



THIRD REGULAR SESSION

RESOLUTION NO. 204

RESOLUTION URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY, THROUGH THE BANGSAMORO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY OFFICE, TO STRENGTHEN THE INTERNET ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY ESPECIALLY IN THE LOCALITIES AND PROVIDE QUARTERLY REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENT AS TO ITS COMPLIANCE

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 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 lockdowns 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. 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";

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;

WHEREAS, in line with issuances of the National government, the Bangsamoro Government issued an Updated Guidelines on the Management of COVID-19 last 4 May 2020. Central to these guidelines is the promotion of social distancing and imposition of restrictions 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 the telecommunication infrastructure in the Philippines, millions of Filipinos still have difficulty accessing the internet. In fact, data shows that "almost 45% (46 million) of Filipino citizens, and 74 % (34,500) of 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;

WHEREAS, in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (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, the BARMM lags behind other regions both in rural areas (lower than 60%) and urban areas (65.1%). In a 2019 study, computers and internet connectivity, which are increasingly critical to maintain accurate and up-to-date health information system, remain rare across health units in BARMM;

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 the 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;

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

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

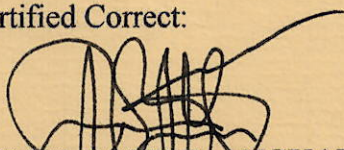
RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, to urge the Government of the Day, through the Bangsamoro Information and Communications Technology Office, to strengthen the internet accessibility and connectivity especially in the localities and provide quarterly report to the Parliament as to its compliance.

RESOLVED, FURTHER, to urge the Bangsamoro Information and Communications Technology Office and other concerned ministries to present a report on the status of internet connection in the 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.


RESOLVED, FINALLY, to forward the foregoing Resolution to the Office of the Chief Minister Hon. Ahod B. Ebrahim, Bangsamoro Information and Communications Technology and other concerned ministries, for information and appropriate consideration.

ADOPTED, Jumada Al-Akhirah 23, 1443/January 27, 2022.

Certified Correct:


PROF. RABY B. ANGKAL
Secretary-General

Attested:


ATTY. ALI PANGALIAN M. BALINDONG
Speaker

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