



## **OUR BACKGROUND**

On September 25, 1999, leading representatives from major people's organizations gathered at the national office of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) in Quezon City and laid the ground for a new alternative party in Philippine parliamentary politics.

This was the beginning of Bayan Muna. The name is the message and the embodiment of all the ideas and ideals it seeks to assert – people first, their interest and welfare above all.

That founding meeting defined the character and program of BAYAN MUNA as a national progressive political party representing the national and democratic aspirations of the people, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged.

Drawing upon lessons and experiences of past political formations, the new political party immediately took up the challenge of party building on the basis of a comprehensive platform for social transformation and New Politics.

Organizing efforts gained ground in the first year of the new millennium. On September 23, 2000, Bayan Muna held a convention attended by 29 leaders and representatives from national and sectoral organizations at the conference room of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in Quezon City.

Reaffirming basic unities and the correct view regarding electoral and parliamentary struggle in support of the militant mass movement, the convention ratified the Constitution and By-laws and General Program of the party. It also elected the national officers to head the party. It also decided to participate in the party-list elections on May 14, 2001 as the organization's first electoral activity.

The convention participants were one in assessing the party-list system as a chance, though a limited one, for the marginalized and under-represented to have a voice in government decision-making. The party-list process, which took off in the 1998 polls, is a mechanism prescribed in the Philippine Constitution supposedly to give small political parties possible representation in the Lower House which is traditionally controlled by parties with big machineries.

On October 27, newly elected party chairperson Dr. Reynaldo Lesaca Jr. and party president Satur Ocampo filed a petition with the Commission on Elections for the registration and accreditation of Bayan Muna as a national political party in the upcoming party-list elections.

By the year's end, the thrust to unify its broad membership bore solid results in grassroots party building and recruitment. Bayan Muna established 13 regional offices and 57 chapters in major provinces, cities and municipalities nationwide. The party is still growing as it inspires optimism in those who believe it is time for change.

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