

GOV. ERICO ARISTOTLE AUMENTADO

State of the Province Address

July 22, 2023

Bohol Cultural Center

**COMING FULL CIRCLE TO COMPLETE BOHOL'S VISION FOR
SUSTAINABLE, SMART, INCLUSIVE, AND RESILIENT GROWTH**

Public service is a noble journey. The path of a public servant's career often leads to a full circle. From aspiring to serve, to serving with dedication, and ultimately returning the fruits of service back to the community that nurtured us.

My partners in governance, the Honorable Vice Governor Dionisio Victor Balite and the Honorable Members of the August Body of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan; our Honorable Congressional Representatives; our Honorable Mayors and local government officials (led by LMP-Bohol President Mayor Dave Duallo, Tagbilaran City Mayor Jane Censoria Cajes-Yap); our partner National Government Agencies, our Civil Society Organizations and People's Organizations, our partners from the private and business sectors, our sectoral representatives, our stakeholders from the academe and religious sectors, our partners from the media, and our Elective Officials, Department Heads, and rank-and-file personnel of the Provincial Government of Bohol. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and especially *ngadto sa tanan nakong kaigsoonang Bol-anon: Maayong Buntag!*

The state of our province that I will present to you is not just the result of the one year in office of this administration but the combined outcome of what has been done and started in the past.

My father, the late Gov. Erico Boyles Aumentado, had a grand vision for the Province of Bohol: a province that would be free from the clutches of poverty, a province with sufficient power, water, irrigation, and infrastructure for its people, and a province with big-ticket projects to ensure its continued development for future generations.

I am now in a position to continue working towards that vision. When destiny brought me to this path last year, I ran my campaign on the message: *Limpyong pang-gobierno, unahon ang Bol-anon*. And two of the pillars of my 10-point reform agenda are power and water.

Even before we assumed office on June 30, 2022, Bohol's economy was in shambles due to the Covid-19 pandemic and made worse by super typhoon Odette. The provincial government had trust and integrity issues. Projects were delayed or abandoned. The procurement system was under question. Deserving employees were not promoted or bypassed by favorites. The price of fish was high. The insurgency which was driven away in 2009 and illegal drugs which was just hibernating were starting to make a comeback.

On the bright side, mega projects were in the pipeline. Bohol was aspiring to become a Global Geopark. And the Boholanos were hopeful that things would be better.

Breakthroughs

One year on, we are proud to cite several breakthroughs:

- **For the first time, sand and gravel quarry fee collections have breached the P35 Million mark, because there is NO MORE IVAN.**
- **For the first time, national retail giants and shopping malls are finally coming to Bohol, *kini nagpakita sa ilang pagsalig sa atong administrasyon.***
- **For the first time, we have disbanded the shadowy procurement unit and more suppliers are submitting their bids, again underscoring their trust in our governance.**

There will be more first-time breakthroughs throughout the course of this State of the Province Address.

Our Strategic Governance Roadmap

We began our term with a clear road map that was founded on my 10-point Reform Agenda. With the guidance and technical expertise from the Institute for Solidarity in Asia and our Provincial Administrator, we crafted a Strategic Governance Roadmap that fully captured our Vision and Mission for Bohol. We highlighted nine key Strategic Change Agenda that will address the problems Bohol was facing when we assumed office and these same agenda will strengthen the initiatives already in place.

With the support of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan and the Management Executive Board, we identified a strategic position for Bohol: a Smart-Resilient Province Advancing Climate-Smart Agriculture and Sustainable Tourism.

Our Roadmap is fully supportive of the Philippine Development Plan and Strategic Framework, as decreed by His Excellency President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Jr. We are in a good position to partner with the National Government on our common priorities.

Our Strategic Change Agenda are the following:

1. Environmental Sustainability
2. Climate-Smart Agriculture
3. Sustainable Tourism
4. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Entrepreneurship
5. Human Capital and Workforce Development
6. Governance Reform
7. Infrastructure and Utilities
8. Health and Social Services
9. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

My report on what we have achieved so far will be presented in this order. Let me emphasize that these accomplishments would not be possible without the assistance and legislative support of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. It is our Executive-Legislative Unity that made all of these things happen.

1. Environmental Sustainability

Our thrust under Environmental Sustainability is to develop a resilient and green Bohol through the implementation of sound environmental programs.

We are very proud that our beloved island of Bohol has been officially designated as the First UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK of the Philippines! This was done on May 24, 2023 during the 216th Executive Board Session of the UNESCO in the city of Paris, France.

To communicate the importance and significance of this designation to the entire Province of Bohol, there will be a grand launch together with the President and the UNESCO Global Geopark Network in November this year. We will leverage on the tourism benefits of this designation to the optimal benefit of our people.

Let me emphasize: it is not just one or two sites that are part of this designation, but the whole island of Bohol and its surrounding waters.

We acknowledge that this accomplishment is but the fruit of the efforts of several administrations. Bohol first became an aspiring geopark during the term of Gov. Edgar Chatto, and compliance with UNESCO requirements continued during the term of Gov. Arthur Yap. When we took over the reins of the provincial leadership, I made it a point to build on the gains of my predecessors. So we gave our full commitment to this endeavor, and as a result, we have been blessed with this historic designation, the first of its kind in the Philippines. But there is much more to be done, and I take on this challenge to maintain and sustain this designation. In the meantime, allow us to highlight these Global Geosites through this video.

As we celebrate this designation, we have always kept the welfare of our beloved Boholanos in mind. Our brand of ***Bol-anong pang-gobyerno para sa mga Bol-anon*** will always make sure that our Bol-anon constituents are our topmost priority.

