



PASUGUAN NG PILIPINAS

EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES

WASHINGTON DC

## STATUS OF THE GRP-MILF PEACE PROCESS

(February 08, 2005)

### 6<sup>th</sup> Exploratory Talks

1. The 6th round of Exploratory Talks held in KL last December 20-21, 2004 reflects the steady momentum of the Government's peace process with the MILF.
2. Among the highlights of the informal talks include the adoption of the interim guidelines to operationalize the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) pursuant to the GRP-MILF Joint Communiqué of May 6, 2002. This Mechanism is tasked in the interdiction and isolation of criminal and lawless elements found within MILF communities.
3. The Panels also adopt Guidelines for Observers in the GRP-MILF Formal Talks outlining the general role and conduct of accredited observers who will participate in the formal peace negotiations.
4. Both sides acknowledge the formal completion of two (2) major confidence building measures for the resumption of the talks, namely: (a) the phased redeployment of AFP troops from the Buliok area, and (b) the dropping of charges filed against several MILF leaders and members implicated in the Davao City bombings of 2003.

### Implementation of Signed Interim Agreements

5. Both Panels have set out to tackle 3 substantive agenda items in the negotiations. These involve the Security Aspect, Rehab and Development Aspect, and Ancestral Domain Aspect. Various interim agreements have already been adopted on the first 2 aspects.

#### *Security Aspect*

6. The Security Aspect of the peace process now stands firmly on 3 legs: (a) the Joint Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities, (b) the International Monitoring Team, and (c) the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group.
7. CCCH – The Joint GRP-MILF CCCH have been conducting regular monthly meetings to ensure the successful implementation of the ceasefire on the

ground. In the context of these meetings, the MILF reiterated its stand against terrorism and criminality. Cooperation and confidence on both sides is steadily growing, thereby ensuring relative stability on the ground and creating an overall atmosphere of conducive to the talks.

During the 24th CCCH meeting held last January 12,2005 in Davao City, the committees sought to resolve the latest incident of hostilities in Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

8. As an additional measure to enforce the cessation of hostilities, the CCCH established joint monitoring outposts in several conflict-prone areas. Jointly manned by AFP and MILF armed regulars, as well as NGO-led Bantay Ceasefire volunteers on full time basis, these mechanisms are now operational in Bgy. Kitango (Datu Saudi Ampatuan) and in Bgy. Linantangan (Mamasapano) are due for completion by the end of January.
9. The latest data on the declining number of recorded armed skirmishes between the AFP and MILF-BIAF reflects the relative success of the ongoing ceasefire.

#### **RECAP OF ARMED SKIRMISHES (CY2003-2004)**

01 January – 18 July 2003 (Buliok incident)	528
19 July – December 2003 (reactivation of Joint CCCH)	31
01 January – 30 December 2004	71

10. *LMTs* – As the operating arm of the CCCH, the Local Monitoring Teams are fully functional in 13 provinces conflict-affected provinces of Mindanao. LMT's are crucial in providing support to the CCCH in the conduct of fact finding missions on the ground, and serve mainly to monitor the day-to-day status of the ceasefire at the community level.

To ensure objectivity during fact-finding missions, each LMT is composed of 1 LGU rep, 1 GRP-nominated NGO, 1 MILF rep, 1 MILF-nominated NGO, 1 religious sector rep

11. *IMT* – The IMT was formally deployed in southern Philippines last October 9, 2004 to begin the task of observing the implementation of the ceasefire. It is presently composed of representatives from Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Libya. The teams are also well into their monitoring activities, accompanying members of the Joint CCCH during ocular visits and fact finding missions.
12. *AHJAG* – Being the latest addition to the Security Aspect, the AHJAG serves as focal mechanism in the introduction and isolation of criminal elements situated within, or near, MILF communities. It commits both sides to the formation of 5 joint teams to share information and intelligence at the filed

level under a common order of battle. The teams shall cover the following areas:

- Team 1: Provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Bukidnon
- Team 2: Provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte
- Team 3: Provinces of Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay
- Team 4: Provinces of Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani
- Team 5: Provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Compostella Valley

On the basis of shared intelligence, AFP-PNP forces will make the interdictions and arrests of criminal and lawless elements, as the MILF will constitute blocking forces. Close coordination with the CCCH, the AFP and MILF-BIAF forces will be observed at all times to ensure the success of AHJAG operations.

#### *Rehabilitation and Development Aspects*

13. Under the Mindanao Trust Fund (MTF), the Joint Needs Assessment fieldwork, led by the World Bank was completed in the months of August and September covering 17 sample sites. Assessment was done in four areas of concern: human development; rural development; finance and private sector; governance and institutions. Special attention was also given to *Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs)* and gender and development issues.
14. Capacity-building programs for the personnel of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) will be undertaken this year through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP). Some 135 personnel are set to avail of the technical training programs in Kuala Lumpur. The BDA is mechanism identified by the MILF to identify, lead and manage development projects in conflict-affected areas.

#### *Ancestral Domain Aspect*

15. During the latest round of informal talks, both Parties agreed to activate their respective Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to meet and discuss the issue of ancestral domain along the following strands: conceptual framework, territories, resources and governance.
16. Another round of informal talks are scheduled on the 1<sup>st</sup> week of February for the TWGs to draw up a common working paper to be presented to the Panels. Upon agreement on a mutually acceptable date, in consultation with the Malaysia Secretariat, both sides will push through with the scheduled peace Negotiations in Kuala Lumpur this month of February 2005 to discuss the ancestral domain agenda.