

JOINT STATEMENT

The 9th Exploratory Talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ended today with the Parties successfully concluding the most difficult hurdle in the ancestral domain agenda.

The Technical Working Groups (TWGs) on Governance together with the GRP and MILF Peace Panels met in Kuala Lumpur from 15 - 16 September 2005 to continue negotiations under the ancestral domain agenda. The meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere despite the complexity of the subject. The TWGs in consultation with their respective Peace Panels succeeded in resolving the unfinished contentious issues from the last meeting in Port Dickson. Both sides adopted the consensus points on the strand on governance.

With this breakthrough, the peace process is on track to complete the ancestral domain agenda before the end of the year. The addition of the ancestral domain accord to the two previous agreements already signed on Security (2001) and Rehabilitation and Development (2002) completes the requirement of the Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001.

The Malaysian Secretariat acknowledge the high level of trust and confidence between the Panels and their respective TWGs for their vital role in ensuring the successful conduct of discussions on the ancestral domain aspect.

Simultaneously the Peace Panels also met to discuss and address several issues of concern to both Parties.

The Parties recognize the efforts of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) relative to the ongoing operations against criminal groups in Maguindanao to wind up before the end of the month, and stress on the need for closer coordination to avoid the undue and prolonged displacement of local communities in affected areas. In this light, joint efforts to extend appropriate relief and livelihood assistance to affected communities will be undertaken.

The Parties will work towards strengthening the socio-economic monitoring function of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). Towards this end, other countries will be invited to participate in the monitoring process. Both parties thank Malaysia, Libya and Brunei for extending the IMT tour of duty in Mindanao.

The Parties express their gratitude to H.E. Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi for the Malaysian Government's continued support to the GRP-MILF peace process. The Parties likewise acknowledge H.E. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's firm commitment to lasting and durable peace.

Done this 16th of September 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

For the GRP:


SEC. SILVESTER C. AFABLE, JR.
Chairman, GRP Peace Panel

For the MILF:


MOHAGHER IQBAL
Chairman, MILF Peace Panel