Thus, we continue to pursue the Northern Bohol Bulk Water Supply Project, which will develop the waterwork systems and expand service areas in the LGUs of Talibon, Trinidad, Bien Unido, San Miguel, Ubay, Getafe, and Buenavista. These projects costing P1 Billion will benefit an estimated 303,000 target population. The Waterworks Project for Catugasan, Dimiao has been completed, while that of Marcelo, Mabini is underway. These projects costing P10 Million and P30 Million, will benefit an estimated 11,000 target population.

We continue to strengthen our Coastal Resource Management through our Marine Protected Areas, and through our partnerships with the private sector. We signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the concerned Mayors for the creation of the Danajon Bank Double Barrier Reef Management Council which occupies an important place in our UNESCO Designation and the Duero-Guindulman-Jagna-Anda or DUGHAN MPA Management Council.

We recognize the strong partnership and collaboration with other government agencies, non-government organizations, and the private sector in the delivery of programs and projects for sustainable environmental management and protection.

We have another exciting partnership: Prime Infra of the Razon Group of companies will invest in the Sustainable Agroforestry Farm Enterprise (SAFE) Project to achieve optimum use of under-utilized land resources, establish new bamboo forests and complementary crops for food and livelihood, and adopt ecosystem-based services towards climate resiliency.

Our Trees for Unity Program and Mangrove Nursery Establishment Rehabilitation Project are another important aspect of environmental sustainability, in coordination with the Tree Growing Program of the national government.

In Responsible Mining, we imposed reforms which led to the apprehension of 52 violators. Also, because of these reforms, as I briefly mentioned in the introduction, our transparent collection led to a substantial increase in Sand and Gravel Quarry Fees, or total collections of P36.7 Million since the beginning of our term, an increase of 264% over the same period in the previous year. On the other hand, for compliant operators, quarry permits have been facilitated and approved without delay.

Our Solid Waste Management Program continues to monitor our component LGUs' compliance with R.A. 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, as well as other environmental laws and ordinances.

We will maintain our reputation as a Green Province. We are doing this in coordination with our Honorable Mayors, and even in partnership with the Department of Education, for Geopark Education Integration.

Another aspect of Environmental Sustainability is Disaster Preparedness. Our Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council Unified Command, is ever-ready to act in the event of disasters. We already have seven TaRSIER substations, with two more set to open. Also, I should mention that our Command Center uses renewable energy in its operations, and is the first major renewable energy program of the Provincial Government.

Bohol has been a consistent recipient of the *Gawad Kalasag* Seal of Excellence in Disaster Preparedness. And this was put to the test during recent emergencies, such as that sudden fire in Poblacion 2, Tagbilaran City, which affected 75 families and 29 individuals. Our team rose to action, and the families were provided with food and non-food items. Our Emergency Response to the MV Esperanza Fire Incident, where we deployed three emergency medical teams, was another proof of our disaster preparedness.

2. Climate-Smart Agriculture

With the reality of climate change already upon us, we need to transition from conventional agriculture to climate-resilient agriculture.

The Philippine Rural Development Project is a flagship project of the Department of Agriculture, funded by the World Bank, and we are very lucky to be one of their partner

provinces. Using the Value Chain approach of the PRDP, Bohol has submitted the highest number of Provincial Commodity Investment Plans in the entire PRDP-Visayas Cluster. These PCIPs are the basis for actual investments, and they are the reason why Bohol has received 36% of the total funding of PRDP and non-PRDP projects in the whole Visayas, translating to P6.5 Billion. This external funding, over and above our Provincial Government budget, translates into more farm-to-market roads and bridges, and more livelihood projects for our beloved Boholanos.

Sixteen Small Livelihood Projects have been turned over to people's organizations in eleven municipalities, with a total project cost of P61.9 Million. Also, eight Micro Enterprise Projects for seaweeds have been completed, totaling to P11.9 Million. And through the i-REAP component of the PRDP, many other cooperatives and people's organizations have been assisted throughout the entire province. There's still more to come, because in October of last year, the Regional Project Advisory Board of the PRDP approved four new enterprises worth P119.8 Million. This funding goes directly to our beloved Boholanos and their cooperatives! Also, just this month, the Bohol Feeds Production and Marketing Enterprise of BONAGCA in Sevilla had its Blessing and Groundbreaking Ceremony for the construction of its processing facility.

As part of Resilient Agriculture Production, the PRDP Global Environmental Facility conducted Resource Ecological Assessment on fish stocks and coral reefs in eight Marine Protected Areas. Also, part of Typhoon Odette Rehabilitation, PRDP enabled us to provide climate-resilient patrol boats and gears to these MPAs. Most recently, we turned over a guardhouse, five big boats and three fiberglass boats and other provisions for MPA sustainability.

Under the i-BUILD component of PRDP, we have received farm-to-market road projects amounting to a grand total (so far) of P1.138 Billion. Allow me to show you a short video of some of our farm-to-market road projects. Still under i-BUILD, we are soon to complete five Potable Water Systems for our island communities, four of them using Solar-powered Water desalination.

Once again, these projects have been implemented over several administrations. But they are just the tip of the iceberg, because we are part of the next phase of PRDP, known as PRDP SCALE-UP 2023-2028, and we have in the pipeline even more projects for Bohol!

Our regular agriculture programs are also being implemented, such as the Hybrid Rice Program. And it gives me great pleasure to say that the Province of Bohol has been an Excellence Awardee in Region VII for our implementation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund Seed and Extension Programs. There are other regular agriculture programs as well: Hybrid Corn, High-Value Commercial Crops, Provision of Crop Facilities and Greenhouses, Production and Dispersal of Seedlings, *Tabo sa Bohol* Program which has earned P11.8 Million for our farmers and exhibitors, and other agricultural events.

