao who have extraordinarily contributed to the welfare and cause of senior citizens. This will be held in Davao City and no less than our beloved Pres. Rodrigo Roa Duterte will be gracing the occasion. In the not so distant future, we will also be choosing, recognizing and awarding Ten Outstanding Senior Citizens in the Visayas, in Luzon and the National Capital Region.

We also lined up several activities for senior citizens all over the country to commemorate our Senior Citizens Week this October 2017. Pinagbigyan po tayo ng ating pamahalaan. Simula kahapon, dahil Senior Citizens Week, may libreng sakay para sa senior citizens in the MRT 3 on October 1, 2 and 7; Line 1- October 8, Sunday; and Line 2, October 2, from 4:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. mula Santolan hanggang Recto.

According to the World Health Organization, old age can be considered as a disorder of the self-regulation system in an organism and destroying process, when adaptive features of the organism are decreasing and the chance of death is increasing. Sa isang salita, malapit na silang humarap sa Dakilang Lumikha. Under this circumstance, parang isang abuloy na lang sa mga senior citizens namin ang inyong pagsang-ayon sa aming bill creating the National Senior Citizens Commission at iba pa naming mga mungkahi para sa kapakanan ng inyong mga nanay at tatay at ng inyong mga lolo at lola.

Sa pangwakas, sinasaluduhan po namin ang magandang pamumuno ng ating Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte na isa ring senior citizen. Sinasaluduhan

din po namin ang walang kapantay at magaling mamuno naming Speaker of the House, Speaker Pantaleon “Bebot” Alvarez. Sinasaluduhan din po namin ang lahat ng Deputy Speakers at gayundin ang magandang naming lalaking Majority Leader, Congressman Rudy Fariñas na mahal na mahal ng senior citizens. *(Applause)*

Tumayo po tayong lahat at bigyan natin ng masigabong palakpakan ang mga buhay na alamat ng Seventeenth Congress. *(Applause)* Alam ko po na aaprobahan ang ating bill sapagkat ang principal author, si Congressman Pantaleon Alvarez at si Congressman Feliciano Belmonte, na ngayon ay may kaarawan. *(Applause)*

Marami pong salamat at pagpalain po tayong lahat ng Poong Maykapal. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from the BUHAY Party-List, Rep. Jose “Lito” L. Atienza Jr. for his interpellation.

REP. ATIENZA. Salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The honorable Rep. Jose “Lito” L. Atienza is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, thank you.

To the Floor Leader, salamat po sa inyong pagkilala, at sa atin din pong magiting na Kinatawan ng ating mga elderly persons, golden ages at senior citizens of our country, Congressman Datol, sapagkat damang-dama natin ang kanyang damdamin na nananalaytay sa lahat sa atin. With his kind permission, I would like to clarify certain points that he raised so that we may all unite behind his noble intentions.

Puwede po ba kayong matanong ng mga ilang pagpapaliwanag?

REP. DATOL. Sige po, Congressman ng BUHAY.

REP. ATIENZA. Sapagkat alam kong nagkakaisa tayo sa damdamin, at lahat ng ating mga Miyembro ngayon ay iisa rin ang damdamin sa pagtanaw ng utang na loob sa ating mga matatanda sa ating lipunan.

Not too long ago, hindi po ganyan ang pag-iisip ng Pilipino. Nahirapan po tayo na ipasa ang batas na kumikilala sa kanilang magandang kontribusyon sa ating bansa, sa lipunan, sa pamayanan, sa pagpapalaki ng kanilang pamilya at pagiging mahusay na Pilipino. Today, this is now a reality, and we have a law that protects the rights of Filipino senior citizens.

Not too long ago, noong sinisimulan namin ang aming kilusang “Mahal ko si Lolo, Mahal ko si Lola,” pinagtatawanan po kami. Ang sabi nila, “Itong si

Lito Atienza”— 1976 po iyon—“ay puro matatanda ang inaasikaso samantalang napakabata pa niya.” Pinagtatawanan po ang inyong lingkod dahil inilalaban ko na sa batas ang bigyan ng pagkilala ang mga lolo at lola. Alam po ninyo, ang magandang balitang sasabihin ko sa inyo, ibabahagi ko sa inyo, iyong mga nagtatawa sa akin, iyong mga nangungutya sa akin, lahat ho sila ay hindi tumanda. Pumalaot na sila sa kabilang buhay. Ang inyong lingkod na sinabihang “Tatanda ka nang maaga sapagkat matatanda ang iyong inaasikaso”—tingnan po ninyo, hanggang ngayon, mukhang batang-bata pa. Iyan ang leksiyon sa buhay na natutunan ng inyong lingkod. Kaya binabati ko si Congressman Datol sa kanyang pakikipaglaban at pagtataguyod ng dagdag pang pagkilala sa ating mga lolo at lola. Hindi po tayo sosobra at tiyak, kulang ang ating maibibigay sapagkat kung talagang tutuusin, kung wala sila ay wala tayo. Kaya iyong inyong panukala, dadagdagan ko lang ng kaunti ho, kung mamarapatin ninyo.

REP. DATOL. Sige po.

REP. ATIENZA. Napag-usapan na natin ito pero kung tatanggapin ninyo ngayon ay magiging bahagi ito ng inyong ipinaglalaman. Sa ngayon, ang ating senior citizen, binibigyan ng P100,000 kapag sumasapit na ng 100 taon. *(Applause)* Ang problema po, bibihira po ang nakikinabang diyang sapagkat bibihira ang umaabot ng 100 taon. Kung mamarapatin ninyo, ibaba natin ang edad na mabibigyan ng pabuya at ibigay natin ito habang sila ay buhay pa.

Sa aking pagsasaliksik, out of the 3,900 centenarians that we have, only about 2,000 are able to avail of the P100,000 bonus allotted to them. Why? Marami po sa kanila ay nakaratay na sa banig. Kapag inabot kayo ng 100 taon, kung hindi rin lamang kayo parang si Congressman Bondoc—siya, aabot pa ng 120—ay sa palagay ko, sa pangkaraniwan, kapag 100 taon, nakahiga na. Papupuntahin pa sa munisipyo pero hindi na nga po makakalakad, at ayaw namang ibigay sa mga kamag-anakan. Kaya kung mamarapatin ninyo, ibaba natin ang edad ng benepisyo. Kapag 90 anyos na, ang 100,000 ay dapat ibigay sa kanila sapagkat ang gusto natin ay pakinabangan nila ang salaping ito.

Marami sa kanila ang mayroon na pong diabetes, mayroon na pong high blood pressure, mayroon na pong mga sakit na dalahin. Gaya nga ng sinabi ninyo, kailangan natin ng mga ospital, pagamutan, libreng gamot. Ang bonus na iyon ay ibigay na rin natin sa kanila, isabay na natin iyong ating pinagtutulungang batas—bigyan ng 50 porsiyentong discount sa pamasaha sa eroplano ang senior citizens upang sila ay makapagbiyahe naman at makita ang ganda ng ating kapuluan. *(Applause)* Iyon po ba ay handa kayong tanggapin at ng ating pagtutulungan sa harap ng ating mga kasamahan upang maging ganap ang ating pagkilala sa ating senior citizens, Philippine

elderly, golden ages, mga Pilipinong naglingkod sa ating lipunan?

REP. DATOL. Handa po kami diyan at napakaganda niyan para sa senior citizens ng ating bansa.

REP. ATIENZA. Handa rin po ba kayo na—ang ating magiting na Speaker, tama rin po ang lagay ng puso niya, ang puso niya nasa kaliwa e. Si Majority Leader, tama rin po ang kinalalagayan ng puso niya, nasa kaliwa. Marami rin po tayong mga kasama rito, ang puso nila ay nasa tamang lugar kaya isama nating lahat bilang cosponsor nitong batas upang sa lalong madaling panahon ay maaprubahan ng ating Kapulungan. *(Applause)*

REP. DATOL. Salamat po.

REP. ATIENZA. Papayag po ba kayo?

REP. DATOL. Payag na payag po kami.

REP. ATIENZA. Okay. With that, Mme. Speaker, the meaningful celebration of the Senior Citizens Week, the Philippine Elderly Week of October 1 to 7, 2017, is made more meaningful. On this day, we are united in recognizing the fact that our lolo and our lola, iyong ating pinagkakautangan ng ating buhay, pinagkakautangan natin ng ating kalagayan sa lipunan, pinagkakautangan natin ng pagtataguyod ng tamang pamamahala, ay kailangang bigyan natin ng wastong pagkilala. Ang hindi lumilingon sa kanyang pinanggalingan, hindi na tatanda. Ang ayaw tumulong sa matanda, hindi na rin tatanda. Tayong lahat, ang ating naisin ay tumanda. Ipagtanggol na natin ang kalagayan nila upang pag-abot natin ng 90 anyos, mayroong 100,000 ang bawat Pilipino. *(Applause)*

Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyo, G. Datol at si Gng. Aquino Magsaysay, sa inyong representasyon sa ating mga lolo at lola na napakahalaga sa mga panahong ito.

Congratulations. Mabuhay ang ating mga lolo at lola. Mabuhay ang Pilipino.

Salamat po. *(Applause)*

REP. DATOL. Salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, we also join the honorable Congressman Atienza in congratulating Congressman Datol for his privilege speech and for standing up for all the senior citizens. *(Applause)*

Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the honorable Congressman Datol, as well as the interpellation, to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, may I respectfully move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Sr. Dep. Majority Leader Rimpay Bondoc of the First District of Pampanga: first is the former Mayor Rene Maglanque, and the barangay kapitanas of Candaba, Pampanga. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Please stand. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. TURABIN-HATAMAN. Mme. Speaker, may I be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, may we know the pleasure of the Lady from the Party-List AMIN?

REP. TURABIN-HATAMAN. Mme. Speaker, I rise on a matter of personal privilege.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, we move to suspend the Privilege Hour to give way to the honorable Rep. Sitti Djalila A. Turabin-Hataman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, we move to recognize for her speech on a matter of personal and collective privilege the honorable Representative of the Party-List AMIN, the Hon. Sitti Turabin-Hataman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Congresswoman Hataman is recognized.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. TURABIN-HATAMAN

REP. TURABIN-HATAMAN. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi ta'ala wabarakatuh. Isang mapagpalayang hapon po sa ating lahat.

My sincerest gratitude for this opportunity to once again and for the last time address this august Chamber, and for all the opportunities these revered halls echoed the small voice from the islands and the

seas of our homeland. Thank you, fellow Members, Majority Leader, Minority Leader, and my fellow proud Mindanaoan, Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

This was no easy decision and perhaps the craziest I have done so far, but those who know me and know my soul have long suspected I was longing to be back home. I was a community worker before I became part of the government as Executive Director of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos. In 2013, I was given the trust by Anak Mindanao to be its first nominee and eventually, the honor of being AMIN's Representative in the Sixteenth Congress and Seventeenth Congress before today. I pray that in the four years I served Anak Mindanao as its voice in the House of Representatives, I have returned this honor.

Apart from our second nominee and now Rep. Makmod Mending Jr., who also has strong conviction in her capacity and commitment, I entrust Anak Mindanao to our third nominee, Ms. Amihilda Sangcopan, a friend, a comrade, Anak Mindanao sa Kongreso's Chief of Staff from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Congress. I leave at their helm our priority bills which include the bill against discrimination on account of ethnicity and religious belief; the Islamic Banking Bill; the bill on the establishment of the Institute of Sulu and Mindanao Traditional Arts; and the bill on the National Hijab Day which was just passed by the Committee on Muslim Affairs.

Being a member of the House of Representatives is indeed a great honor; to be the people's voice; to be their representative; to decide and cast a vote, for and in their behalf, on policies and laws that affect their lives from conception to death; to run this government and determine the country's future; to build the foundations upon which this nation's tomorrow shall stand; and to create a path unto which the children of this nation, our own children, shall take their journey.

