

JOINT STATEMENT

The 2-day 5th Round of GRP-MILF Exploratory Talks ended in Kuala Lumpur today with both sides agreeing to resume formal peace talks towards the end of April 2004, as facilitated by the Malaysian Government.

The GRP and MILF Panels resolved all outstanding issues standing in the way of the formal talks and expressed confidence that the prospects for lasting peace were firm. They commended the work of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) of both Parties in stabilizing the situation on the ground and nurturing the climate for peace.

The Panels agreed to consolidate their respective proposed *Terms of Reference (TOR)* for the *International Monitoring Team (IMT)*, and requested the Malaysian Government to send the advance survey team in Southern Philippines soonest possible. An itinerary for the team was adopted. Both Panels agreed for the Malaysian Government to finalize the TOR in consultation with the Panels and undertake the task of setting up the IMT in Southern Philippines.

Both Panels agreed to the mechanism to extend capacity-building programs for the people in conflict-affected areas through the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), the development arm of the MILF. To assist in the rehabilitation and development of conflict-affected areas, the Malaysian Government has committed a similar program for the BDA under its Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP).

Likewise, the Panels will work closely with the World Bank and the multi-donor community in implementing the joint needs assessment phase of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund intended for the rehabilitation and development of the conflict-affected areas. In this regard, the BDA shall represent the MILF. A similar request will be made to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

The Panels expressed their gratitude to Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi and to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, for their unstinting support to the Mindanao peace process, which largely contributed to this breakthrough.

The GRP delegation was composed of Panel Chair Sec. Silvestre C. Afable, Jr., Lt. General Rodolfo Garcia, Ms. Diosita T. Andot and Mr. Ryan Mark B. Sullivan and the MILF delegation was composed of Mr. Mohagher Iqbal, Attorney Lanang S. Ali, Attorney Michael O. Mastura, Mr. Robert Maulana M. Alonto, Mr. Mike Pasigan and Mohajirin T. Ali.

Done on 20 February 2004 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

FOR THE GRP:


SILVESTRE C. AFABLE, JR.
GRP Panel Chair

FOR THE MILF:


MOHAGHER IQBAL
MILF Panel Chair