Through the provision of agricultural machinery, we have assisted 378 farmers and covered 190 hectares to date.

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management is updating the Soils Map of the Province of Bohol. This will allow us to be even more strategic in the planting of crops. In fact, Bohol is one of the 10 pilot provinces of this project, and the only one in Visayas.

And to address the previously high prices of fish, our Isda Program, which started last October 5, 2022, made common fishery commodities available at an average price lower by 19% compared to regular market prices. This initiative is supplemented by other fishery programs, such as our Bilar Multi-Species Hatchery, Marine Aquaculture, and Fish Cages Production Programs.

In the area of Livestock, we are proud to say that the island province of Bohol continues to be ASF-FREE! As you know, African Swine Fever has already infected the swine populations of many provinces in the Philippines. Our vigilant efforts have succeeded in keeping ASF out of Bohol, thanks to our partnership with national government agencies and LGUs in maintaining quarantine stations in 11 seaports and 1 airport. This holds true not just for ASF, but for Avian Flu and other livestock and poultry diseases as well.

On top of these preventions, we are also anticipating possible effects of El Niño in Bohol. Therefore, we conducted the ASF and El Niño Preparedness Forum to strengthen preventive measures against ASF and to mitigate the ill-effects of El Niño.

Allow me to cite our other continuing Livestock Programs: the Barangay Livestock Aide (BALA) Program, Artificial Insemination Program, Livestock and Poultry-based Enterprise Development Program, LETS HELP Bohol Program, and the Native Chicken Program.

There are new programs as well: the Swine Genetic Material Processing Center, and the Gatas Bol-anon Program.

The Gatas Bol-anon Program needs to be highlighted: through this program, we have conducted community-based milk feeding for 16,000 children so far throughout the province, in cooperation with DepEd. As of the latest figure, total milk produced stands at more than 91,000 liters, valued at P5.38 Million.

To promote our dairy buffalo milk, /we have conducted the 7th Bohol Milk Festival. We encourage the use of Gatas Bol-anon as the official welcome drink in Bohol's tourist destinations as well as in the capitol offices to help Bohol's dairy industry. During the ceremony, we turned over dairy equipment and supplies, 18 Native Carabaos to 2 POs and 30 Dairy Cattles to Bohol Cattle Raisers Association of the Philippines dairy farmers.

On the side of the dairy farmers, they have discovered a sustainable livelihood. With the assistance of PRDP, our very own Bohol Dairy Producers Association, now BODACO which used to have zero operating capital at the start, now has P27.9 Million in total assets, and a total revenue of P13.8 Million. Bohol Dairy now has 10 cooperatives and associations, with 138 farmers in 35 barangays throughout six municipalities. They have 622 animal heads, all with potential for milking. They have 32 commercial outlets and 48 other outlets available in public schools in Bohol. We are inspired and encouraged by the success of our Boholano Dairy Farmers: as their motto goes, *"Sa Dairy, ang kita daily."*

Poverty Reduction is a key priority. All of the foregoing programs and projects are meant to further reduce poverty in our province. We are adding a new one: Cooperative Development. Through this program, we are reaching communities in remote areas, training them on simplified bookkeeping and proposal making, and strengthening them in cooperative management and governance. So far, we have assisted 94 community groups

in very poor areas, and we have turned over more than P4 Million worth of Livelihood Grants from the Department of Labor and Employment.

3. Sustainable Tourism

We want to innovate tourism management practices in the province for sustainable tourism. We will have our master planning for our tourism agenda and we will re-visit our branding.

After the downturn caused by Covid-19 and Typhoon Odette, we have very good news in Tourism Statistics. The “Revenge Travel” trend has given us a 198% increase in Tourist Arrivals from 2021 to 2022! We are projected to reach the one-million mark in tourist arrivals at the end of the year! Our tourism businesses and stakeholders earned an estimated P7.3 Billion in 2022, and for 2023 so far, an estimated P3.8 Billion as of May 31. Let us watch a video testimony from our tourists and Tourism Stakeholders.

On top of that, Bohol welcomes Air Busan as it opens new international flights. I have even more exciting news: Asiana Air launched its maiden flight from Incheon, South Korea to Panglao last July 20, which is the international gateway to major destinations! On July 25 Royal Air Philippines will start its flights from Kunming City, China to Panglao. Just last month, 217 passengers from the first flight of Air Busan, arrived at the Bohol-Panglao International Airport. Through our efforts, we addressed the needs of these airlines so they could open these new flights. The future is very bright for Tourism in Bohol!

Because of our UNESCO Global Geopark Status, we have a new Tourism Development Program showcasing the 17 Geosites in our province. Please enjoy these beautiful pictures.

We are developing new Tourism Circuits, such as the Farm, Fork, Fitness Tour, Outdoor Adventure Trails, UNESCO Geotrail, Motorbike Loops, and others.

We are also pinning our hopes on a forthcoming program: the Transforming Communities Towards Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism (TouRIST) Program, with the endorsement of the Department of Tourism and funding from the World Bank. With the approval of this program, we will implement more projects to benefit not just the tourists, but our Boholano constituents first and foremost. We need to make sure that our tourism industry is Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient.

We continue to raise Bohol’s profile in our marketing and promotion efforts by participating in tour and travel expos, as well as international ecotourism travel marts and forums. And because I believe in an active and athletic lifestyle, we would like to promote Sports Tourism as well! Just recently, over 600 triathletes joined the 5150 Triathlon held in our beautiful province of Bohol.