The very thought of this great responsibility overwhelms me; it scares me. As a struggling Muslim, I fear being made accountable in the next life of the trust given to me by the people, when I cannot even begin to imagine how I shall account for my own weaknesses, but with the guidance and hard work of all Anak Mindanao members and partners, from our AMIN sa Kongreso staff, to our AMIN volunteers in the communities, to those who continue to believe in us, who kept reminding us of the more than 700,000 who voted and therefore trusted us, this Representation held on.

Being a Member of the House of Representatives is no comfortable task, not when you have your own persuasions too which do not always align with the people you claim to represent; not when you know the complexities of government bureaucracy that are impossible to reform overnight and you also know how greatly they contribute to the worse realities of our people on the ground; not when you pour your soul out to champion a cause you believe in but you are judged by what they perceive to be your political agenda.

Despite all these, I do not regret a single moment I was Anak Mindanao's Representative. I shall hold it one of my greatest blessings, perhaps a destiny I was meant to fulfill. The knowledge, wisdom and competencies I gained as a Member of this House; the brilliance and commitment of fellow Legislators, unfortunately, seldom seen by the public as the most productive hard work happen in committee meetings which, unless controversial, do not make it to the headlines; the doors of opportunities it opened not just for myself but for every deserving individual and cause; and the people I met and whose friendship I shall value my whole life—all these I will carry with me beyond the walls of Congress. All these I shall bring with me when I go back to my people not as their Representative but as one of them.

Some of those who knew of my decision said I can always go back as we are only required to be here on specific days, but going back does not only mean being with them physically. It only means, for me, being heard when I speak not as a person of influence or power, but as me. It also means being spoken to without the barrier of a title or a position, just me. Our sad reality today is that many can no longer see beyond titles and positions. May we realize that these are not goals but are mere platforms and opportunities, ways on how to fulfill a greater calling in life and for me as a Muslim, as a path to gain a better life in the hereafter, *insha Allah*. Whatever title or position or status we have, when it no longer serves that purpose, becomes meaningless. There is no higher office or lower rank. What matters is where and how you can serve best and this is a reminder, foremost to myself.

This realization became strongly evident when the Marawi incident happened. I am not from the city but the impact of what happened brought me to so many questions and self-reflections, thoughts of where I am and where I am most needed and probably, most effective. Although there are many factors coming together that led to the incident, it is a known fact that our people's, particularly our youth's, frustrations over the seeming loss of our struggles, the imminent failure to realize our aspirations, became a vulnerable sentiment used by these groups to their advantage. As Member of this House in the Sixteenth Congress, I, along with some fellow Moro legislators, did not fail in saying this.

When the Marawi incident happened, especially when I heard how young some of the Members of this group were—10, 12, 15—ages of our own children, I can only ask myself, where did we fail? When and how did we lose them? Had I remained in the communities as one of them and spoke to them of peace, perhaps I could have convinced a child or two that it is possible. We often speak of winning hearts and minds. The fight is no longer anywhere but in our very communities and homes. The hearts and minds we so desperately need to

win over are not anyone else's but the hearts and minds of our very own children. But as I go back, I make this last plea to all of you, honorable Members of this august Chamber. There is another opportunity for you.

I am grateful to Deputy Speaker Bai Sandra Sema, Majority Leader Fariñas and Speaker Alvarez for allowing me to co-author the Bangsamoro Basic Law drafted by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, my last act as Member of the House of Representatives. I leave, appealing to your compassion and discernment, with hope in our leaders and faith in the President to make true his vow to pass the BBL. I appeal to you, we may be a little too late, as we all know now, but please let us not miss this opportunity, probably the last, to win back our people. As I go back, may this be a gift I can offer them from you, not a gift as a token of benevolence but a gift that we truly deserve, a gift not just from the House of Representatives, not just from this administration, but from the Filipino people.

To all those who believed and journeyed with me, who lent their voices so I may speak on their behalf, know that I have given my all to be a worthy echo of your beautiful voices. I leave not to be silent, but just as I spoke all these years to magnify your own, and I pray that you welcome me back and allow my voice to be one with yours where it always belong.

Lastly, in these most challenging times we face as a nation, and as a former Member of this honored House, I pray for our strength and guidance, for lights in our hearts as individual Members and as an institution—an institution that is a pillar of our democracy, a sail that sets the course of our country's voyage. May we find the courage to overcome that which rifted us apart and the compassion to rise above whatever barrier had been built among us, including those we ourselves built. For while it is the very nature of this institution in the performance of its mandate to always divide the House, it is our greater accountability to keep this nation and the people whole.

Maraming salamat po. *Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi ta'ala wabarakatuh.* (Applause)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Cong. Kaka J. Bag-ao of the Lone District of Dinagat Islands for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Hon. Kaka J. Bag-ao is recognized.

REP. BAG-AO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I would just like to make a short manifestation.

Mme. Speaker, nais ko lang pong magbigay ng pugay sa ating kasama, si Anak Mindanao Party-List Representative, the Hon. Sitti Djalia Turabin-Hataman.

Nalulungkot po ako na hindi na natin siya makakasama rito sa Kongreso. Naging kasama po natin siya sa napakaraming laban para sa isang mas makatarungang lipunan. Mula sa pagtutulak na maipasa ang Bangsamoro Basic Law hanggang sa paglaban sa diskriminasyong nararanasan ng mga Pilipino, Moro man o LGBT, isa siya sa mga hinahangaan nating Mambabatas. Isa pang malaking kawalan sa Seventeenth Congress ang kanyang paglisan pero tiyak kong makakasama pa natin siya sa iba't ibang kampanya para sa katarungan, kapayapaan at demokrasya.

Kaya, Cong. Dada, maraming salamat sa iyo. Bilang kapwa taga-isa, bilang kapwa Mindanaoan, bilang kapwa kasapi ng Kaya Natin, bilang kapwa peace advocate, human rights defender at equality champ, makakaasa kang kasama mo pa rin ako sa pagpapanday ng mas maganda at makatarungang bukas para sa ating bayan.

Mabuhay ka, Anak Mindanao Party-List Representative, the Hon. Sitti Djalia Turabin-Hataman. (Applause)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. Sitti Turabin-Hataman to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (Silence) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

PRIVILEGE HOUR *Continuation*

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (Silence) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I now move that the Gentleman from the First District of Lanao del Norte, Rep. Mohamad Khalid Q. Dimaporo, be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The honorable Rep. Mohamad Khalid Q. Dimaporo is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. DIMAPORO (M.)

REP. DIMAPORO (M.). *Auzu billahi min ash shaitani rajeem. Bismillah Hirakman-Niraheem.*

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, *Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh*.

First, let me acknowledge the House leadership for filing House Bill No. 6475, the BTC version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law. The passage of that legislation will give the Moros their ancestral domain and their right to self-determination. At the same time, let me remind the Body that the word “Moro” was used to unite the Muslim tribes in an armed struggle against the Philippine government. Not all of us believe in the Moro movement. I, for one, am proudly a Filipino and the legislation passed in Congress, on my behalf, was the creation of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos.

My speech today is about the NCMF and how it is failing as an institution. First, I would like to address its budget. Second, I would like to revisit the NCMF Law. Third, I would like to discuss corruption in the Commission as regards the Hajj passport scandal. Lastly, I would like to touch on the Hajj pilgrimage program of the Commission.

To begin with, in the plenary deliberations on the 2018 Budget, three Commissions were moved to be given a P1,000 budget: the Energy Regulatory Commission, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Commission on Human Rights. Unknown to the public is that another Commission was almost subjected to a P1, 000 budget, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos. This was mainly due to the unsatisfactory presentation and explanation of their 2018 Budget during the NCMF budget briefing and pre-plenary under the Committee on Appropriations. The Committee Chairman and all Members of Congress present were disappointed that the NCMF Secretary and all the Commissioners were absent. The presentation of the NCMF of their 2018 budget lacked substance. The only clear-cut financial explanation given to the House of Representatives is that the DBM increased their budget to P612,962,000 and that they prioritized ICT projects for 2018 worth a total of P15,431,000 and that 80 percent of their total budget is for salary. No substantial explanation was given as to how the more than P600 million worth of taxpayers’ money will go to the benefit of Muslim Filipinos. No data were provided as to what output will be delivered from the use of public funds. I was hoping for a more detailed presentation of government services delivered for the payment of their salaries.

As I previously mentioned, the initial reaction was to give a P1,000 budget as retaliation for the absence of the NCMF officials during the budget briefing and in the plenary. The 2018 NCMF budget passed unquestioned and was approved even with the absence of its officials. The approval of the 2018 NCMF budget was, in retrospect, an act of kindness. Those of us present in the Committee were not satisfied with the

answers regarding their budget for salary, specifically the agency’s inability to fill vacant positions, especially since these were converted to savings in the agency and we do not know how the savings were spent. To address this, I filed the following resolution: A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMISSION ON AUDIT TO PROVIDE THE COMMITTEE ON MUSLIM AFFAIRS A REPORT ON THE UTILIZATION OF SAVINGS IN THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM FILIPINOS FOR THE YEAR 2011 TO 2016.

Before I continue, let me refer to the law creating the NCMF. The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos was created by virtue of Republic Act No. 9997 on July 27, 2009. The Act abolished the Office of Muslim Affairs and replaced it with a commission headed by an NCMF Secretary. There are nine Commissioners in total. Among the Commissioners, one is from the women sector, one is from the youth, one is from the Ulama sector; and the remaining number of Commissioners are chosen to represent the different Muslim tribes of the Philippines, provided that not more than two Commissioners come from the same tribe at any given time.

Republic Act No. 9997 provides the NCMF with 29 powers and functions. Its primary function is to act as a link between the President and Muslim communities. Its secondary responsibilities would be the development of Muslim settlements and it acts as the primary agency in which Muslim Filipinos can seek government assistance. It also functions as a coordinating body to the government agencies in behalf of Muslim Filipinos, and this includes the peace process, the development of trade and industry, and the planning, budgeting and performance evaluation of government programs that benefit Muslim Filipinos. It is also mandated to establish Islamic research centers, museums and cultural institutions. It is the frontline agency of the government to facilitate the Hajj, *awqaf* or endowment, and the Madrasah education system.

The NCMF Law also provides the Commission with seven bureaus to attain its objectives: 1) Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs – this Bureau focuses on the economic development and livelihood for Muslim Filipinos; 2) Bureau of Muslim Cultural Affairs – this Bureau is in charge of research, studies of cultural development of Muslim Filipinos. It is also responsible for the Madrasah and also the conduct of the *Qu’ran* Reading Contest; 3) Bureau of Muslim Settlement – this Bureau is responsible for the development of Muslim settlements; 4) Bureau of External Relations – this Bureau is both the public relations arm and the public information arm of the NCMF; 5) Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment – this Bureau is in charge of the administration of Hajj, the processing of travel documents, collection of fees such as the *mutawiff* fees

and other requirements stipulated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This Bureau is also in charge of the administration of *awqaf* (endowment) programs and projects; 6) Bureau of Peace and Conflict Resolution. – this Bureau is tasked to settle conflict in Muslim communities and participate in the national peace process; 7) Bureau of Legal Affairs. – it is the Bureau tasked to provide legal assistance to members of Muslim Filipinos. It is also the legal arm of the NCMF.

Congress has legislated a good law for the benefit of Muslim Filipinos. I would like to place on record my disappointment in the unprofessionalism of the NCMF leadership, as they have been absent when called upon by the Committee on Muslim Affairs and were absent when called upon to defend their 2018 budget. Ideally, we should be working together for the benefit of Muslim Filipinos scattered throughout our Republic. How can we work together if the NCMF cannot treat their partners here in the House of Representatives with respect?

