



Republic of the Philippines  
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  
Cotabato City

**BANGSAMORO TRANSITION AUTHORITY**  
Proposed Resolution No. 228

Introduced by: **BTA MEMBER DIAMILA DISIMBAN-RAMOS**

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**A RESOLUTION**

**CALLING FOR THE BANGSAMORO GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN THE REGION, SECURE SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND FASTER ONLINE ACCESS AND PROVIDE FREE WI-FI OR INTERNET TO THE ENTIRE BANGSAMORO AREA, IN LINE WITH THE "NEW NORMAL" POLICIES THAT CALL FOR AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR INTERNET SERVICES DUE TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC.**

**WHEREAS**, a current crisis besets the world with the outbreak of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). What started in Wuhan China in December 2019 has now become a global pandemic which threatens not only public health but also the social and economic well-being of millions of people. This crisis has far-reaching and long-term implications as it drastically disrupts peoples' established course of living and communal affairs.

**WHEREAS**, in view of the current state of COVID-19 in the country, the government has to take necessary measures such as community quarantines (general or enhanced) and lock downs to contain the spread of the virus. Recently, the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines (Inter-Agency Task Force Resolution No. 30 and 30-A) was adopted through Executive Order No. 112.<sup>1</sup> These guidelines call for a "new normal" which has to be observed in the country.

**WHEREAS**, the Bangsamoro Government shall exercise powers which are essential to the promotion of general welfare. It shall, among other things, "promote health and safety", "encourage and support the development of appropriate and self-reliant scientific and technological capabilities", "enhance economic prosperity and social justice" and "preserve the comfort and convenience of its inhabitants".<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, the Bangsamoro people have the right of access to basic services and it is the Bangsamoro Government that must provide, maintain, and ensure the delivery of said basic services.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Executive Order No. 112, "Imposing an Enhanced Community Quarantine in High-Risk Geographic Areas in the Philippines and a General Community Quarantine in the Rest of the Country from 1 May to 15 May 2020, Adopting the Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation Thereof, and for Other Purposes." 30 April 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Sec. 3, Art. 5, Bangsamoro Organic Law.

<sup>3</sup> Sec. 8, Art. 9, Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  
Bangsamoro Transition Authority Parliament  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

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**WHEREAS**, in line with issuances of the National government, the Bangsamoro Government issued an Updated Guidelines on the Management of Corona Virus Disease 2019 last 4 May 2020. Central to these guidelines is the promotion of social distancing, which imposes restriction in the movement of people and business operations for the protection and safety of the Bangsamoro. Adherence to these measures resulted to the increasing demand for internet connectivity. Sudden surge in the digital platform transpired as people shift their interactions and transactions online to help prevent the spread of virus. With the “new normal”, most transactions are expected to be online.

**WHEREAS**, despite efforts to liberalize and deregulate telecommunication infrastructure in the Philippines, millions of Filipinos still have difficulty accessing the internet.<sup>4</sup> In fact, data shows that “almost 45% (46 million) of Filipino citizens, and 74 percent (34,500) public schools do not have access to the internet.” Among others, the lack of competition in the market, the long-drawn bureaucratic processes, and its costly nature are major factors in the limited internet access in the country.<sup>5</sup>

**WHEREAS**, in BARMM, internet access remains a constraint. Up to this date, certain areas in the region suffer from slow and unstable internet connection. In terms of 4G availability, BARMM lags behind other regions both in rural areas (lower than 60%) and urban areas (65.1%).<sup>6</sup> In a 2019 study, computer and internet connectivity, which are increasingly critical to maintain accurate and up-to-date health information system, remain rare across health units in BARMM.<sup>7</sup>

**WHEREAS**, to keep up with the pressing need to shift online for telehealth access, home learning, work from home setup, electronic commerce, and public information drive, there is a need to strengthen the internet connectivity in BARMM by making internet service faster, more affordable and accessible to the general public. One way is to lower spectrum fees and in effect encourage small internet providers to expand in the provinces.<sup>8</sup>

**WHEREAS**, rural electrification and broadband infrastructure, among others, are important considerations in improving the state of internet access in BARMM. Accordingly, efforts to expand electricity and broadband access should go hand in hand for “without electricity, internet is only a blackhole”.<sup>9</sup> Close coordination and better harmonization between internet providers and power companies can help address the rising demand for faster internet and reliable electricity<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> “Small Policy Change, Big Impact: Improving Internet Access in the Philippines”, *Asia Foundation*. January 2019, accessible at: <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CfC-Reform-Story-11-Improving-Internet-Access-in-the-Philippines.pdf> (last accessed: 11 May 2020).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> David Nedescu, “In the Philippines, the urban-rural 4G availability divide varies by region.” *Open Signal*. 29 October 2019 citing Philippines Statistics Authority, accessible at: <https://www.opensignal.com/2019/10/29/in-the-philippines-the-urban-rural-4g-availability-divide-varies-by-region> (last accessed: 11 May 2020).

<sup>7</sup> “Preparing for the Transition: Supply-Side Readiness of Primary Health Care in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.” *The World Bank*, 2019, accessible at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31947/Towards-a-More-Equitable-and-Better-Prepared-Public-Primary-Health-Care-System.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>, (last accessed: 11 May 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Balinbin, Arjay, “DICT says internet should be cheaper, faster after emergency ends.” *Business World*. 3 May 2020, <https://www.msn.com/en-ph/money/topstories/dict-says-internet-should-be-cheaper-faster-after-emergency-ends/ar-BB13xDDI>, (last accessed: 11 May 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Lerner, Anna, et. al. “Electricity and the internet: two markets, one big opportunity.” *Digital Development*, 25 May 2017, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/digital-development/electricity-and-internet-two-markets-one-big-opportunity>, (last accessed: 11 May 2020).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, as it is hereby resolved, by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to strengthen internet connectivity in the region and secure safe, affordable and faster online access, provide free WIFI or internet to the entire Bangsamoro area, in line with the "new normal" policies that call for an increasing demand for internet services due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, to request the Ministry of Science and Technology and other concerned ministries to present a report on the status of internet connection in BARMM, as well as, data relating to the telecommunication/cellular towers installed in every province within the region, areas with free public Wi-Fi access, the number of 2G/3G/4G/5G users, if any, and other relevant information, in order to properly ascertain the capability and readiness of service providers to provide reliable, accessible, and affordable internet connection, to open avenues for investors to expand the industry, and to provide further context for the proposed measures, with the end goal of improving the internet access for every Bangsamoro constituents.

Adopted,



**DIAMILA DISIMBAN-RAMOS**  
Member, BTA Parliament