Through our Provision of Tourism Assistance at the *Escuela de las Niñas* (at the Old Capitol Building), at the Bohol International Airport, and more locations to come, we intend to maintain Bohol’s reputation for professional tourism.

As we pursue our tourism market, we must not lose sight of who we are as Boholanos. Our brand of “*Bol-anong pang-gobyerno para sa mga Bol-anon*” highlights our culture and heritage. We have our Bohol Arts and Cultural Heritage Council. We have celebrations to

remember historic events, such as the annual Sandugo Festival. We are proud of our musical and performing arts groups, such as the Loboc Children's Choir, Dimiao Children's *Rondalla*, Alicia *Pangkat Kawayan*, and the LUPAE of Tubigon. We have arts and literature events such as the annual "*Bahal, Balut ug Balak*" poetry night. We have held many art exhibits and also given our support to film projects. Just last week, we held the grand coronation night of Miss Bohol 2023 which was widely praised as the best production in the history of Miss Bohol.

4. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurship

Aided by the technical expertise of our Provincial Administrator, Ma'am Aster Caberte, who brings with her valuable experience in the Department of Trade and Industry, we intend to foster a business-enabling environment for resilient and competitive MSMEs that will contribute to the provincial economy.

Under our Business Development Program, investments from large enterprises reached P9.7 Billion in 2022 and generated 2,982 new jobs for the Boholanos. On the part of our MSMEs, they reached P11 Billion worth of investments and paved the way for the creation of over 31,000 jobs.

In addition, Paid-up Capital Investments from 265 New Corporations and Partnerships in Bohol reached P376 million in 2022, 52% higher than the previous year.

We are attracting major investments to spur economic activity and generate employment. Bohol now has two major BPO locators employing 5,000 workers and 20,000 freelancers offering expertise in various fields of BPO services.

We have conducted eight Abante Negosyo Caravans and two Abante Barangay Service Caravans so far. Through these caravans, we have served a total of 2,923 MSMEs and clients to date.

Just this year, we launched the Basic Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Transformation (BEST) Series Seminars in start-up Food Parks in the municipalities. We want to develop Bohol's local food industry, support MSMEs in the food service sector, and transform food parks into tourist destinations.

Let us not forget an established facility: the Bohol Business One Stop Shop remains committed to providing assistance to MSMEs in business registration. Their quality of service has been consistently rated high by clients, with the latest satisfaction rating at 93.4%.

There are other Investment Promotion Initiatives, such as Fusion Nights, *Sandugo* Night Market, Café Caloy, Bohol Biodiversity Complex, and the publication of Bohol's Economic Factbook.

As another testimony to the strong economy aided by our MSMEs, 86 local businesses have earned P8.3 Million so far since July 1 at the Sandugo Park at the Old Tagbilaran Airport. In a little over two weeks, we have already exceeded the month-long revenue earned during last year's event!

We have assisted, so far, 53 investment leads of large investors who have shown interest to invest in various fields of development. Of course, not all of these will lead to actual

investments, and that is why we have reactivated the Bohol Investments Board, to act as a platform to evaluate potential investments.

5. Human Capital and Workforce Development

Aside from ensuring the continued capacity development of our Provincial Government workforce, we also aim to expand the workforce in the Agriculture and Tourism sectors and align their skills to match current and emerging industry demands.

We beefed up the Provincial Government workforce by filling up vacancies: we have appointed and promoted 160 personnel to regular positions, so far. This includes the promotion of our OIC heads of Provincial Government offices to full Department Head Status. Our target is that 50% of all vacant positions will be filled up by the end of the year. This means more Provincial Government workers who will be dedicated to serving your needs!

We continue to enable more good jobs for our beloved Boholanos. We do this through our Local and Overseas Job Fairs: so far, 9,073 applicants have been registered, referred and matched. And through our TUPAD Program, in cooperation with the Department of Labor and Employment we have assisted 3,097 displaced and disadvantaged workers. Our assistance includes Pre-Employment Orientation Seminars, which have benefited 3,862 participants so far.

Aside from our labor force, we also assist students through these programs:

- a. Special Program for the Employment of Students;
- b. CPG Scholarship Program;
- c. Bohol Educational Subsidy Program;
- d. Learning Support Program; and
- e. Bohol Medical Scholarship Program, with financial assistance per semester of P200,000 tuition fee, P30,000 living allowance, and P25,000 monthly allowance for internship, to a total of 21 medical scholars. We are investing in our future doctors, so that they will, in a few years, serve our Boholano citizens with passion and dedication.

This is what sets Bohol apart from other provinces: our development trajectory continues because we support programs that we believe in, all for the welfare of our beloved Boholano constituents!

This performance has led to all these awards for Bohol: for being the Consistent Top Performing PESO Office and PESO Manager in the Region, Ms. Maria Vilma Yorong, also a Regional Awardee of the Secretary's Bayanihan Service Award in 2021 and 2022. Bohol is also nominated as the Best PESO for 2023 together with the municipalities of Talibon and Mabini in their respective categories.

Boholano topnotchers in this year's board exams also deserve recognition. This afternoon, a separate program will be held for this purpose.

We also have programs to assist our Boholano OFWs and Migrant Workers, especially during their times of need: for example, we assisted the return of 42 Distressed Boholano

OFWs from abroad. That is just one among many services which you see onscreen. The point is, we are always here for our Boholano OFWs and Migrant Workers.