When I was Governor, the impression that I had of the NCMF was that they were mere facilitators of Hajj pilgrimage, as the only time we, in the LGU, see them active is when Hajj season begins. Now, as Congressman, I have seen the depth of their powers as a Commission—the power to develop domestic trade and provide livelihood for Muslim Filipinos; the power to provide scholarships, domestically and internationally, for Muslim Filipinos; the power to establish cultural museums; and the responsibility over the Madrasah educational system— all of which could have been for the benefit of my province, Lanao del Norte, and other Muslim Filipino settlements outside of the ARMM.

So, now, I would like to address this question: What have they accomplished in their mandate outside the Hajj pilgrimage program and *Qur'an* reading contests? To answer that question, I have filed the following resolution: A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO ASSESS THE BUDGET PROVIDED TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM FILIPINOS AND ITS SEVEN BUREAUS FOR THE YEARS 2010 TO 2017 IN COMPARISON TO THEIR PERFORMANCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF MUSLIM FILIPINOS. It has been almost 10 years since the creation of the NCMF. It is timely that we reevaluate the Commission to determine if it has accomplished anything significant for Muslim Filipinos, and if there is a need to amend and update Republic Act No. 9997 so that the Commission will be more effective in its mandate for the Filipino people.

Next, the current problem of the NCMF is that it has been recently rocked with scandal. Last year, 177 Hajj pilgrims from Indonesia were arrested on August 18, 2016. Indonesian pilgrims were able to obtain Hajj passports from the Department of Foreign Affairs in coordination with the National Commission on Muslim

Filipinos. The Indonesians paid anywhere between P270,000 to P460,000 to obtain a Hajj passport from the Philippines and join the Philippine Hajj delegation. The National Bureau of Investigation unearthed the conspiracy behind the detention of 177 Indonesians. The NBI's Anti-Human Trafficking Division surmised that the Hajj passport scam included members of the NCMF, the DFA and civilian recruiters. The latest news release stated that NCMF Secretary Yasmin Busran-Lao and nine other members of the NCMF are facing charges for violation of the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, Philippine Passport Act, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, and estafa.

Now, the NCMF needs to rebuild their image. They have lost the faith and trust of Muslim Filipinos, being the lead conspirators in the 2016 Hajj passport scandal. We in the House of Representatives can help by providing the needed legislation to prevent this abuse from happening again. Therefore, I also filed the following resolution: A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM FILIPINOS TO PROVIDE A DETAILED BRIEFING REGARDING THEIR FINDINGS IN THE 2016 HAJJ PASSPORT SCANDAL, IN AID OF LEGISLATION.

Finally, last month, September, the Hajj pilgrims of the Philippines returned home. The Hajj pilgrimage is religious tourism. It starts with a departure from Manila to Saudi Arabia and begins in Mecca where pilgrims visit and pray in the Kaaba. From Mecca, they travel to Mina and the pilgrims spend a day in Mina praying and staying in the tents. After Mina, they travel to Arafat where they seek mercy from God and ask for forgiveness of their sins. This ritual lasts from noon to sunset, after which they travel to Muzdalifah and spend their night praying, then sleeping under open skies. They return to Mina and perform the symbolic “stoning of the devil.” Then, *Eid'l Adha* is celebrated with the slaughtering of animals to commemorate the history of Abraham and Ishmael. Then the pilgrims return to Mecca to do a farewell prayer in the sacred mosque. That ends their pilgrimage and they return home to Manila.

A pilgrim embarks on a journey for religious purposes. After the completion of the Hajj, pilgrims generally do not complain of their travel; however, the sheiks do. Sheiks act as guides for our pilgrims, and I have heard complaints from them over the years with regard to food, lodging, and transportation. To place it in perspective, let me share some data. In the year 2015, the Philippines had 8,193 pilgrims who embarked on the Hajj. In 2015, the NCMF collected US\$2,020 per pilgrim to cover entrance fees, food in Arafat and Mina, hotel/housing in Mecca and Mina, and insurance. For the year 2015, with 8,193 pilgrims at US\$2,020 per pilgrim, the NCMF Mutawwif Trust

Fund totals US\$16,549,860—I repeat, US\$16,549,860. If we assume an exchange rate of P45 to a dollar, that is equal to P744,745,700—I repeat again, P744,745,700, an amount larger than the total NCMF 2018 budget. The sheiks complained because they questioned if the pilgrims were getting their money's worth. Rumors circulated that unscrupulous members of the NCMF were making money out of the Hajj Trust Fund.

I addressed this problem in the NCMF budget briefing under the Committee on Appropriations, and the reply of the NCMF was that the inadequate lodging, food and transportation was due to supply and demand. This year, more than 2,000,000 pilgrims worldwide attended the Hajj but unfortunately for the NCMF, they booked food, accommodations and transportation at the last minute, after they have collected the *mutawwif* fee from the pilgrims. This is in comparison to other Muslim countries which negotiate service contracts good for 10 to 15 years. The NCMF solution is a program to establish a revolving fund to cover the 20 percent downpayment required for the Hajj pilgrimage, and the amount needed is P137, 620,000 that was submitted to the DBM for funding. On behalf of the NCMF, the sheiks and our future Hajj pilgrims, I appeal to Malacañang that the NCMF, the DFA, the DOF, the DBM and the COA convene a technical working group to provide a solution that will ensure our pilgrims with satisfactory service when they embark on a Hajj pilgrimage. Likewise, I have filed the following resolution: A RESOLUTION FOR THE DFA, DOF, DBM, AND COA TO SUBMIT THEIR OPINION REGARDING THE NCMF HAJJ REVOLVING FUND PROPOSAL TO THE COMMITTEE ON MUSLIM AFFAIRS, so that we as legislators can help address the needs of our Hajj pilgrims.

In closing, as I have stated in the beginning, when the Spaniards colonized the Philippines, they found Muslim tribes in the archipelago and they referred to them as Moros, similar to the Muslims they have encountered in Spain, the Moors. Centuries later, the struggle for independence continued through armed struggle by the Moro National Liberation Front, then the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Now, the government will act on a legislation to address their needs, the Bangsamoro Basic Law, but for those of us who are already content with the government and have joined mainstream Filipino society, Congress has legislated the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos. My privilege speech today is an appeal to our leaders that we strengthen the NCMF as an institution to live up to its essence, that is, to give dignity and representation to productive members of mainstream society, your brothers and sisters in Islam, the Muslim Filipinos.

Thank you for the privilege to speak, Mme. Speaker.

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuho.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. Mohamad Khalid Q. Dimaporo to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I respectfully move that we recognize the honorable Rep. Tomasito “Tom” S. Villarain of the AKBAYAN Party-List to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The honorable Rep. Tom S. Villarain of Party-List AKBAYAN is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. VILLARIN

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues:

Ever since everyone here was elected into office, we have already been acquainted, at the very least, with our country's biggest enemy. All Filipinos know it. Most of us have felt it, while about a fifth of our population today continue to struggle with it every single day of their lives. Indubitably, the greatest enemy of the Filipino people is poverty—kahirapan. For policymakers, poverty is a problem that demands solution but for more than 21 million Filipinos, it is a reality—the reality—and perhaps the only one they will ever experience if we do not put an end to it.

As an enemy, Mme. Speaker, poverty can be very sophisticated. It can hide behind stellar growth numbers, behind grandiose infrastructure development projects, and even behind the smiles of people who had neither choice nor capability but to acquiesce to the rule of poverty. Once it strikes, it can deal lethal and long-lasting blows to unsuspecting lives for generations, though no fault of their own. As a problem, Mme. Speaker, poverty is complex. It is imbued in our social, political and economic systems, with roots grown so deep that we are challenged to rethink the fundamentals of our current state of affairs. Mme. Speaker, there are disturbing trends in income, wealth and health inequalities. Decreases in income and decline in the standards of living are often accompanied by social problems—malnutrition, drug abuse and deterioration of family life as our social fabric. All these take a toll on the overall health and life expectancy of our people. In the end, inequality can reach the point when it can be inefficient and bad for growth.

Mme. Speaker, as a reality, poverty can be changed. It does not have to be the only reality for many of our fellow Filipinos. This is precisely the role of the government: to change this reality. This is the change that all Filipinos want. This is the change that the poor and marginalized need, and it is incumbent upon us, as their duly elected Representatives to this august Chamber, to call on the Executive to task for making this promise of change happen. Then, again, Mme. Speaker, the challenge to change the reality of poverty transcends all administrations. For the longest time, our country has been plagued with low spending in social protection, weak poverty targeting systems and a lack of policy coherence and coordination, all of which indicate massive underinvestment in human capital, health and education. This is, unfortunately, reflective of the budget that we just passed.

The effects of poverty were very evident in the mid-2000s when the Philippine economy grew at a relatively fast pace, but poverty remained high and even increased at some point. So, the imperative to this challenge, Mme. Speaker, is very clear: We have to reinforce the social protection system. This is what propelled the Department of Social Welfare and Development to pilot and expand the Conditional Cash Transfer Program. From a meager 6,000 families in 2007, the program was eventually able to help 4.46 million families at the end of 2014. All these efforts, Mme. Speaker, spanned for more than seven years and two administrations which, in improving poverty targeting, monitoring and evaluation, secured social protection and financing by gradually increasing the program's budget more than five times bigger since it was started in 2010.

Clearly, Mme. Speaker, it is a considerable breakthrough. Never before has the Philippine government spent so much to directly assist the poorest of the poor at such scale. With a maximum grant of P2,000 per month for complying with health conditions and sending up to three children to school, an incentive mechanism was put in place in order to help the poorest of the poor help themselves. True enough, rigorous impact evaluations, one conducted by the Asian Development Bank as early as 2012 and 2014, confirmed that the Conditional Cash Transfer Program "improves access to health services, keeps children in school, reduces child labor, and does not encourage dependency." Mme. Speaker, sa wikang Pilipino: Naging mas madali para sa mga pamilyang Pilipinong magpagamot at magpaaral, nabawasan ang mga kaso ng mga menor de edad na nagtatrabaho kahit hindi sila dapat magtrabaho, at hindi nito hinihimok ang mahihirap nating mga kababayan na mamihasa at umasa lamang sa pamahalaan. Marahil po, Mme. Speaker, para sa marami sa atin dito, parang maliit na halaga lang ang P2,000 kada buwan. Subalit po para sa mga mahihirap

nating kababayan, ito ang nagtatakda ng pagkakaiba ng paghihikahos at pagraos ng kanilang pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan.

Of course, Mme. Speaker, dear colleagues, there is always room for improvement. Certain adjustments to the program must be made in order to effectively strengthen our country's social protection program: First, and moving forward, regular adjustments must be made to benefit levels to account for inflation. Second, access to and availability of facilities such as schools and health facilities at the community level must meet the growing demand for basic services that the program necessarily creates. Third, coordination among implementers and co-implementers must be tightened to ensure that family development sessions, a core element unique to the Philippines' CCT Program, are well-attended, making for a holistic approach to the reality of poverty as experienced by our kababayan. Finally, we must nurture an open environment for the Conditional Cash Transfer Program as a viable social protection measure and to future innovations that have the huge potential to address the immediate needs of poor Filipino families.

Mme. Speaker, as a closing note, poverty, again, as I have mentioned, is a sophisticated enemy but it can be defeated by, first, protecting the poor, precisely, through social protection. Of course, the bigger challenges of structural reforms must also come into play. Poverty, as a complex problem, can be solved by encouraging bold solutions with clear short-term and long-term indicators. Poverty as a reality can be changed by changing the way we look at social protection, starting with existing measures that evidently work—a claim that Filipino families themselves now, as seen in our gallery here of CCT beneficiaries, can attest to.

With that, Mme. Speaker, this Representation appeals that Congress should, again, do its refocusing on really improving the social protection system that our Filipino families, especially under the CCT Program, badly need.

