

Statement of Understanding

1. The Second Round of Exploratory Talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was held at Istana Presiden, Cipanas, West Java, Indonesia on April 14-16, 1993.
2. The talks were held in an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding and through the good offices of the Indonesian Government representing the Ministerial Committee of Six of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and H. E. Ambassador Ibrahim Bakr, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Political, Legal and Minority Affairs as representative of the Secretary General of the OIC.

OPENING CEREMONY

3. The Opening Ceremony, held on April 14, 1993, was presided over by H. E. Ali Alatas, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, who welcomed the delegations on behalf of H.E. President Soeharto and expressed the constant readiness of his government to assist in pushing forward the peace process between the GRP and the MNLF in line with the mandate of the Indonesian Constitution seeking Ôthe achievement and maintenance of a world of greater peace, justice and security.Ó In his opening statement, Minister Alatas also urged both sides to consider certain measures that will create the necessary and conducive atmosphere of mutual confidence that could help ensure the success of further substantive talks as for instance, a cessation of armed hostilities and other appropriate measures.
4. In the Opening Ceremony, the gathering also received the message of H. E. Dr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary General of the OIC, which was read out on his behalf by H.E. Ambassador Ibrahim Bakr, representative of the Secretary General of the OIC. In his message, Dr. Algabid thanked President Soeharto and Minister Alatas for their noble gesture in hosting the talks. He said he was convinced that the problem of the Muslims in Southern Philippines could best be resolved by sincere and constructive negotiations between the parties within the framework of Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity; and aimed at the full realization of the objectives, purpose and commitment embodied in the Tripoli Agreement of 1976.

5. Representative Eduardo R. Ermita, Head of the GRP Panel, made an Opening Statement, expressing the gratitude of the President of the Philippines, H.E. Fide V. Ramos to President Soeharto and Minister Alatas, for the hospitality extended the GRP Panel. He cited the policy of President Ramos of placing peace at the forefront of all efforts at national progress and development; and affirmed the commitment of the National Unification Commission of the GRP to pursue a national peace program based on the principled and peaceful resolution of armed conflict with neither blame or surrender, but with dignity to all concerned. He also emphasized the desire of the GRP to exhaust all avenues to peace under the realm of Philippine sovereignty, territorial integrity, the Constitution and democratic processes; and the undiminished commitment of the GRP to render the full measure of autonomy to Muslim Filipinos in line with the spirit and intent of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976. He said that the mandate of the Philippine panel was not to negotiate the substantive issues but to further explore a viable framework for peace with the MNLF and the agenda for projected formal negotiations, as well as the date thereof and attendant administrative requirements and public information guidelines.
6. Prof. Nur Misuari, Chairman of the MNLF, made an Opening Statement thanking President Soeharto and the Indonesian people and government for responding positively to the request of the OIC in regard to the holding of the exploratory talks. He stressed the honorable intentions of the MNLF in coming to the talks, even as he expressed his concern over the fragility of the undertaking. He said that the area of coverage of autonomy under Article II of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 is final and unalterable and should be unconditionally implemented if the Philippine Government is indeed sincere in facing its responsibility; and that this demand was a sine qua non for the peace process to move forward. He further emphasized that the MNLF would not accept any solution to the problem that would come in the form of an imposition to the MNLF.
7. The Opening Ceremony ended at this point and all parties repaired to dinner, held under a cordial and friendly atmosphere, hosted by H. E. Minister Alatas.

TALKS PROPER

8. The talks proper commenced the next day, April 15, 1993 with H.E. Ibrahim Saleh Bakr, Deputy Secretary General representing the Secretary General of the OIC and H. E. S. Wiryono representing the Indonesian Government and the OIC Ministerial Committee of Six.
9. Chairman Misuari reiterated his proposal that the main agenda of the formal talks would be to determine the modalities to fully implement the 1976 Tripoli Agreement in letter and spirit, adding that the MNLF was prepared to agree on the agenda, time and place of the formal talks which the MNLF preferred to be held in any of the OIC member states. Representative Ermita, on the other hand, expressed the position of the Philippine Government that the formal talks be held in the Philippines.
10. H.E. Ambassador Ibrahim Bakr explained the position of the OIC and gave assurances to the effect that the OIC will continue to be an active participant in the talks between the GRP and the MNLF.
11. Representative Ermita submitted a set of talking points to the MNLF panel outlining the constitutional and legal steps undertaken by the GRP to comply with all the provisions of the Tripoli Agreement which served as the basic document for the drafting of the provisions of the 1987 constitution on the creation of the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras as well as the enactment of the organic act for the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao. Representative Ermita also emphasized that even under the 1973 Constitution which was enforced at the time of the signing of the Tripoli Agreement, any state action to create, merge and abolish political subdivisions or local government units or to substantially alter their boundaries was always subject to approval by a majority of the votes cast in a plebiscite in the unit or units affected. He said this is a universally accepted democratic process merely reiterated in the 1987 Constitution.
12. Chairman Misuari rejected the constitutional and the legal bases of the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao installed under the Philippine Constitution and said that the MNLF was not a party to the process of granting the autonomy; reiterating the demand for the full implementation of Article II of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976.

AGREEMENTS

13. The formal talks will be held on or before June 30, 1993 at a place to be mutually agreed upon.
14. The agenda for the formal talks will focus on the modalities for the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement in letter and spirit, to include:
 - A. Those portions of the Agreement left for further or later discussion; and
 - B. Transitional implementing structure and mechanism.
15. The talks shall be held with the participation of the Secretary General of the OIC and the OIC Ministerial Committee of Six.
16. The talks shall be supported by a Joint Secretariat to be appointed by both parties.
17. All press releases in relation to the peace talks shall be approved by both parties.

FINAL ITEMS

18. The foregoing agreements are subject to the approval of the highest authorities of the GRP; such approval to be communicated to the MNLF and the Office of the Secretary General of the OIC as soon as possible.
19. All parties agreed to send a letter of thanks to H.E. President Soeharto for the warm hospitality of the Indonesian Government and people in hosting the second exploratory talks between the Philippine Government and the MNLF; as well as for their vital and positive contributions to the said talks.
20. The parties likewise agreed to send a letter of thanks to the Secretary General of the OIC, expressing their profound appreciation for the valuable contribution extended by his representatives towards the success of the talks.

Signed in Istana Presiden, Cipanas, West Java, Indonesia on April 16,
1993.

For the GRP Panel:

EDUARDO R. ERMITA

S. WIRYONO

Director General for Political Affairs,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Indonesia representing
the OIC Ministerial Committee of Six

For the MNLF Panel:

NUR MISUAR

IBRAHIM SALEH BAKR

Deputy Secretary General for
Political, Legal and Minority
Affairs, OIC, representing the
Secretary General of the OIC