Just this week, the Province of Bohol assisted in the registration of applicants for the “Passport on Wheels”. The DFA allocated 4,000 slots for Bohol this year, but a lot more applicants lined up. Thus, we will be knocking on DFA’s door once more to schedule another “Passport on Wheels” before the year ends to cater to those who were not accommodated. The bill for the establishment of a permanent DFA office in Bohol, re-filed by Cong. Van-van Aumentado, was approved in its first reading at the plenary session. After approval during the 2nd and 3rd readings, it will be forwarded for deliberation in the Senate.

6. Governance

One of my electoral platforms was the advocacy for transparency and reforms in governance. Therefore, we are implementing serious changes and improvements in the Provincial Government, and enabling a shift to more strategic governance.

This is why one of the first things we did upon assumption was to craft our Strategic Governance Roadmap, which is also the foundation of our Executive-Legislative Agenda 2022-2025.

The highlight of our Governance Reforms is Executive Order No. 2, Creating the Office of Governance Accountability and Review (OGAR). Through this body, we are seriously pursuing the investigation and prosecution of cases against past and present public officials and employees who, based on the evidence and careful evaluation, have committed acts of corruption and graft. We have seen the cases that were filed so far. More will follow. I have just received OGAR’s latest recommendation signed by all members led by CabSec Jun Evasco to file a criminal case against a former governor. My response: proceed and carry on. A criminal case shall also be filed against the persons secretly using our own provincial internet network to spread fake news and cyber libel.

Two provincial government employees are facing serious administrative cases which could lead to their dismissal if the evidence warrants.

For the first time, the provincial government hosted the Bible Day Celebration right inside the capitol building last January. From then on, it will be a yearly activity.

Our governance reform is supported by our *Kamustahan sa Kaligdong* Program for Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in Public Service.

We have given recognition to the Most Improved Office in Internal Control, based on their extent of compliance to internal audit recommendations. We would like to acknowledge the Chief of Hospital, Dr. Victor Alan Torrefranca, and the staff of Francisco Dagohoy Municipal Hospital in Inabanga. We have put in place risk assessment and management to further broaden and strengthen management appreciation of internal control. We have introduced the importance of internal audit to the Municipal LGUs of Bohol, through a seminar on Internal Audit Best Practices, Challenges and Opportunities.

When it comes to financial matters, I am grateful for the guidance of the Local Finance Committee, which gives policy advice on fiscal matters of the Provincial Government.

It is my honor to serve the entire Region 7 as the Regional Development Council Chairman. In a sense, I am coming full circle to my father's vision for Bohol and the region. He, too, was RDC Chair from 2001 to 2004. It is the highest honor to serve our fellow Boholanos and the whole Central Visayas Region! I am fully supported in this responsibility by our Provincial Development Council.

We are also active in the Regional Peace and Order Council. The RPOC has recognized our Provincial Peace and Order Council for its 95% Exemplary Rating in the Peace and Order Performance Audit in 2022. We owe this to our partners in the PPOC, especially the Philippine National Police, for keeping our Crime Incidence down, lower by 1.89% than last year, from January to June. During my first year, a total of 12,000 grams of illegal drugs with an estimated street value of P85 Million was confiscated. Because of these efforts, Bohol has been named as one of the 10 safest places in the Philippines.

On our campaign to end local communist armed conflict, we are happy to report that shortly after we began our term, one high-ranking leader of the CPP-NPA-NDF surrendered, even if he was facing criminal cases for 33 counts of murder and frustrated murder. In his own words, "I believe in the sincerity of your peace program that is patterned after the peace program of your father, Gov. Erico."

Together with him, we have facilitated the surrender of five others under our PTF-ELCAC. All of them have been issued JAPIC Certifications. Five others from Antequera and San Isidro are now undergoing the process of certification.

We hope that more will surface in the coming days as we have sent people to talk to the families of those remaining in the Bohol Party Committee. We have passed our own local version of the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program through E.O. No. 27 which I signed last month. This will expand the coverage of benefits from the program instituted by EO No. 70 of former Pres. Duterte, which is being continued by President Bongbong Marcos.

7. Infrastructure and Utilities

Being a climate-resilient province requires infrastructure and utilities that anticipate future demands.

Here, we rely not just on our own resources, but also on the resources of national government agencies, because they hold most of the available funding for infrastructure and utilities.

We at the Provincial Government continue to do our part in providing Climate-Resilient Roads through our 20% Development Fund. In partnership with the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Province of Bohol achieved an 11% increase in paved roads, from 1,938 kilometers in 2020 to 2,150 kilometers in 2022. This includes the construction and maintenance of 13.7 kilometers of roads amounting to P500 Million. This is in addition to all those farm-to-market roads implemented through PRDP that was presented a while ago.

As an outcome of our Post-Typhoon Odette Rehab Plan, the DPWH has now implemented Road Projects with provision of Solar lights. We also received a total amount of P30 Million for the rehabilitation and restoration of the damaged public infrastructure. This includes

the restoration of the Hanging Bridge in Sevilla, which has been completed, and the ongoing projects in Napo Bridge in Inabanga and the Public Market in Loboc. There is still more to come!

Still on Climate-Resilient Roads, in convergence with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Tourism, the DPWH has completed 61 kilometers of Roads leading to Seaports, Airports, and Tourism Destinations in the total amount of P1.13 Billion. That is a lot of external funding, once again on top of our Provincial Budget, benefiting our beloved Boholanos!

Another priority project of the Provincial Government is the Construction of the Talibon-Bien Unido Bridge, which is already ongoing. This bridge connects Nueva Esperanza, Bien Unido and San Isidro, Talibon, making transport between the two municipalities much easier. With this new bridge, travel time will be shortened to 19 minutes compared to 30 minutes before. This is one of the projects that used to be a dream of my *Papa Erico* and previous administrations.