Thank you. Magandang gabi po, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Honorable ...

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). What is the pleasure ...

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the Gentleman from Albay, Congressman Edcel C. Lagman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The honorable Cong. Edcel Lagman is recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Will the distinguished Gentleman yield to some questions?

REP. VILLARIN. With great honor and privilege, Mme. Speaker, I yield to Congressman Lagman for an interpellation.

REP. LAGMAN. May we know, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman what are the components of social protection?

REP. VILLARIN. Mme. Speaker, the components include this Cash Transfer—direct cash transfer to poor families identified under the National Household Targeting System. Another component would be the conditions for this cash transfer that would include regular check-ups for nursing mothers who are members who are identified beneficiaries under the NHTS; and another condition would be for the children of CCT beneficiaries who go to school, not just on the secondary level now but, perhaps, a condition that would eventually have to reach going to school under the Free Tertiary Education Law that we had just passed, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. How about an improved health delivery system, is this a component of social protection?

REP. VILLARIN. It should include that component, Mme. Speaker, especially in providing our community-based, our barangay-based health facilities which, until now, are still challenged because, from the latest accounts of the DOH, there are only, I think, 19,000 out of the possible 34,000 or 36,000 supposedly barangay health centers that should be constructed. Again, as I had said, Mme. Speaker, the CCT beneficiaries especially the mothers are required to report to the nearest health centers for their regular check-ups and that would include maternal health care and reproductive health care, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, thank you for those answers, distinguished Gentleman. I think the latest data showed that there are so many or numerous barangays which do not have health centers, so much so that, if the poor is required to go to health centers and there is no health center to attend to them, then, that would be a failure. Would that be correct?

REP. VILLARIN. I agree with the observation of Cong. Edcel Lagman because as I had mentioned earlier, the lack of health facilities and equipment,

especially at the community barangay level, hinders this one significant condition of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program. It is really urgent and important that the focus on health should be made a priority in terms of really reengineering the design of the CCT Program and so, it should be included in the package of really improving the health delivery system at the community level, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. May we also know from the distinguished Gentleman what are the major causes of poverty?

REP. VILLARIN. What are ...

REP. LAGMAN. ... the major causes of poverty?

REP. VILLARIN. Well, poverty has multi-faceted reasons and they would range from the issue of lack of access to productive assets in the communities like land, access to our coastal resources, access to our natural resources by the poorest of the poor. Second would be the issue of lack of opportunities in terms of gainful employment, especially at the countryside where sources of livelihood are lacking, and the opportunities for having productive labor and earning decent wages are also lacking. Then, in the urban areas, again, we face a situation wherein there is a lack of decent settlement for our workers, especially those doing menial labor. There is a lack of, of course, regular employment in terms of having tenurial security and in general, there is a lack of jobs—regular and sustainable jobs—for many of those entering the workforce, Mme. Speaker. There are also structural problems of poverty which, in my humble opinion, Mme. Speaker, are also rooted in certain economic policies, the neo-liberal economic policies that favor the few and the elite over the demands of the vast majority of our people.

So, again, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the problems are huge and the reasons for poverty can be both historical and structural in nature.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, thank you, distinguished Gentleman. Can we include the problem on population as a major cause of poverty, although the population growth rate has decelerated due to the enactment of the Reproductive Health Law, despite its implementation being hampered by a number of causes. The population growth rate is still high, relatively high, compared to progressive countries in Asia as well as in the rest of the world. Would he account this relatively high population growth rate as a cause or a major cause of poverty?

REP. VILLARIN. Well, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I would also subscribe to that analysis that population in terms of the present situation where there

are existing problems on access and lack of resources available to the vast majority of our Filipino people, then population growth exerts pressure on the existing resources that we have, and when population growth registers an increase over a significant period. It would also provide challenges to the government in terms of, not just development planning, but, of course, allocating the necessary budget for this growing population, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. This problem of a relatively high population growth rate is compounded by a low contraceptive prevalence rate, also a high number of teenage pregnancies—the highest in this part of the world—and also a high incidence of maternal morbidity. Would you agree to these factors, distinguished Gentleman?

REP. VILLARIN. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. In fact, these are key indicators when we do planning development interventions. We look at MMR, and even the issue of infant mortality rate has also been a constant and consistent problem that we are still encountering despite the relatively high economic growth that we are supposedly registering. So, the big challenge really is to look at poverty from these very important social indicators. Again, as I had mentioned earlier, it would redound to the family as the basic unit, to the community, and, of course, to the political units that govern these communities and families, on what would be the responsibilities that they have to shoulder in terms of addressing these concerns, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Would the distinguished Gentleman agree that another major cause of poverty would be poor human capacity development?

REP. VILLARIN. Yes, Mme. Speaker. As I had mentioned, the challenge includes addressing human capacity development. In fact, one of the component elements of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program would be the Family Development Sessions that should address human capacity development. Here, when we want to address poverty, it is not just the economic side, but also the attitude, the mindset and the perspectives of the poor that we want to help; and not just because we are giving it as a dole-out, but this is an intervention of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program, the FDS as a component for improving their human capacities in terms of really looking at poverty from their own lens, from their own experience, and helping themselves out of poverty. I think that is really crucial human capacity development because the poor can be empowered and this empowerment of the poor would be the greatest contribution in terms of addressing poverty, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Another factor would be the prevalence of health disabilities, so much so that those in the labor sector are unable to avail of or engage in viable work activities because of health disabilities.

REP. VILLARIN. That is also true, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. In fact, even our social protection measures for our workers, especially their pension and retirement plans, if we look at even the workers covered under social security of the 12 million members of the SSS, perhaps, only around two million enjoy regular jobs or regular wages. The rest of the SSS members—the more than 10 million are seasonal workers—only contribute to the fund on a seasonal basis. In fact, some have just contributed three months or a month as their contribution to the pension fund.

So, these issues related to social protection, related to access to health services under the program of or in our medicare program, it is really very limited and cannot be availed of by thousands of our workers, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, the latest figure which I have on the poverty incidence as of 2015 is 21.6 percent. Would the distinguished Gentleman have any later figure?

REP. VILLARIN. Well, those are the latest available statistics, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, although there are supposedly changes in those statistics from a previous high of 26 percent. Again, this 21.6 percent does not truly reflect what is the reality on the ground because the indicators in terms of capturing poverty incidence would just look primarily on the socio-economic profile of the respondents, and as I had said, poverty is a multifaceted problem, its face and mask can be deceiving in terms of what we see. So, I do believe that 21.6 percent is not just the figure, but it could be higher, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, thank you, Mme. Speaker. To my last point on the latest self-rated poverty, the SWS March 25 to 28 poll showed 50 percent of 1,200 respondents, or an estimated 11.5 million families, as rating themselves poor. This is six points above the 44 percent or an estimated 10 million recorded in December 2016. Now, what would this figure indicate, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman?

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you for those figures, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

I think this self-rated poverty is, in a way, a direct and clear indicator of how people perceive reality on the ground. Self-rated poverty directly asks the question that really matters to a particular individual in terms of his or her existing condition, and I think 11.5

million Filipinos out of the 103 million Filipinos rating themselves as poor or lacking the essentials needed to eke out a living or even have food on their tables, that is still a very significant and high number. This 11.5 million, perhaps, is not just the total number because, again, this self-rated poverty captures only a moment of a person's existence, but this number could change and I do believe, Mme. Speaker, that this number, again, could go higher.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, this figure is nationwide. Do you have any idea what is the figure, say in Mindanao? Would it be higher than the nationwide average?

REP. VILLARIN. Well, I do not have the exact figures, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, but in Mindanao, Lanao del Sur where Marawi is located, has now the highest in terms of poverty incidence, going as high as 73 percent. In terms of the poorest provinces in our country, 11 out of the 20 poorest provinces are in Mindanao which has around 28 provinces. So, when we say 11 out of the 28 provinces in Mindanao are rated being within the 20 top poorest provinces of our country, that speaks a lot, and that, again, the face of poverty is in Mindanao where conflict and poverty coexist for decades and decades, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you again, distinguished Gentleman. Under the TRAIN, which is the tax reform package, phase one, there is a provision in the House version on social protection. We will have to await the final form of the TRAIN in the Senate so that we will be able to assess what social protection is included in the Senate version.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Villarica relinquished the Chair to Rep. Arthur R. Defensor Jr.

REP. VILLARIN. My interpretation of social protection, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is not just about safety nets. When we talk about social protection, this is more about helping those in the marginalized sectors, helping the poor come out of poverty through a complex and comprehensive approach, and not just treat this as a one-time measure wherein you give dole-outs or you give token amounts of money, like increasing the fuel taxes wherein a certain percentage of that fuel tax would subsidize the lowly jeepney drivers and those that would be significantly affected by the taxes on fuel. So, I think we really have to look deeper into what we think about social protection, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. In the House version, there is what is known as the unconditional cash transfer, it is a component of the TRAIN, and this is good for four years, from the effectivity of the new excise taxes. I was

just wondering, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman, why do you have to burden the poor with the increase in excise taxes like in LPG, kerosene and other goods being availed of by the poor and then, give them this unconditional cash transfer, the implementation of which could be a bureaucratic nightmare?

REP. VILLARIN. I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that, again, the Gentleman's observation that this is a burden to the poor is reflective of that policy, wherein you take away from the left hand and give it back through the right hand of the poor. So, it is just like saying that the poor is being mesmerized to believe that his or her contribution, in terms of improving the fiscal position of government, is helping the entire country but in reality, it is the poor that will be heavily burdened, not just because they will be at the losing end of this fiscal measure, but because it will impact on their daily lives, being poor, and much more in the lives of their families and the communities where they are located, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Would the distinguished Gentleman agree, Mr. Speaker, that the administration is not consistent with its policies to address, alleviate or solve the poverty problem because there are certain policies which demonizes the poor, like the increase in the excise taxes which would affect seriously the majority of our people who are disadvantaged and marginalized?

REP. VILLARIN. I would agree to that, again, to that observation, Mr. Speaker, because even now that the Senate is deliberating and has approved this TRAIN measure, there is still really no comprehensive study in terms of the lasting effect of this tax reform package, while it will contribute a significant revenue, supposedly, around P500 billion to the national coffers. Again, the danger of raising revenues would be on the spending side, and if there is a lack of spending for social protection, lack of spending for health care delivery, and lack of spending for improving employment opportunities, especially in the rural areas or countryside, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that would, again, entail burdening the poor more with these fiscal policies.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Gentleman, for accommodating my questions.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you, Congressman Lagman. It is always an honor to be interpellated by the distinguished Gentleman from Albay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Defensor). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Honorable Villarín and the interpellation to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Defensor). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The speech of the Honorable Villarín is referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Lady from ACT TEACHERS Party-List, the Hon. France L. Castro, be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Defensor). The distinguished Lady from ACT TEACHERS, the Hon. France L. Castro, is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. CASTRO (F.L.)

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker at mga kapwa ko Kinatawan, magandang hapon.

Ang darating na Huwebes, Oktubre 5, ay National Teachers' Day. Para sa sektor na aking pinanggalingan at pinagsisilbihan, higit sa araw ng pagdiriwang, ito ay araw ng paniningil at protesta. Minamarkahan ang October 5 dahil sa ito ay araw ng adoption o paglagda sa Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers noong 1966 ng International Labor Organization at ng United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization o ILO-UNESCO. Ito ay makasaysayang dokumento dahil nilalaman nito ang mga internasyunal na pamantayan para sa nakabubuhay na sahod at benepisyong sa mga guro; makataong kondisyon sa empleyo, trabaho at pagtuturo; partisipasyon ng mga guro sa pormulasyon at implementasyon ng mga polisiya at batas na may epekto sa kanila at sa kanilang propesyon at iba pa. Nakasaad din dito ang mga rekomendasyon upang kilalanin, igalang at proteksiyunan ng mga gobyerno ang mga karapatan ng mga nasa propesyon sa publiko o pribado mang sektor. Lahat ng ito ay bahagi ng karapatan ng mamamayan sa edukasyon na siyang dapat protektahan ng pamahalaan.

