



FIRST REGULAR SESSION

RESOLUTION NO. 296

RESOLUTION STRONGLY APPEALING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) TO RE-OPEN ITS CONSULAR SERVICES OFFICE IN COTABATO CITY TO SERVE THE RESIDENTS OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (BARMM)

WHEREAS, as a matter of policy under the Republic Act No. 7157, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Foreign Service Act of 1991*,” the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is the government agency mandated to implement the three (3) pillars of the Philippine Foreign Policy, namely:

1. the preservation and enhancement of national security;
2. the promotion and attainment of economic security; and
3. the protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas;

WHEREAS, apart from the aforementioned mandate, the DFA is also the government agency charged with the issuance of passports, the most vital travel document and a primary national identity document;

WHEREAS, the DFA has closed its consular office in Cotabato City, the current seat of government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, most residents of the City of Cotabato have had to travel outside of the region to apply for their passports. Particularly, residents have to travel to Davao City, General Santos City, Cagayan de Oro City, or Zamboanga City, which are hours and hundreds of kilometers away. In worse cases, residents even travel to Visayas or Luzon. Thus, BARMM residents are incurring bigger cost in the processing of their application for the said travel document;

WHEREAS, due to economic hardships, more Filipino workers, including Muslim workers in the BARMM, continue to look for jobs abroad to meet their needs and the needs of their families at home. The passport is crucial as most of the time, it is required before Filipino jobseekers can apply or so that they can finalize their applications for overseas jobs;

WHEREAS, the passport is an essential requisite to be able to perform “*Hajj*”, one of the five (5) pillars of Islam, and a religious obligation that Muslims need to fulfill, as long as resources permit. It is performed in Mecca or *Makkah* in Saudi Arabia. It is expected that most of the pilgrims will come from BARMM as a majority of the country’s Muslims reside in the BARMM;

WHEREAS, the passport is also a significant proof of identity that almost all residents aspire to acquire;

WHEREAS, BARMM, including Cotabato City is expected to be a recipient of foreign assistance from donor agencies and institutions supporting the peace and development of this newly created autonomous region. Ambassadors, consuls, foreign and donor officials, and senior staff are expected to travel to BARMM on regular basis in relation to the ongoing concerns. Thus, it would be efficient if there is a consular services office located in the region too;

WHEREAS, the BARMM can have its own separate *Hajj* services pursuant to Section 42, Article VII of Republic Act No. 11054 otherwise known as “*Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao*,” which provides that the Parliament may create other offices such as for the youth, women, settler communities, disaster risk reduction and management, and planning and development, including a Bangsamoro Pilgrimage Authority which shall exercise

jurisdiction over *Hajj* and *Umrah* matters affecting pilgrims from within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, the BARMM participates actively in the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines- East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) cooperation initiative, which aims to increase trade, tourism, and investments by facilitating the free movement of people, goods, and services; utilizing the most efficient use of common infrastructure and shared natural resources; and taking the fullest advantage of economic complementation; the Department of Foreign Affairs plays a pivotal role in this international economic cooperation initiative:

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, To strongly appeal to the Department of Foreign Affairs to re-open its Consular Services Office in Cotabato City to serve the residents of the BARMM.


RESOLVED, FURTHER, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Department of Foreign Affairs, for information.

ADOPTED, *Jumada Al-Awwal* 27, 1444/December 21, 2022.

Certified Correct:


PROF. RABY B. ANGKAL
Secretary-General

Attested:


ATTY. PANGALIAN M. BALINDONG
Speaker

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