

PRESS RELEASE

Gokongwei Group of Companies backs *Negosyo para sa Kapayapaan sa Sulu* *Supports local coffee and housing development projects*



NEGOSYO PARA SA KAPAYAPAAN SA SULU: President Rodrigo Duterte led the Christmas Townhall last Dec. 19, which launched the project, Negosyo Para sa Kapayapaan sa Sulu of the Departments of Agriculture and Trade and Industry, and Go Negosyo. More than 400 entrepreneurs, advocates, mentors and government officials joined the celebration of inclusive growth. In line with Go Negosyo's Kapatid Angat Lahat program, Negosyo Para sa Kapayapaan sa Sulu encouraged big brother companies to help and contribute in building an active socio-economic environment in Sulu. Many corporations and entrepreneurs have pledged their support in the plans of development in Sulu. In photo are (second row, from left) Merly Cruz of Go Negosyo, Robina Gokongwei-Pe of Robinsons Supermarket, Marissa Concepcion, Tony Meloto of Gawad Kalinga, George Barcelon of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Michael Tan of the LT Group and Asia Brewery Corp., Manny Osmena of the Manny O. Group, Luis Oquina of Gawad Kalinga, Mike Toledo of MVP Group of Companies Media Bureau, Joseph Chua of Macroasia Corp., Babe Romualdez of Stargate Media Corp., Sammy Uy of Davao Import Distributors Inc., Alfredo Yao of Zesto Corp. and William Belo of Wilcon Depot. (1st row, from left) Manny Pangilinan of the MVP Group, Teresita Sy-Coson of SM Investments Corp., Peace Process Secretary Jess Dureza, Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol, presidential adviser Joey Concepcion, President Rodrigo Duterte, former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez, Datu Shah Bandar Abdusakur Tan, Gov. Abdusakur Tan II of Sulu, Ginggay Hontivero and Henry Lim Bon Liong of SL Agritech Corp.

The Gokongwei Group of Companies led by Universal Robina Corporation (URC) and Robinsons Supermarket have pledged its support to President Rodrigo Duterte's initiative to help the province of Sulu attain peace and socio-economic development thru sustainable economic activities, livelihood programs and infrastructure development.

Launching the private sector-government partnership program called *Negosyo Para sa Kapayapaan sa Sulu* spearheaded by Go Negosyo of Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion, a Christmas town hall meeting was held recently in Malacañang where top businessmen and business groups have been invited by the President to participate in a multi sectoral program that aims to complement the government's effort in rehabilitating and improving the lives of the people of Sulu which has long been saddled by war and poverty.

As the Gokongwei Group's contribution to the monumental task of rebuilding the once thriving and promising province, food and beverage company URC have pledged to support the local coffee farmers of Sulu by placing an initial order of 30 metric tons of their high grade local coffee variety that are being grown in the island's upland areas.

In addition, Robinsons Supermarket has joined other business groups in a program that will build houses in identified barangay communities that currently lack decent dwelling for its residents. The company has pledged its participation in this worthy project with Robina Gokongwei-Pe, president & COO of Robinsons Supermarket representing the Gokongwei conglomerate at the ceremonial event held at Heroes Hall.

"As a company who is committed to make every Filipino life better, we laud efforts such as this initiative of providing adequate housing for the citizens of Sulu. This certainly deserves our wholehearted support," said Gokongwei-Pe.

BREWING DEVELOPMENT

A major pillar of the Sulu project aims to get the backing of big business entities to support the local coffee farmers' cooperative in the province called People's Alliance for Progress Multipurpose Cooperative headed by Princess Kumala "Lala"

Elardo, a Tausug princess and an entrepreneur who sells the popular premium local coffee brand Royal Coffee.

Princess Lala said promoting peace in Sulu means providing decent work and employment for people living in the province. “By supporting and growing the local coffee farming community this will translate into opportunities for rebels to eventually be convinced and be enticed to lay down their weapons and live a peaceful life by becoming a productive part of the emerging coffee farming industry.”

This modest attempt of providing the much-needed boost to the Sulu coffee industry by the country’s biggest food and beverage company with powerful presence throughout the PAN-ASEAN region, augurs well with URC’s rich heritage and legacy as a trailblazing and pioneering business venture founded by entrepreneur and billionaire philanthropist John Gokongwei Jr. In 1956, market leader URC blazed many a trail in the coffee business by pioneering many firsts such as the first locally-manufactured coffee blend Blend 45, the first concentrated coffee Great Taste and the complete coffee mix Great Taste 3-in-1, among others.

Now in partnership with the Sulu coffee farmers’ cooperative, URC will be purchasing substantial amounts of coffee beans from Progress Multipurpose Cooperative to be developed into a future product offering that will be made available in the market.

URC Executive Vice-President and Managing Director Nilo S. Mapa said the company is both privileged and honored to be invited to take part in this groundbreaking initiative of the government that will help jumpstart business activities to stimulate economic growth and bring peace and prosperity in Sulu.

“In the same vein that we have made great strides with URC’s success in the commercial coffee brand business, we too are hopeful and optimistic that this initiative will bring about a new kind of economic revolution for the people of Sulu as sparked by the rebirth of a thriving local coffee industry,” said Mapa.

Coffee in the region is considered as one of the high valued crop that has potential to contribute in the acceleration of the region’s economic growth. Princess Lala said Mindanao is the biggest producer of coffee, accounting for 75

percent of Philippine production. Sulu alone she said produces around 7,300 metric tons annually with robusta accounting for about 70% of what is cultivated, while 30% are liberica, excelsa and others.

She added that Sulu in fact was once known as the producer of the best coffee beans in the country, if not for the armed conflict in the area that made it lag behind in production. She said there are around 1,000 hectares of idle lands in Sulu, of which 300 hectares was planted to coffee. The area has an ideal climatic condition, fertile soil, has large tracts of available land for cultivation and an ample supply of human resource, thus making it ideal for a coffee industry to thrive. #