

TRANSITION COUNCIL:

OUR ALTERNATIVE TO THE ARROYO REGIME

Amid the economic and political crises, calls for Arroyo's resignation and/or ouster have become more resounding. Above and beyond lying, cheating, stealing public funds and grossly violating human rights, the lives of the majority have become worse under her governance.

Contrary to Arroyo's claim that no one can replace her, the Gloria Step Down! Movement (GSM) is actively advancing the Transition Council as a viable alternative to the Arroyo regime. The Transition Council will be borne out of a new People Power that will remove the regime.

Why the Transition Council?

Arroyo is clinging on to power. Her allies in Congress have killed the impeachment complaint and she has no intention of resigning voluntarily. There is a need for the different anti-Arroyo political forces, groups and personalities to remove Arroyo through People Power. This is the most effective means of immediately ending the Arroyo regime.

At this period, constitutional succession, where the vice president automatically takes over the presidency, will not suffice. This time, People Power should ensure the representation of various political forces, especially the oppressed sectors, in the transition government.

Why not Noli de Castro or Franklin Drilon? Why not the constitutional succession?

Noli de Castro is unacceptable as a replacement to Arroyo. First, he continues to defend Arroyo. Second, he has benefited from Arroyo's electoral fraud and corruption. Third, he is closely identified with certain big business interests. Thus, de Castro should also be removed from office.

Senate President Franklin Drilon cannot replace Arroyo even as interim or temporary president before snap elections. Comelec's tainted credibility will make the Drilon transition and snap election ineffective. More importantly, a Drilon transition will not give way to the representation of anti-Arroyo forces, especially the marginalized sectors in society.

Who will compose the transition council?

Different political forces involved in the ouster of Arroyo regime will compose the transition council. There may be representatives from various parties, groups from the Legal Opposition, the progressive mass movement, the middle forces such as professionals and the academe and even retired military officials who may represent those in active service.

The most active and most effective anti-Arroyo groups must be represented. A proportional representation must also be ensured where the number of representatives of a group depends on the number of its constituents.

We have been asserting that the marginalized sectors such as the workers, peasants, women, youth, indigenous people and urban poor be given representation in the transition council. Organizations carrying nationalist and democratic platforms must also be given representation. They are needed in the transition council to carry out reforms.



How do we choose the representatives for the transition council? When will it be formed?

Various political forces will call for a People's Assembly. The People's Assembly will provide the mandate of the Transition Council. Groups and personalities involved in the anti-Arroyo movement will draft rules for the nomination and selection of representatives for the transition council. This process will take place as the Arroyo regime nears its end.

The active participation of different sectors in the People's Assembly must be guaranteed. The People's Assembly should advance the People's Agenda in the period of transition.

How long will the transition council last?

The transition council is not a permanent government. It is just a form of temporary governance while the most urgent reforms are being undertaken and new elections are being prepared. The transition council may last from a minimum of six months up to one year.

Even as new leaders will have been elected, the People's Assembly and the Transition Council may remain as expressions of the broad unity of the Filipino people.

What will be the tasks of the transition council?

1. Advance urgent economic and political reforms.
2. Clean up the mess left by the Arroyo regime, including cases of corruption, cronyism, anomalous contracts etc. Fill up vacant posts in the bureaucracy.
3. Prepare for a clean, honest and credible elections. Overhaul the Comelec.
4. Advance national unity for patriotic and democratic reforms.
5. The transition council may call for a constitutional convention that will draft a new constitution. National sovereignty, patrimony and people's

rights must be upheld and strengthened in the new charter.

Is the transition council the final solution to the country's problems?

We have to recognize that the fundamental problems of the country will not be resolved by one, two or three people power uprisings. We also know that rotten politics continues to dominate our society. There is a big possibility that traditional politicians will gain the upper hand in the transition council and the genuine representatives of the people will be a mere minority.

What matters most is that during this period of struggle and transition, the people's movement accumulates strength, advances the most urgent reforms in the People's Agenda and prepares for the next round of struggles to achieve genuine change.

We yearn for a country that is truly free, just and democratic. We are advancing this aspiration right now and we will continue to do so even after the Arroyo regime has been replaced. In the future, we long for a government that will truly serve the interest of the people and not just of the privileged few.

PEOPLE'S AGENDA for the Transition Council

Proposed by the Gloria Step Down! Movement in its National Assembly

1. Unite to oust the Arroyo regime and set up a democratic transition council to pave the way for a new government that can unite the people, uphold their interests and promote their welfare, and thereby enjoy their trust, confidence and support.

2. Set up the transition council consisting of representatives of the various forces that worked for the ouster of the Arroyo regime, especially the representatives of the toiling masses and other democratic sectors and including representatives from women, the Moro, Cordillera, Lumads, and other indigenous peoples. Initiate electoral reforms and pave the way for the holding of credible elections within a reasonable transition period.

3. Investigate and prosecute Arroyo and other high public officials who are party to the betrayal of public trust, bribery, graft and corruption and other high crimes against the Filipino people. Render justice, including a swift and fair trial, on all outstanding cases of plunder and graft and corruption involving current and previous high public officials.

4. Undertake measures to provide immediate economic relief and rehabilitation while laying the groundwork for a strong, self-reliant economy.

- Institute a pro-people fiscal policy. Scrap measures that place onerous burdens on the toiling people such as the Expanded VAT.

- Place a cap on debt repayments and renegotiate terms of previous debts up to and including debt cancellation and repudiation.

- Stop runaway price increases of all basic commodities and services, especially fuel, water and electrical power. Scrap the onerous Purchased Power Agreement or PPA. Ensure consumer protection. Advance a national and rational drug policy.

- Stop the expulsion, dispossession, eviction of peasants and indigenous peoples from their lands by whatever means. Stop land-use conversion and crop-conversion of prime agricultural lands.

- Institute a P125 across-the-board daily wage increase nationwide for all private sector workers. and a P3,000 across-the-board salary increase and full benefits for public school teachers, health workers and all other government employees.

Repeal laws that violate the workers' security of tenure. Put a stop to the practice of contractualization.

- Prioritize the provision of such basic social services as education, housing, health and social welfare.

- Stop the wanton demolition of urban poor homes and ensure that their basic needs such as housing, jobs and livelihood are met.

- Immediately take positive action on outstanding labor strikes, ensuring that workers demands are satisfactorily addressed.

- Uphold and protect migrants' rights

5. Uphold economic sovereignty & protect the national patrimony.

6. Carry out national industrialization to ensure a self-reliant economy, provide decent jobs and the basic consumer needs, and ensure all-round socio-economic growth and development. Carry out genuine land reform by giving land to the tillers as a matter of social justice and to provide the foundation for national industrialization.

7. Uphold national sovereignty and territorial integrity and repeal unequal treaties and laws.

8. Work for a just and lasting peace by instituting the necessary basic political, social and economic reforms. Resume formal peace talks between the GRP and NDFP without preconditions and in accordance with previous bilateral agreements. Pursue the peace process with the MILF.

9. Uphold the people's democratic rights – civil, political, social, economic – and render justice to the victims of human rights violations.

10. Advance a nationalist and pro-people culture that will promote national unity and progressive ideals.

11. Promote women's rights and empowerment through their active participation in the transition council and in other areas of reform. Work towards the elimination of discrimination against women. Protect the rights of children.

12. Develop a pro-people ecological policy. Scrap mining act, cancel timber licensing agreements. Prohibit the entry of US weapons of mass destruction in Phil territory, cleanup of US bases toxic waste.