At this juncture, the Presiding Officer relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Linabelle Ruth R. Villarica.

Sa ganitong konteksto nakalatag ang aming komemorasyon ng National Teachers' Day. Para sa

amin, walang saysay ang anumang pagbati kung walang makatotohanang pagkilala ang pamahalaan sa esensiya at direksiyon ng 1966 Recommendations, at bilang isang guro na nagsilbi ng halos 30 taon, ako po ay taos-pusong naninindigan, kasama ang mga guro, upang ipaglaban ang esensiyang ito.

Mme. Speaker, noong nakaraang taon, kasama ang mga guro sa mga naniniwala sa mga pangako ni Pangulong Duterte at kanyang bagong administrasyon na itataas niya ang suweldo, hindi lamang sa mga pulis at sundalo, pati na rin ang sahod ng mga teacher, na wawakasan niya ang endo at kontraktwalisasyon, na ibababa niya ang income tax at maglalagat ng progresibong mga sistema ng pagbuwis, na kabilang sa mga prayoridad niya ang edukasyon, kalusugan at iba pang mga batayang serbisyo para sa mga mamamayan at iba pa.

Ngunit ngayon, pagkalipas ng mahigit isang taon, kasama rin ang mga guro sa mga binigo ng Pangulo sa pagbali niya sa mga pangakong ito. Nananatiling drawing ang pangakong salary increase at sa halip ay pinagpapatuloy lamang ang barya-baryang umento sa ilalim ng Salary Standardization Law IV ng administrasyong Aquino. Nagpapatuloy ang kontraktwalisasyon at sa halip ay palalalain at mai-institutionalize pa sa pribado at pampublikong sektor sa ilalim ng mga pinalabas na sirkular ng department order ng DBM, DepEd, CSC, DILG at ng DOLE. Walang dagdag na benepisyong, sa halip ay binabawasan pa nga ang mga inaasahang local allowances ng mga guro at babawasan pa ang Performance-Based Bonus ng lahat ng mga kawani ng pamahalaan. Mataas pa rin ang income tax. Sa halip ay tinali ang pagbibigay nito sa mga bago at pabigat na excise tax sa produkto ng langis at -sweetened beverages, pati na rin sa mas malawak na VAT. Paparating na ang TRAIN na ibabangga ng administrasyong Duterte sa mamamayan, lalo na sa mga mahihirap. Ramdam na ramdam po ng ating mga kaguruan, mga kawani at mga mamamayan ang impact o epekto ng halos tatlong buwan na pagtaas ng mga presyo ng gasolina na siyang may domino effect sa mga presyo ng ating mga bilihan at ng ating mga serbisyo.

Ngayon, nagpapatuloy ang mga neoliberal na atake sa edukasyon, kalusugan at batayang serbisyo. Sunod-sunod ang pagpasa ng Kongresong ito ng mga panukalang batas na magpapalubog lalo sa mga mamamayan sa kahirapan at maglalayo sa kanila mula sa kanilang karapatan sa edukasyon, kalusugan at iba pang kagaya ng mga naturangang Universal Health Care at National ID System Bills. Pinalala rin ang mga giyera laban sa mga mamamayan, mga giyerang kontra droga at kontra terorista diumano, pero pumapatay kahit sa mga inosenteng kabataan kagaya nila Kian delos Santos, Carl Angelo Arnaiz at Obillo Bay-ao, at tuma-target sa mga eskuwelahan, guro at estudyante ng mga kapatid nating Lumad at Moro sa Mindanao.

Gumagastos ng P323,000 kada bomba upang wasakin ang mga paaralan, imbis na suportahan at payabungin pa ang mga ito.

Kapapasa rin sa House na ito ang panukalang 2018 Budget na komprehensibong naglalaman ng mga neo-liberal at pasistang polisiyang ito at komprehensibong ring lalabag sa mga karapatan ng mga mamamayan. Hindi inaprobahan ang mga panukala naming amyenda kagaya ng mas mataas na MOOE, pondo para sa Special Hardship Allowance, libreng medical examination, chalk allowance, at lump sum para sa promotion. Sa nakaraang taon, ipinagpapatuloy ang mga anti-gurong polisiya ng DepEd kagaya ng pabigat na daily lesson log. Hindi rin natin nakitaan ang ahensiya ng pagtindig upang suportahan ang mga laban ng mga guro at iba pang mga kawani mula sa salary increase at pagbibigay ng sapat na MOOE para sa mga operasyon ng mga eskuwelahan, kabilang na ang nonmonetary benefits sa ilalim ng collective negotiation agreements, lalong-lalo na sa tatlong regional unions na mayroon ng approved, at hanggang sa pagkondena sa pagbobomba sa mga paaralan at komunidad ng mga Lumad at Moro.

Masahol din ang kalagayan ng mga guro sa mga pribadong eskuwelahan dahil kasama sila sa nananawagan upang itaas ng sahod—P750 kada araw para sa pribadong sektor—at wakasan na ang kontraktwalisasyon. Marami rin sa kanila ang biktima ngayon ng kapabayaang nang ipinatupad ng gobyerno ang K to 12 Program nang walang sapat na paghahanda upang protektahan ang mga mawawalan ng trabaho at mababawasan ng suweldo. Mme. Speaker, mga kapwa ko Mambabatas, ito ang kinakaharap ng mga guro sa ngayon—mga kondisyong taliwas sa ipinapanawagan ng 1966 ILO-UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers. Ito rin ang mga kondisyong lalong nagpapaalab sa deskontento at galit ng mga guro dahil sa mga kondisyong ito, lumalabas na tinatalikuran ni Pangulong Duterte ang esensiya ng National Teachers' Day dahil sinasawalang bahala niya ang kapakanan, kagalingan at karapatan ng mga guro bilang isang propesyon, bilang pangunahing tagapaghatid ng edukasyon at bahagi ng lipunang Pilipino.

Pinaglaban ng mga guro at ipinasa, sa pamamagitan ng ACT TEACHERS Party-List, ang isang batas na nagtatakda sa October 5 bilang araw ng komemorasyon ng National Teachers' Day at pagdiin sa gobyerno upang tuparin ang esensiya nito. Sinasalamang ng National Teachers' Day ang kahilingan ng mga guro upang kilalanin naman ng pamahalaan ang kanilang mga karapatan sa nakabubuhay na sahod at iba pang economic and labor rights, at isapatupad at pondohan ng sapat ang mga batas at kasunduan ng CNA na ipinangako ng karapatang ito. Sa pamamagitan ng sama-samang pagkilos, matagal nang nilulunsad ng aming sektor ang komemorasyon ng World Teachers' Day. Sa sama-samang pagkilos din napagtatagumpayan

ang pagsasabatas ng isang National Teachers' Day Law, gaya ng iba pang mga napagtagumpayan naming laban sa mga isyu ng suweldo noong mga nakaraang dekada, GSIS, chalk allowance, karapatan sa pag-union at collective negotiation for better working conditions at iba pa. Bilang isang sektor ay ibinahagi ng kaguruan ang kanilang ambag sa pagsulong ng kampanyang masa sa sambayanang Pilipino laban sa pork barrel, korapsyon at iba pa.

Hindi pa buo ang tagumpay na ito at nahaharap pa nga sa papatinding laban ang sektor ng edukasyon at mamamayan. Kaya sa sama-samang pagkilos din ay isusulong ng mga guro sa darating na October 5 ang isang malawakan at pambansang protesta upang ipanawagan at ipaglaban ang salary increase at iba pang mga ekonomiko at pulitikal na hinaing ng edukasyon. Ngayong darating na October 5, hindi nanghihingi ng simpleng pagbati ng "Happy National Teachers' Day" ang mga guro mula sa ating Pangulo. Mas lalong hindi sila nanghihingi ng panibagong matatamis na pangako. Para sa amin, sa mamamayang Pilipino, hindi bababa sa solidong commitment at maka-gurong tindig mula sa Pangulo ang aming hiling:

Suweldo itaas: P25,000 minimum para sa ating mga guro at P16,000 para sa ating mga kawani!

No to new excise taxes and expanded VAT!

Stop killing our youth!

Lift martial law in Mindanao!

Marami pong salamat, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara for a short manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Hon. Ria Vergara is recognized.

REP. VERGARA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Ang akin po ay maikling manifestation lamang ukol sa privilege speech ng aking mabuting kaibigan na si Congresswoman France Castro.

Kagalang-galang na Representante France Castro, dinig ko po ang iyong mga hinaing subalit, sana, kapag kayo po ay naglilista ng mga isyu, alalahanin naman sana natin na hindi lamang mga guro ang pinaglilingkuran ng ating mahal na Presidente. Siya po ay Presidente ng lahat ng Pilipino at kabilang din ang mga pinaglilingkuran niyang mga magsasaka, tricycle drivers at iba pang mga sektor na mas hirap pa sa buhay. While I hear your frustration, I hope you realize that there is a myriad of problems that our country is facing: we have global warming, climate change, drug war, EJKs, and these are all very complex. This coming

World Teachers' Day on October 5, while I know it will be a forum for us to express our dissatisfaction, I hope it is also a day when we come together to support our President and the hard work that he is doing to put our country together. There are a lot of challenges, and I think it is counterproductive for us to go there rallying and saying "You did not do what you promised like the end of contractualization, the increase on salaries." Alam kong gusto niyang gawin lahat ito pero siya ay Presidente ng buong Pilipinas at maraming sektor din ang mas nangangailangan pa ng tulong.

Iyon lang po, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you, Congresswoman France Castro.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. France Castro to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I now move to recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Makati, the Hon. Manuel Monsour T. Del Rosario III, for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Hon. Monsour Del Rosario of the First District of Makati City is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. DEL ROSARIO

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Mme. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues, for the past three weeks this Representation has been on an official mission abroad. I was appointed by the Philippine Olympic Committee as *Chef de Mission* to the 2017 Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games or AIMAG.

I could not refuse the appointment. Sports is my passion, public service my vocation. Long before I was elected to Congress and even before I became an actor, I was a sportsman. I am, still. Sports saved my life. You see, I was a stray youth once, escaping a broken home, living a vice-filled life until I found the sport of taekwondo. The sport rescued me from a perilous existence. It filled the void that resulted from my childhood struggles and shielded me from the evils that once tormented my early years. Sports shaped my character. I am what I am now because of sports. I accepted the appointment as *Chef de Mission* as my way of paying back to sports which has given me so much.

The AIMAG is a multi-sport competition organized by the Olympic Council of Asia. Participation in the AIMAG is important because the games only occur every four years and is highly prized by elite athletes, coaches and national and international sporting federations. This year's AIMAG was held from September 15 to 27, 2017 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. It has more participating countries than the Asian games. Sixty-two nations competed in the AIMAG, consisting of 45 member-countries of the Olympic Council of Asia, and for the first time, 19 countries from Oceania and the African Refugee Team. The games saw over 6,000 athletes compete in 21 sports. We sent a delegation of 116 athletes who competed in 17 sports, as well as a number of coaches and officials, including our respective colleague and Chairman of the Committee on Youth and Sports, the honorable Cong. Conrado M. Estrella III.

Over the duration of the games, we witnessed a festival of top-level sports and a showcase of world-class facilities. The events were held in the multibillion-dollar Olympic Complex which includes over 30 different facilities. The opening and the closing ceremonies were held in the gleaming 45,000-capacity Ashgabat Olympic Stadium. We were amazed at the quality of the facilities and the cultural experiences the host country shared with our team during our stay in Ashgabat. We could only wish we had similar cutting-edge facilities in our country, as well as the same level of support as the massive assistance their government pours into sports development.

