

JOINT STATEMENT

The 7th Round of GRP-MILF Exploratory Talks concluded on a high note today in Port Dickson, Malaysia with both Parties expressing deep satisfaction over the result of the joint discussions on ancestral domain.

The GRP-MILF Panels led more than 40 technical resource persons from both sides in multi-level meetings to examine the details in the agenda, which included the concept, territory, resources and governance aspects of the ancestral domain issue.

After a three-day session on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001, the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) agreed on several substantial points vis-à-vis the strands on concept, territory and resources, and further agreed to tackle the strand on governance in the next round of talks.

Since the inception of the GRP-MILF peace process in January 1997, the Port Dickson talks marked the first time that both sides entered into substantive discussions outside of the cessation of hostilities. They hailed the outcome of the meeting as a breakthrough towards a just and durable solution to the Mindanao conflict.

The Panels decided to forge on with technical level talks in Malaysia to exhaust all possible consensus points before the start of formal negotiations expected to be held by mid-year.

They also affirmed that recent hostilities in Mindanao would not affect the impetus of the peace talks and that both sides would strive to resolve all outstanding ceasefire issues at a subsidiary level.

The Parties likewise agreed to strengthen the operations of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) in order to bolster the joint campaign against lawlessness and criminality.

Both Parties reiterated the substantive role of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in monitoring the implementation of the security, rehabilitation and development aspects of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001. Both Parties hope for the continued presence of the IMT in Mindanao.

The Panels expressed their gratitude to the Malaysian Government headed by H.E. Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi for its continued facilitating role in the peace process, and the unwavering commitment of H.E. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in the achievement of a durable, comprehensive and lasting peace in Mindanao.

They lauded the excellent facilities and assistance extended by the Malaysian Secretariat under the Office of the Prime Minister. They likewise expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the technical experts of both sides who worked hard to ensure the successful outcome of the talks.

Done on the 20th April 2005 at Port Dickson, Malaysia.

FOR THE GRP:


SILVESTRE C. AFABLE, JR.
GRP Panel Chair

FOR THE MILF:


MOHAGHER IQBAL
MILF Panel Chair