Now, because of the continuity in our development programs, that dream has become a reality!

Another big-ticket multi-year project, the Panglao-Tagbilaran City Offshore Connector Bridge, is ongoing, with more funding being proposed under the DPWH Budget for the succeeding years.

Another initiative that we are doing at the provincial level is the formulation of the Local Public Transport Route Plan, together with all 48 Component LGUs. Surveys have been conducted to assess the existing Public Transport network. The completion of the plan will allow more transport operators to obtain franchises and ease the commuting experience of the Boholano public.

Will our road network be able to handle this increased vehicle traffic? That is why we have proposed, through a PDC Resolution, a Feasibility Study by the DPWH for a Second Circumferential Highway to deal with the volume of traffic in the coming years.

Under the SIRT Project of the DOT, one major project aims to provide efficient bulk water supply and sanitation through wastewater treatment to LGUs under the Loboc River Source Cluster, which includes Tagbilaran City, Dauis, Panglao, Baclayon, Albuquerque, Corella, Sikatuna, Loboc, and shall include the town of Sevilla in the next phase of the project. We are also welcoming multiple investors to realize our Proposed Potable Water System Project for ten island barangays throughout the province.

In Resilient Power Development, we are closely coordinating with the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines for the completion of the Cebu-Bohol 230KV Interconnection Project. Right now, the project is under way, and once completed, this will be a major boost to resiliency in our power supply! This means that we will attract more power investors to locate here, because they will be able to tap into the national grid.

One of these locators is the 95.2 MegaWatt In-Island Power Plant for One Bohol Power located in Brgy. Imelda, Ubay. Site development has started, and project construction is set to follow.

Another ongoing power project is the 25-MegaWatt Dagohoy Solar Power Project of Petrogreen Corp. Once completed, this will provide another source of renewable energy for our province!

We are not stopping there. We are also talking to other potential power investors for solar farms, wind power, and waste-to-energy facilities.

We are coordinating with partner national government agencies and LGUs in the construction of more school buildings, more waterworks projects, more desalination projects for island barangays, and other infrastructure facilities.

Because we are an agricultural province, we need irrigation facilities. The National Irrigation Administration is implementing multiple irrigation projects in Bohol, and has now serviced 64% of the total irrigable land area in the province. The Bohol Northeast Catch Basin project includes irrigation for Bien Unido, with extension to Trinidad, San Miguel, and Ubay. This means more agricultural productivity for our Boholano farmers!

Our seaports are another major reason for Bohol's development, because of the ease of access, coupled with the increasing volume of cargo. We would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Philippine Ports Authority. In 2022, 7 Port Improvement Projects were completed. For this year, 10 Port Projects are set to be completed in almost all seaports in the Province. These works include port construction and other activities to have a safe berth for international cargo and cruise ships. Also, our Provincial Development Council has endorsed the proposed Maribojoc Port Zone Delineation, which will enable the port's expansion.

8. Health and Social Services

We need to ensure our communities' continued resiliency by providing inclusive health and social services.

This means providing help in times of need, through the following programs:

- Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations, which has given financial aid to 10,014 clients from July 2022 to June 2023, totaling to P46.2 Million;
- Care for the Elderly Program, with 30 centenarians given cash incentives worth P100,000 each;
- Persons with Disabilities are given assistive devices and Children with Disabilities are given developmental support services;
- LAPWA Program, where women's organizations in all barangays were given kitchen utensils;
- Affected families during the armed conflicts in Balilihan, San Isidro, and Antequera were given food packs and psychological first aid; and
- Former rebels were given cash and livelihood assistance.

Since the start of my administration, we have visited 50% of all barangays so far. They were given services and food packs under the *Abante Barangay Serbisyo* Caravan. Let us watch a video testimony of some of our beneficiaries.

We provide vital help to Victims of Exploitation and Gender-based Violence, especially children who have been exposed to Online Sexual Exploitation, by providing protective

custody through our Bohol Crisis Intervention Center. We give them protection and education until they graduate and become strong, independent members of society.

Because of all these efforts, Bohol was given a 100% IDEAL rating in our efforts on Anti-Trafficking and Violence against Women and Children /– the highest in Region 7, and the only perfect score among all of the rated LGUs!

Resilient Housing is another concern under Social Services. Because funding for housing belongs to national government agencies, we are grateful for their assistance. Enabled by our Post-Typhoon Odette Rehab Plan, we received a P100 Million Grant from the Office of the President’s Socio-Civic Projects Fund, which has provided Resettlement Projects in Talibon and Loboc and Evacuation Facilities in Ubay and Pres. Carlos P. Garcia.

More housing units are being constructed by our partners, such as the Philippine Red Cross (funded by the Republic of Korea) and the United Nations Development Program.

We partnered with the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development for the “*Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino: Zero ISF Program for 2028*”.

There is still more to come! The National Housing Authority, through its Emergency Housing Assistance Program, is targeting 84,560 beneficiaries for housing, in the total amount of P797.5 Million. We have launched a pilot site in Ubay, where we gave P10,000 assistance each to 4,979 beneficiaries, amounting to P49.79 Million.

In Health Services, we continue to provide our regular programs, such as Vaccination against Covid-19, Measles, Polio and Rubella. We are providing for our Provincial Government employees’ needs through our Botika sa Kapitolyo. In addition to this, we have provided our Provincial Government employees with health insurance, to take care of their medical, dental and hospitalization needs.

We are persistent in our efforts under the Universal Health Care Program in partnership with the Department of Health and our component LGUs. In fact, Bohol will be the pilot site of *Konsulta* Plus Sustainable Development Goals in the Visayas.