The job of a *Chef de Mission* was not an easy one. It required significant multi-tasking skills, the ability to walk between the raindrops and not get wet, so to speak, the ability to exercise diplomacy without compromising. It involved endless meetings with the Philippine Sports Commission, the Philippine Olympic Committee, and the National Sports Associations to plan strategies, select athletes and officials, and prepare logistics up to the tiniest detail. It entailed acting as team spokesperson, responding to media inquiries, ensuring that the responsibilities of all team personnel are carried out, and building a team environment that is conducive to a productive and positive experience for all team members. It required taking a hands-on approach in looking after the welfare of our athletes and motivating them on competition days.

While national team success is dependent on the quality of athletic talent and coaching, effective leadership of Team Philippines is equally critical for a successful participation at the games. I made no bold predictions. My only prayer was they perform their best for the glory of our country and boy, did they ever. As *Chef de Mission*, I am proud to inform this noble assembly that our country's participation in the games was a huge success. Despite the daunting

challenges, Team Philippines exceeded expectations. We finished the 12-day competition with a tally of 30 medals consisting of two golds, 14 silvers, and 14 bronze medals, enabling the Philippines to rank 19th place among 62 countries. This is a tremendous improvement from our previous one-gold, two-bronze haul in the 2013 AIMAG held in Incheon, South Korea that was participated in by only 45 nations. We won medals in 12 of the 17 sports competed in, earning an average of 71 percent. We won medals in such sports as jiu-jitsu, taekwondo, weightlifting, belt and traditional wrestling, athletics, dance sport, chess, billiards, bowling, Muay Thai, Kurash judo, and electronic sports.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Speaker Pantaleon “Bebot” Alvarez for allowing me to represent the House of Representatives and to lead the national delegation; to the PSC led by Chairman William “Butch” Ramirez for its financial and technical backing; to the POC chaired by Jose “Peping” Cojuangco Jr. for entrusting the leadership reins in my hands and allowing me to shepherd the team as *Chef de Mission*; and to our various sponsors whose unwavering support contributed to the success of Team Philippines.

With the 2017 AIMAG having drawn to a close, and long after the flames on the games’ cauldron had been extinguished, our memories of our athletes will be relegated to the dustbin of Philippine history. Such is the ominous fate of our national athletes—forgotten, neglected and ignored. These athletes have sacrificed their blood and sweat to make our country proud. It is only right that we not only honor their sacrifices, but give them the proper recognition they are worthy of. Mme. Speaker, may I, therefore, request that all medal winners of the 2017 AIMAG, as well as their coaches, be invited to the House of Representatives so that they can personally be granted a proper and highly deserved recognition for earning glory for our country, and making our nation proud through their victories.

Congressman po tayo ngayon pero ang puso ko po ay isang Pilipinong mandirigmang atleta, a fighting athlete.

Maraming salamat and good evening to everyone. *(Applause)*

REP. ZUBIRI. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Third District of Bukidnon, the Hon. Manuel F. Zubiri, for his interpellation.

REP. ZUBIRI. Mme. Speaker, would the kind Gentleman from the First District of Makati heed one or two questions, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, and I will answer questions from the good-looking Congressman from Bukidnon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Honorable Zubiri is recognized.

REP. ZUBIRI. Mme. Speaker, as you know, he is my best friend that is why he is telling you that.

Anyway, Mme. Speaker, what is the key to the success of the Asian Games for the Philippines? I remember watching closely during the SEA Games, we came out, we were at number six out of 11 countries but in the Asian Games, out of 62 nations, and you have giant nations, sporting nations vying for gold medals, silver medals, and bronze medals, we came at a good standing of 19 out of 62, which made me very proud. What is the key to the success of our Asian Games performance, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DEL ROSARIO. There are many ingredients. I cannot pinpoint just one particular ingredient. I think the success in Turkmenistan resulted from the cooperation of everybody in the team. Nobody was fighting against each other. We were united and we were able to achieve the impossible. We were there for one cause. We were like one family together fighting for the glory of our country. I think the motivation that inspired the athletes—the team was put in one building. They were all together and nobody went home after the games. We all went there together and we all flew out together. They were like family and the athletes, you know, I really do not know what—I guess the prayers. It is a miracle actually. I am still—lumulutang pa rin ako sa lupa. Hindi ako makapaniwala sa nangyari. I think Congressman Estrella is here and he can say a few words. He witnessed how incredible the games were and how incredible the athletes were, but I think we have to be united. That is a small speck, an example that if we are united, we can achieve the impossible.

So, to my good friend, Congressman Zubiri, I am still trying to figure out what really the success is, but I think the success was that we were confined in one place, we were not allowed to leave, and we had to be together, and we all had to do our roles together. The secretariat did their job, the medical staff did their job, the coaches did their job, and the athletes did their job to the best of their ability. I think this is a good stepping stone for Philippine sports. I think we can learn from this—that if we stop fighting with each other, we can surpass insurmountable odds and achieve the greatness we are all looking for in our athletes. That is all I can say.

REP. ZUBIRI. Mme. Speaker, I think the key word is “united.” I remember the *Chef de Mission*, the First District Congressman from Makati, he sent me a few messages, Viber messages, and they were also happy. In every tournament, all of them were there united. This is the same way I pray every night that this country of ours be united because if we are all united, all people from all walks of life unite and see each other as one, as one nation, then there is no barrier that can destroy us or no barrier that can stop us.

Anyway, I would just like to manifest to my very good friend, to my schoolmate, to my teammate, I salute you. He has done what no one has done for Philippine sports. As *Chef de Mission*, he did it not for himself but for his beloved country and, of course, to the athletes who were there. He was there behind them all the time; in any tournament, in any moment, from morning until late at night, he was there with them.

To the Gentleman and to Team Philippines, kayo po, you are our heroes. We are all so proud of you. Mabuhay kayong lahat! Mabuhay tayong lahat, mga Pilipino! Higit sa lahat, mabuhay ang ating bansa, Republika ng Pilipinas. Hindi Pilipino ng isa, hindi Pilipino ng dalawa, hindi Pilipino ng tatlo, kung hindi Pilipino ng higit na 100 milyong Pilipino. Mabuhay ka *Chef de Mission* Mon Del Rosario! Mabuhay Team Philippines! Mabuhay ang ating bansa!

Marami pong salamat, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Thank you, Cong. Manuel Zubiri. I thank the Gentleman for his support. Thank you for this House of Representatives’ support.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). It is really emotional. We look forward really to seeing in the halls of Congress the team that made the Philippines proud, Honorable Del Rosario.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from the First District of Manila, Cong. Manuel Luis T. Lopez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Hon. Manuel Lopez is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (M.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

If the distinguished and very brave Gentleman from the First District of Makati is composed enough to answer a few questions of interpellation ...

REP. DEL ROSARIO. I will answer another handsome Congressman from Manila City, my senior in Philippine sports, the guy who knows what backroom

negotiations are in international competition. I learned a lot from this guy when I was still an athlete and he was doing a lot of those negotiations behind the doors.

REP. LOPEZ (M.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

To my fellow athlete and fellow sports administrator, I was once in his position when I headed amateur boxing and being the first Vice President of the Olympic Committee, as Assistant *Chef de Mission* and *Chef de Mission* of the Asian Games. I understand fully well the hardships that he had undergone. Considering that the present state of Philippine sports is not at an all-time high, we are all aghast at the performance exhibited by the delegation and contingent to the fourth Asian indoor martial arts games. I think we have to give credit to the leadership that carried the baton of the whole contingent dahil you carried the team very well.

Now, as mentioned by Congressman Zubiri, the Gentleman has also replied quite well with regard to the success of his delegation. But I am not—the Gentleman is being very modest in the sense that he is praising the Lord for the success that we had attained. While it is true that Divine intervention had interceded—alam po ninyo, darating po ang Southeast Asian Games sa 2019 at ang bayang Pilipinas ay dadaan po sa malaking pagsubok. Pagsubok po dahil kanina binanggit ko na hindi po nasa magandang kalagayan ang larangan ng palakasan at sigurado ako may mga sikreto ka na ginawa kung bakit naging matagumpay ang inyo pong pinakita at pinamalas sa taong-bayan.

We are all proud of you. I think it is just but proper that you share the secrets of your success dahil kami po, sa amin po sa amateur boxing ay pinapaliwanag ko po roon sa aming mga sumunod at sumubaybay ang amin pong naging sikreto. Siguro, in an indoor or in an executive session, you will be more privy to explain to us on what your secrets are, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

Now, one little question. Bakit po naging 62 ang bayan na nakilahok samantalang ang akin pong pagkakaintindi sa titulo pa lamang na Asian Indoor—ang katagang Asian ay binubuo lamang po ng 44 na bayan ng Asia. Bakit po ba naging 62 at sana pakibanggit na rin kung inyo pong mamarapatin ang inyo pong tunay na sikreto.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Okay, Mme. Speaker, parang mapapasubo ako rito. Anyway, for the countries na nag-participate, originally 45 iyon. Naisip ng Olympic Council of Asia na isama ang Oceanic countries and African refugee countries at maging mas malaki ang competition, mas mahirap at mas mabigat kaysa sa Asian Games dahil naghahanap sila ng mga susunod na Asian Olympic medalists. Dito binabantayan ang Asia ng iba’t ibang parte ng mundo. Iyon ang nakita ko doon—nakita ko nandoon iyong Germany, iyong

France, iyong Spain, iyong Italy, binabantayan kung sino sa Asia ang magiging super powerhouse dahil pinaghahandaan nila ang 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Doon ko nakita na kaya ng Pilipinong atleta, kaya ng Asian athletes mag-excel sa world level.

Now, as far as our secrets or my secrets are concerned—I do not know if I should reveal them here—maybe sa Committee on Youth and Sports Development na lang, kapag nag-usap tayo but maganda siguro itanong ninyo sa atleta kung anong kaibahan ng leadership ng CDM nila kumpara sa leadership ng mga previous CDM, dahil if I start talking about what I did, parang binubuhat ko ang sarili kong bangko. Hindi naman yata magandang pakinggan iyon.

REP. LOPEZ (M.). Sige po. Thank you po, honorable Gentleman from Makati.

Mme. Speaker, I would like to add also one more thing before I conclude. Iyon nga pong binanggit ko kanina, in 2019, the whole country will play host to the 2019 Southeast Asian Games. Iyong inyo pong ipinamalas, being a quadrennial event, I am sure that while so many countries prepare for that, ang preparasyon po ng ating bayan was not as thorough as it should have been. Ako po, I am very realistic, at ang akin pong paniwala na this event that had just transpired should serve as a very glaring example in our technical preparations for the coming Southeast Asian Games. Iyong inyo pong ipinamalas, higit pa sa Asian Games at nasisiguro ko na we can perform better. Just like what you said, we should set aside all personal interest—and that I would just like to commend, Mme. Speaker, the leadership that carried this contingent to a very victorious campaign, thus, giving the Philippines—most often than not, in international competitions, what is called a debacle—dito po ay ipinakita natin na talagang kaya po ng Pilipino. Bagamat may limitasyon po ang pondo, ang preparasyon at ang training ay kulang, naipakita po ng ating magiting na kasamahan ng Makati kung papaano po magdala ng isang koponan lalo na at sa ibang bayan.

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, and the fine Gentleman from Makati. Thank you.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Mme. Speaker, magbibigay ako ng kaunting sikreto dahil ang tingin sa akin ni Congressman Manny Lopez parang sinasabi, “Magsalita ka naman.” Isa lang, isang sikreto. Marami po tayong ginawang strategy pero isang sikreto.