Our Center for Drug Education and Counselling provides hope for those who have been entangled in prohibited drugs through several forms of recovery education. We have given assistance to 28 municipalities under the Community-Based Rehabilitation Program, with in-house rehabilitation at the DOH Treatment Center. To intensify drug awareness, we continue to conduct drug education activities.

One recent achievement is that the Bohol Provincial Diagnostic and Ambulatory Care Center has been granted a license to operate as a Secondary Clinic Laboratory. This license was issued last May 31, 2023. Our BPDACC is now currently providing X-Ray, ECG and Ultrasound services. Recently, our Hemodialysis Unit received its license to operate. We have installed new machines including Reverse Osmosis equipment.

We are improving the buildings, facilities and equipment of our 10 Provincial Government-operated hospitals, under our Hospital Modernization Program. So far, there are 47 sub-projects under the program with a total amount of P316 Million since the start of Phase 2. These are just a few examples of the work we are currently doing in these 10 hospitals.

To update the public on the Construction of the Gov. Celestino Gallares Medical Center in Cortes funded by the DOH: Phase 1 is now at 64.4% of the estimated P1.5 Billion project cost, and Phase 2 is now at 48.3% of the P940 Million project cost. This will mean more inclusive and resilient health services and facilities for our fellow Boholanos!

This will be an apex hospital for our Universal Health Care Program. And I envision to develop the surrounding area as a multi-use commercial complex.

To promote an active and athletic lifestyle, we have launched the Governor's Cup for Boholanos' health and wellness and to give our local athletes opportunity to grow in sports. This is the first inter-LGU basketball league joined by all municipalities of Bohol. This is another testament to our unity!

Just recently, we were informed that the National Nutrition Council and the Central Visayas Nutrition Committee will be awarding the Green Banner Seal of Compliance for 2022 for the Province of Bohol.

9. Information and Communications Technology

Finally, in the area of ICT, we want to integrate information systems to digitize government, agriculture and tourism processes to facilitate streamlined services.

Although Telecommunications is a private industry, we are coordinating with our major service providers to ensure that Bohol is connected to the national fiber optic highway and its digital infrastructure. This will give us improved internet service and greater capacity, boost redundancy and resiliency, and spread the benefits of economic growth.

Within the Provincial Government itself, the PGBh Unified System for Procurement is already in place end-to-end and we have the commitment of all agencies concerned to implement the system. This will fully computerize our procurement system, to ensure that there will be no corruption and manipulation in our procurement process. You can see onscreen some images of digitized forms within the system.

More than just procurement, our PGBh-US is at the heart of our financial systems and processes. This system integrates all other systems in the Capitol, making it a data center for the generation of all reports and an avenue for data analytics. The objective is to improve the flow of transactions and maximize internal control, streamline financial processes maintain inventory records, and act as a guard against any potential for corruption.

We reviewed the existing procurement processes in the province with all the concerned departments. We have implemented reforms, and one of these is the creation of two TWGs and the early preparation of the procurement plan for each department. These reforms are for strict compliance.

We are also filling up 100% of all vacancies at the Provincial Procurement Management Unit to ensure that they have full manpower complement.

Together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and service providers, we are developing a Smart Collection System for Environmental Users' Fees, for systematic and cashless collection, in our protected areas in Bohol.

Valuing our Workforce

Our brand of governance is participatory and inclusive. Therefore, we revitalized the Management Executive Board meetings, where we have dialogues on the day-to-day management of the Provincial Government, and for continuous improvement and reforms. At this point, I would like to recognize our Department Heads, Heads of Attached Agencies, Chiefs of Hospitals, and the entire Provincial Government workforce, led by our Provincial Administrator, Ma'am Aster Caberte. All of you, please stand and be recognized.

Dear August members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, it is through the efforts of these dedicated public servants that we are able to report these accomplishments to you.

Challenges

The true state of our province will not be complete if I will present only the rosy side of things. Just like any other province, Bohol is also facing a number of challenges and hindrances to smooth development.

- Our share in the National Tax Allocation, known as the Internal Revenue Allotment before, is much lower than the NTA of 2022, by 14.7%. The National Government allocated only P2.8 Billion for Bohol this year. There is a gap of P484 Million, which has affected the programs and projects that we planned this year. We will overcome this by improving our revenue collection and generation:
 - ✓ We are now updating the Bohol Revenue Code.
 - ✓ Income from quarry, sand and gravel permits has greatly increased by 264%. As I said earlier, Ivan no more.
 - ✓ We are now developing the Online Payment System of Provincial Government Fees and Charges, including the payment of Real Property Taxes.
- Our effort to bring down the price of fish needs to be sustained. On average, we were able to bring down prices by 19%. For example, the price of *borotborot* back in January averaged at P220 per kilo. Now it can be bought at an average of P180 per kilo, *basta maayo ang panahon. Apan dili sayon ang pagpabilin nga ubos ang presyo.* Task Force *Isda* was launched as an immediate stop-gap measure. But it will be the Fish Buy-back Program that will sustain our objective. We have put soft infrastructure in place as we continually improve the system.
- The delayed completion of the construction of hospital buildings, government facilities, and other infrastructure projects started in the past administrations has deprived the taxpayers of much-needed basic services and caused damage and prejudice. Some of the contractors asked for a chance to complete the work but still they failed. Thus, we have ordered the termination of five contracts so that the

unfinished work can be completed by new contractors after public and competitive bidding.