Alam po ninyo, 30 years ago, I felt exactly how these fighting athletes were feeling. Bago ang laban nila, 100 sila, kinausap ko, lalo na iyong makikipag-upakan sa susunod na araw. Sabi ko sa kanila, “Kung anong nararamdaman ninyo ngayon bago kayo matulog at bukas makipag-upakan kayo, naranasan ko iyan. Magulpi kayo, ma-knock out kayo, sumuka kayo ng

dugo, mabalian kayo ng buto; naranasan ko iyan. Manalo kayo, umakyat kayo sa podium, tumanggap kayo ng medalya, marinig ninyo iyong National Anthem of the Philippines; naranasan ko iyan. Umuwi kayong masaya; naranasan ko iyan. Umuwi kayong luhaan, naranasan ko iyan.” Sabi ko sa kanila, “Isa lang ang isipin ninyo. Six months kayo nag-training, seven hours a day, but you have nine minutes to show the world your moment of greatness. Are you gonna throw that away? Or are you gonna fight till you get knocked out?” And I said, “I want to see you fight till you get knocked out. If you do not fight, then, this is your last time you are gonna bring the flag of the Philippines anywhere in the world.” And I told them, “I want to see you fight, and I do not care if you lose. You fight and show the Filipino fighting spirit and I will salute you.” The 95, maybe 100 percent, 99 percent of them did what I asked them to do. I hugged them even if they lost, and I hugged them even if they got knocked out. Puno sila ng pawis, niyakap ko sila, and they were very thankful that from the beginning till the end, hindi ko sila iniwan. Iyan ang isang sikreto na ginawa natin doon.

REP. LOPEZ (M.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I am very sure that (*Applause*) aside from what the honorable Gentleman from Makati said, marami pa pong laban sa bulsa iyan na hindi sinasabi and he will just divulge it at the proper time.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, and the Gentleman from Makati.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Party-List ABONO, the Hon. Conrado M. Estrella III, for his interpellation.

REP. ESTRELLA. Thank you, Floor Leader. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you also, distinguished Gentleman from Makati.

At the outset, Mme. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the *Chef de Mission* of the Philippine delegation in the recently concluded Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Turkmenistan. I was with the group, Mme. Speaker, and I witnessed the leadership and the care of the distinguished Gentleman from Makati. He really shepherded the athletes to the right path and equally, I would like to congratulate him for accepting a bigger responsibility, for being the *Chef de Mission* for the forthcoming Asian Games that will be hosted here in Manila. (*Applause*) Mme. Speaker, being one among the 62 is challenging indeed, but being the one taking care of 11 countries participating in the Asian Games is more challenging. I think the POC made the right decision when they recommended the Gentleman

from Makati as the *Chef de Mission* for this forthcoming Asian Games here in the Philippines.

I was listening to the exchange that they had earlier and they were trying to figure out the secret why the delegation in the AIMAG performed better than our delegation in the Southeast Asian Games. Perhaps, let me share also, I think the secret is the long preparation, and I would like to say that the *Chef de Mission* was right, being an athlete himself, that he understood the importance of early preparation and that he made it a point to bring our athletes to Turkmenistan way ahead of time ...

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Yes.

REP. ESTRELLA. ... and they even chartered a flight and thanks to the ...

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Philippine Airlines.

REP. ESTRELLA. ... the POC and the Philippine Sports Commission for supporting them in that endeavor. They flew to Turkmenistan ahead of time in order to see to it that the athletes will be rested and they will be conditioned for the venue of the event.

Looking at this, there is reason for us to celebrate, but I think there is more to be done and there is a greater challenge, Mme. Speaker. I do not know if the distinguished *Chef de Mission*, in the person of Cong. Monsour Del Rosario, would agree with me that I think the best preparation is that we bring sports down to the grassroots level and more importantly, we bring the sports that we will surely excel into the grassroots level. Like, right now, Mme. Speaker, the present Palarong Pambansa, it begins in the district level, the intramurals, and then it goes up to the division level, and then to the regional level in the Palarong Pambansa. There are sports there where we do not play but we could surely excel in the future and these sports that I am referring to are diving, gymnastics and also synchronized swimming. These are the sports wherein we can excel. You do not need to be a rocket scientist to determine that if you are more petite, you are smaller, you are lighter, it is easier for you to maneuver.

That is why I hope the distinguished Gentleman from Makati will also help us, together with the sports-minded Members of the House, to pursue these sports where we can excel in the Olympics in the future. If you have tried it already—the distinguished Gentleman from Makati has tried it already—the result of a long preparation and so, we go longer, farther back so that we can prepare for these sports where we can excel in the future. Would the distinguished *Chef de Mission* agree with me?

REP. DEL ROSARIO. I completely agree with you, Mme. Speaker, and I would like to add that yes,

preparation is really one factor, one key for success. We went around to almost all 17 National Sports Associations, checked what they needed to perform to win, and hosting the 2019 SEA Games will be more challenging because the pressure is upon us to come up on top and be number one. I am not saying that it is not possible. I am not saying that we will be. What I am saying is that it is possible, but it will take a lot of hard work. They are trying to compare it to the 2005 SEA Games, but remember that 2005 was different. Times have changed, people change, the world changes, the sport changes. Every year, some new technology comes out, it changes and so, you know, no bold predictions, just accurate ones that I can promise, that it is a possibility. We just have to work hard to get there and with the support of the House of Representatives behind this, I have a gut feel that we will do very well. I have this good feeling, knowing that the Chairman himself and a couple of Congressmen here whom I get to talk to once in a while really love sports.

We all know we have a drug problem in our country and I have been insisting and emphasizing that sports can help change that problem. Let us give the children, the youth, something to aspire for, something where they can be great and where our country can be great again.

Again, thank you, Congressman Estrella for being with us, for walking with me in the opening ceremonies. He was so shocked and he kept telling me, “My God, this is so majestic. This is so majestic, this is so ostentatious. This is my first time to walk in an opening ceremony.” And I was saying, “Chairman, it is always like this when you walk for your country. You gotta look good, you gotta smile and show the world we can win.”

REP. ESTRELLA. Indeed, I agree with the Gentleman from Makati, Mme. Speaker. The other thing that I would like to ask the Gentleman, the distinguished *Chef de Mission*, not only about the AIMAG but also for the forthcoming Southeast Asian Games here in the Philippines, how could our government and the private sector support this endeavor and also our athletes? Would he kindly give us a few secrets on that?

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Number one key—number one, what we need to do is to stop fighting with each other. The opponent is outside of our country. The opponent is not within us. The opponent is not you or him or her. The opponent is outside. How can we win if we keep fighting amongst ourselves? I really wish there is some peace and unity in Philippine sports because what happened in AIMAG Turkmenistan is just a small peek, an example of what we can achieve if we are united and, hopefully, that can happen within two years.

That is number one. Everything else will fall into place once that happens because we will focus on only one thing—getting those gold medals for the country.

REP. ESTRELLA. I have no choice but to agree with the distinguished Gentleman from Makati because I subscribe to the dictum that sports should unite us and the only way, the only ticket to us being on top is for us to help one another instead of fighting each other. That is why I am happy because with age creeping up on the leadership of Philippine sports, all of a sudden, we have discovered in the person of the *Chef de Mission*, the distinguished Gentleman from Makati, a looming leader—future leader, not future but the next leader of the sports community of our nation.

So, Mme. Speaker, I would like to again congratulate the Gentleman from Makati for his leadership. I have witnessed it. Instead of him staying in the luxurious hotels being *Chef de Mission*, he was together with the athletes. He had himself camped there in the athletes' building, he was talking to them, he was there.

In fact, when one of our athletes was hospitalized because his ribs were fractured, he was there also; he was the one looking after each and every one of them.

Thank you for your service to the nation, please do not cry anymore because your make-up might be smudged. So, huwag ka nang umiyak, at sinasabi sa akin ni Majority Leader kanina, “Conrad, ano ba iyong ginagawa mo diyan sa Youth and Sports Development Committee at nag-iiyakan ang mga tao?” I just said that, “Well, you are just so emotional about it because it came as a surprise.” We were expecting a not-so-good performance because there were 62 nations, unlike before where there were only 44, and there was a greater challenge now but we pulled through. Together with the athletes, thank you, Mme. Speaker, for the honor that you had brought to our nation.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Thank you for the support.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of the Hon. Del Rosario and the interpellations thereon to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the GABRIELA Party-List, the Hon. Arlene D. Brosas, for her privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Hon. Arlene Brosas, GABRIELA Party-List Representative, is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BROSAS

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, noong Sabado, Setyembre 30, ang Kinatawang ito, kasama ang dalawa pang Kinatawan ng Kongreso na sina Antonio Tinio ng ACT TEACHERS Party-List at Ariel Casilao ng ANAKPAWIS Party-List ay nagtungo sa Lobo, Batangas upang maging bahagi ng isang humanitarian mission para sa mahigit 100 pamilya na sapilitang napalikas dahil sa tuloy-tuloy na aerial bombings ng 730th Combat Group, Philippine Air Force at ng 202nd IBPA sa Mt. Banoi sa Batangas. Ang operasyong militar at ang sunod-sunod na aerial bombings sa naturang lugar ay nagsimula pa noong ika-24 ng Setyembre. Panaka-nakang nakatatanggap ng ulat ang mga volunteer ng Karapatan-Southern Tagalog ng matinding pagkawasak ng mga komunidad kabilang na ang tangke ng tubig sa naturang komunidad. Nasa may 15 paaralan ang nagsuspindi ng klase sa 12 barangay dahil na rin sa isinagawang mga airstrikes ng AFP. Naiulat din ang pagkasawi ng hindi bababa sa tatlong indibidwal kabilang na ang isang bata.

Mme. Speaker, mga kapwa Kinatawan, ang operasyong inilunsad ng AFP, na ayon sa kanila ay bunsod ng isang engkuwentro sa mga rebolusyonaryong New People's Army, ay nagpahamak at naglagay sa panganib sa buhay at kabuhayan ng mga sibilyan sa lugar. Malinaw itong paglabag sa Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law o CARHRIHL at ng mga pandaigdigang batas sa paglulunsad ng digma. Dagdag pang paglabag ang pagpigil sa humanitarian mission na maabot ang mga komunidad na nangangailangan ng tulong. Wala pong ibang paraan para ma-check ito dahil hindi nga po nakapasok ang humanitarian mission para malaman kung ano talaga ang nangyayari sa mga lugar.

Mula nang dumating ang convoy ng humanitarian mission sa Batangas City ay makailang beses kaming hinarang hanggang sa napilitang manatili na lamang sa Barangay San Miguel, ilang barangay pa ang layo mula sa aming itinakdang destinasyon kung saan higit na makatutugon ang humanitarian mission sa mga nangangailangan. Sa mga huling ulat, lumalabas na tuloy-tuloy na harassment at paghaharang sa mga

nais tumulong at hanggang kahapon ay hindi pa rin pinalusot ang humanitarian mission. Sa Batangas City pier kahapon ay kinasahan pa ng baby armalite ng isang alagad ng PNP na may nameplate na Ronquillo at Reyes ang nagtangkang takutin ang delegasyon. Labis kaming nababahala, nagdududa at nagagalit sa ganitong aktuasyon ng AFP na naghahari-harian habang naghahasik ng lagim at kamatayan sa naturang lugar. May martial law na po ba sa lalawigan ng Batangas? Matindi rin ang aming hinalang sa likod ng matinding pag-atake sa lugar ay ang madulas na pagpapapasok ng operasyong pagmimina sa Mt. Banoi.