- We recognize the need for a venue for big meetings, incentives, conferences and events with a seating capacity of 5,000 or more. We hope to have this soon.
- Among our barangays, 34.7% still have no access to level III waterworks services. *Hugot nakong tinguha nga ang gobierno ug pribadong sector magtinabangay – ug dili mag-away – aron makatubig ang katawhan.*
- Small beachfront resorts are having a hard time because they are deprived of road right of way from the main roads. The playing field should be leveled so that no one will be left behind.
- The problem of Illegal drugs has reared its ugly head once more. The fact that millions of pesos worth of these drugs were seized demonstrates that this administration and our law enforcement authorities are serious in eliminating this menace. Thus, we intensified our campaign against illegal drugs by signing this year E.O. No. 4 that created our own K-9 Units and E.O. No. 31 mandating all motor vehicles entering Bohol through the seaports to undergo inspection by the K-9 units. And so, I call on the youth and even the adults, to join us in our War against Illegal Drugs! We will award more incentives to enforcers and citizens who can provide A-1 information leading to apprehension.
- The scourge of illegal gambling has no place in Bohol. I will not tolerate any of my friends or relatives...STOP NAMEDROPPING!

A New Dawn is Breaking

Despite the challenges, many positive developments are coming in:

- The expansion and development of Hantos St. which connects J.A. Clarin St. to the New Capitol Site has already started. This road passes alongside the lot acquired by SM Properties. This will start SM's development and construction of the shopping mall they planned on the 7-hectare property, projected to be completed in 2025.
- Puregold will start construction and operation in Ubay, the first of seven branches. Robinson's will follow soon, and so will S&R in Panglao.
- More serious investors have expressed interest to pursue the Bohol-Cebu Bridge, such as Prime Infra of the Razon Group.
- San Miguel Global Power, through Universal Power Solutions, will put up a 20-MegaWatt Battery Storage System at Brgy. Imelda, Ubay. It will operate by the end of this year, to supply more power to the NGCP grid. We will execute a MOA with them so that the Province of Bohol can avail of the benefits as a host beneficiary.
- The Bohol Investment Board has favorably endorsed the following projects:

- Unity Digital Infrastructure, a joint venture between a global private equity group and Aboitiz
- Robocare Solutions
- E-Formula Technologies
- Peak Off-Grid Innovations and Solutions
- Luxury and high-end hotels and resorts are coming to Bohol:
 - JW Marriott Panglao Island Resort and Spa will start mobilization in the next two months
 - J Park Island Resort and Waterpark will resume construction
 - Mo'ayon Hotel, a sister company of Modala, will start this year
 - Bohol Nine Degrees Condotel
 - Crown Regency
 - Costa Mira Bohol
 - Panglao Shores

With all these investors now coming in, let us not forget to salute and commend our homegrown business owners. They have been with us from the start, no matter what. When Bohol suffered all those hardships and disasters, they helped us make it through our darkest hour.

- The long-awaited improvement of the passenger terminal building of the Bohol Panglao International Airport will soon become a reality now that discussions between the national government and the Aboitiz Group are in the final stage.
- To further enhance our airport services, we will continue to work on the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine requirements with appropriate agencies.
- Our UNESCO Global Geopark Designation has already put us on the map of similar international sites. We will sustain this status through various programs, one of which is the Bohol: First Regenerative Island Project.
- As a Global Geopark, Bohol joins the proposed Philippine UNESCO Trail, which brings together culture, creativity, nature, and local communities by connecting UNESCO-designated and UNESCO-inscribed sites in the country.
- USAID-INSPIRE has started the “Protect Danajon Project”.
- We will hire full-time product designers to assist our MSMEs in developing local souvenir items to support the tourism industry.
- We will dream bigger dreams. We are already in the process of updating our Provincial Development and Physical Framework Plan, and once we complete it, we will have our roadmap for an even longer planning horizon, from 2024-2036.

As we are inspired by our past, we look forward to an even brighter future. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

The State of the Province

By what we have achieved so far, I dare say, without fear of contradiction, that:

- Bohol has reached the level of being a compelling destination in tourism. We are back on our feet. Our local economy is thriving once more.
- The Provincial Government has regained the trust of the people. Our satisfaction rating stands at +78 as of the poll survey in May this year. Our effort to control graft and corruption has a net satisfaction rating of +16, nineteen points higher than in the first half of 2022, at -3.
- Bohol is still very peaceful and orderly. Ours is a place for a wholesome family experience.
- *Hayag ug lamdag ang kaugmaon sa atong probinsya!*

Call to Action

Despite our proven sincerity and dedication in serving the people and in running a clean government, there is always that small noise that tries to undermine our efforts. We welcome constructive criticism. We are not perfect. But we can smell when the true intention is to bring back in power a disgraced style of governance that Boholanos have already rejected last year. These people will stop at nothing. Lie after lie they will not stop until the change we started will die.

And yet... Even the tree gives shade to the woodsman who is cutting it down. *Bisan ang kahoy naghatag og landong sa manigbasay nga buot mopukan niini.*

Although they are trying to pull down this administration, they will still enjoy the same benefits we are working to achieve.

I only have the legacy of the good name of my father to protect and the sacred trust you—the people—reposed in me to assure you that I and this administration will always follow the straight and narrow path.

For our beloved Bohol, I call on everyone to do your sworn duty as responsible Boholanos and citizens of our country. Keep us—your public servants—in your daily prayers that God will grant us His Divine guidance. Let us set aside our differences and work hand-in-hand to build upon the gains we have already achieved as we march towards Bohol’s bright and promising future.

Mark this day. July 22, 2023. The day we launch our renewed commitment for good governance towards sustainable, smart, inclusive and resilient growth for our beloved Boholanos! This is our tipping point!

Abante Bohol!

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