Ang lalawigan ng Batangas ay hitik sa likas na yaman, lalo na ang tinaguriang Mt. Banoi at Mt. Nagueling Complex. Ang mga barangay ng Sto. Domingo, Cumba, Conde itaas, Sico, Pinamucan, Simlong, Talahib, Pandayan, Talumpok Silangan, Banalo, Lobo Mabilog na Bundok, ay bahagi ng 29,000 ektarya na tumatahi sa dalawang bundok na ito. Kinasasakupan ito ng mga planong large-scale open-pit mines sa ilalim ng mineral production-sharing agreements ng kompanyang Awstralyano na Red Mountain Mining Ltd, at mga lokal nitong kasosyo na Mindoro Resources Ltd at Egerton Gold. Ang nakapipinsalang plano ng open-pit mine ay mariing tinututulan ng mga mamamayan ng Batangas at kabilang din sa mga tinututulan ng dating DENR Secretary na si Gina Lopez. Sa patuloy na pagharang ng AFP sa anumang tulong sa lugar, lalo't higit sa mahigit 100 pamilyang apektado ng kanilang operasyon, lalong lumalakas ang pag-ugong ng balitang ang pagmimina ng ginto sa naturang lugar ang dahilan ng sunod-sunod na pagpapaulan ng bomba at pagpapasabog sa Mt. Banoi.

Ang Kinatawang ito at ang Gabriela Women's Party na naging bahagi ng humanitarian and fact-finding mission ay nananawagang itigil ang paghahari ng AFP sa naturang lugar upang agad na maipaabot ang tulong sa mga residente nito. Hinihiling rin naming imbestigahan ng Kapulungang ito ang mga planong pagmimina sa naturang lugar upang tuluyang makita ang pinsalang maaaring idulot nito sa Mt. Banoi at mga kanugnog na kabundukan.

Muli, magandang hapon po, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Brosas to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from ANAKPAWIS Party-List, the Hon. Ariel "Ka Ayik" B. Casilao, for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Congressman Ariel Casilao is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. CASILAO

REP. CASILAO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Magandang gabi sa ating lahat.

Mme. Speaker, mga kasamang Mambabatas, pagbati ng hustisya at kapayapaan ang ipinapahatid ng Kinatawang ito. Gaya ng nabanggit ng aking kasama sa Makabayan bloc, Congresswoman Arlene Brosas, kabilang ang Kinatawang ito noong September 30 na kasama sa inilunsad na humanitarian mission sa probinsiya ng Batangas upang makatulong sa paghahatid ng relief goods sa mga apektadong magsasaka. In fact, Mme. Speaker, mayroon kaming mga barangay and municipal chapters ng ANAKPAWIS Party-List, sa pangunguna ng mga organisasyon ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda na kabilang sa mahigit na 200 ang nag-bakwit dahil sa serye ng pambobomba, artillery and aerial bombardment, mula pa noong September 21 hanggang September 24. Kaya sila ngayon ay napilitang lisanin ang kanilang mga tahanan at mga bukirin sa takot na matamaan at matamasa ang brigade-size ng military operation sa probinsiyang iyon.

Ang katuwiran ng AFP, Mme. Speaker, sa ilalim ng 202nd Infantry Brigade ng Philippine Army at 730th Combat Group ng Philippine Air Force, tinutugis raw nila ang mga miyembro ng New People's Army na naka-engkuwentro nila noong Setyembre 24 sa Mount Banoi sa pagitan ng Batangas City at bayan ng Lobo. Ang operasyong militar na ito ay nagbunga sa pagkansela ng mga klase sa mga paaralan sa 12 barangay, at bukod sa pagbakwet ng mga residenteng magsasaka, mayroon ding naitala na report na dalawang sibilyan ang namatay dahil sa operasyong ito. Sa ganitong kalagayan, nais ng Kinatawang ito na maimbestigahan at malaman ang mga pangyayari ngunit bigo kami na makapasok sa tarangkahan pa lang sa Barangay San Miguel.

Ako na Miyembro na mismo ng Kongresong ito ay naging biktima pa sa harassment ng mga puwersa ng gobyerno, nang ang aming delegasyon ay hinarang ng PNP sa checkpoint, kami ay kinunan ng litrato nang walang permiso, ininspeksiyon ang relief goods, pinadelay hanggang sa pinagbawalan kaming maghatid ng tulong sa mga apektado. Mas malala pa, Mme. Speaker, nang kami ay pauwi, sinundan kami ng mga armadong pulis gamit ang saskayan ng SWAT na puno ng high-powered rifle-carrying na mga police personnel. Ito ay sa kabila na nagpakilala na kami, kasama ang ibang

Kinatawan sa ilalim ng Makabayan bloc, ay Miyembro ng House of Representatives.

Pinapauna ko na, Mme. Speaker, ipinapanawagan ko sa Kongresong ito na imbestigahan ang mala-martial law na practice ng AFP at PNP sa Batangas City. Gusto ko silang isalang sa Kongresong ito kung paano sila umabot sa mga ganoong kautusan na dumulo sa malawakang paglabag sa karapatan ng mga magsasaka sa lugar. Sa ulat na nakarating sa amin, nagpapulong ang mga militar sa mga apektadong barangay na huwag daw umano tanggapin ang anumang mga tulong mula sa grupong Karapatan, BAYAN MUNA, ANAKPAWIS at iba pang maka-kaliwang grupo dahil daw sila ay mga miyembro ng NPA o mga supporter ng NPA. Ito ay malinaw na red-baiting, Mme. Speaker, pagdidikta at paglabag sa kalayaan at karapatan ng mga mamamayan. Dagdag dito, kahapon ay hinarang ng mga elemento ng PNP-Highway Patrol Group ang mga jeep na may dala-dalang relief goods na dadalhin sana sa isang kampuhan ng mga taga-suporta sa bukana ng Batangas pier para gawin doon ang repacking ng relief goods. Kagaya ng nabanggit ni Congresswoman Brosas, may isang pulis na nagkasa ng kanyang service firearm para takutin ang mga delegado ng humanitarian mission at ang aming mga kasamahan na huwag ng ituloy ang repacking ng relief goods. Bukod pa dito, pinagsarahan ng gate ang mga delegado ng humanitarian mission na nais makipag-diyalogo kay Batangas Gov. Hermilando “Dodo” Mandanas upang ihain ang suliranin ng mga apektadong barangay ng operasyong militar at aerial bombings na humingi ng tulong.

Mme. Speaker, sa ilang aktibidad pa lamang na ito, kitang-kita na ang mga mala-martial law na panunupil ng AFP at PNP. Sino ba sila para harangin ang tulong ng mga concerned na mamamayan para sa apektadong magsasaka? Mayroon ba silang itinatago? Bakit hindi payagan na makapasok sa mga komunidad na ito? Binanggit na wala ng aerial bombardment mula pa noong September 27, 28 at 29 pero bakit naka-concentrate pa rin sa mga bakwet center sa barangay gym, sa municipal gym ang iilang mga daan-daang pamilya? Ito ay malinaw na mukha ng human rights violations sa aktwal. Maging ang pagharang sa humanitarian aid ay isang porma ng economic embargo na isang kabahagi ng malalang war crime sa mata ng international community.

Kinokondena ng Kinatawang ito ang mala-martial law na panunupil kung kaya inuulit ko ang panawagang imbestigahan ito ng Kongreso. Ipatawag ang mga Poncio Pilatong pasimuno, ng mismo ang manawagang panagutin sila sa ginawa nilang pagpapahirap sa mga magsasaka. Kung wala silang itinatago, wala silang dahilan na kami ay harangin. Kung malinis ang kanilang konsensiya, hindi sila magiging mapag-abuso sa kanilang kapangyarihan.

Dapat malaya ang sinuman, taga-roon man o hindi, mga magsasaka man o mga lehitimong grupo, na magpahayag tungkol sa kanilang kalagayan, ngunit kabaligtaran ang nangyayari hanggang sa kasalukuyan, Mme. Speaker. Nais ko ring itulak ang Kongresong ito sa nagiging SOP o standard operating procedure na implementasyon ng AFP sa aerial bombardments, na kada may engkuwentro na lang, bomba rito, bomba roon ang isinasagawa nito sa mga komunidad ng mga magsasaka. Ito ay sa kabila na ang pambobomba ng mga sibilyang komunidad ay isang malalang war crime. Mme. Speaker, 2017 na ngayon pero nagaganap pa rin ang mga nasasaksihan natin sa mga teleserye, sa mga palabas sa sine. Dito mismo sa mga bahagi ng mga rehiyon kung saan mayroong malalakas na mga rebolusyonaryong kilusan at sa likod nito, mayroong mga nakaamba na mga interes tulad ng mina at iba pa na mga interes pangnegosyo ay nangyayari ang mga ganitong pag-atake sa karapatan.

Bilang panghuli, Mme. Speaker at mga kapwa ko Mambabatas, mahigpit na kinokondena ng Kinatawang ito, sampu ng mga kasamahan ko sa koalisyong Makabayan at mga chapter namin sa iba't ibang rehiyon, ang patuloy at nakaamba pa na mga planong pagsasagawa pa ng aerial bombardments at palalang brigade-size military operation ng AFP sa probinsiya ng Batangas. Kaya, Mme. Speaker, hinihiling namin na ito, in the proper time, ay mabigyan ng kaukulang pansin ng Kongresong ito. Patuloy pa ring nagrereklamo at patuloy pang kumokontak ang ating mga kasamahan dahil habang sinasabing clear na ang lugar ay hindi pa rin pinapayagan ang anumang humanitarian mission.

Magandang gabi, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the privilege speech of the Honorable Casilao to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we terminate the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Additional Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Additional Reference of Business.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following Committee Reports, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report by the Committee on Local Government (Committee Report No. 400), re H.B. No. 6512, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY TIMBABAUAN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TUNGAWAN, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2500

Sponsors: Representatives Acharon and Hofer

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Local Government (Committee Report No. 401), re H.B. No. 6513, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY MASAO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TUNGAWAN, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2500

Sponsors: Representatives Acharon and Hofer

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Health (Committee Report No. 402), re H.B. No. 6517, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING COMPASSIONATE AND RIGHT OF ACCESS TO MEDICAL CANNABIS AND EXPANDING RESEARCH INTO ITS MEDICINAL PROPERTIES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 180

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (A.) and Albano

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 403), re H.B. No. 6521, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING THE BATAAN PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL IN THE PROVINCE OF BATAAN INTO A LEVEL 3 TEACHING AND TRAINING HOSPITAL

TO BE NOW KNOWN AS THE BATAAN GENERAL HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2043

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (A.), Garcia (J.E.) and Nograles (K.A.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 404), re H.B. No. 6522, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY BAGUMBAYAN, BALANGA CITY, PROVINCE OF BATAAN TO BE KNOWN AS BALANGA CITY NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 5500

Sponsors: Representatives Durano, Nograles (K.A.) and Garcia (J.E.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The Floor Leader is recognized.

CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MEASURES

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measures:

1. House Bill Nos. 92, 6121 and 6263 – providing for the Basic Law for the Bangsamoro, from the Committees on Local Government and Muslim Affairs, to the Committees on Local Government and Muslim Affairs, and the Special Committee on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity;

2. House Bill Nos. 539, 1605, 3529 and 4955 – institutionalizing a Pre-Hospital Emergency Care System, from the Committee on Health, to the Committees on Health and Civil Service and Professional Regulation;

3. House Bill No. 3731 – including the fact of intoxication and the presence of non-resident or alumni fraternity members during hazing as aggravating circumstances to increase applicable penalties, from the Committee on Revision of Laws, to the Committee on Justice;

4. House Bill No. 3963 – prohibiting hazing and regulating other forms of initiation rites of fraternities, sororities and other organizations, from the Committee on Revision of Laws, to the Committee on Justice; and

5. House Bill No. 5088 – providing for the

creation of the Central Luzon River Control System Commission covering the Provinces of Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales, from the Committee on Public Works and Highways, to the Committees on Government Reorganization, and Public Works and Highways.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until tomorrow, October 3, at 4:00 p.m.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villarica). The session is adjourned until tomorrow, October 3, 2017, at 4:00 p.m.

It was 7:21 p.m.