EU confirms willingness to participate in International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, Philippines

Following a request from the Peace Panels of the Government of the Philippines and of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the European Union has confirmed its willingness to participate in the International Monitoring Team (IMT) assisting the peace process in Mindanao. The EU has been asked to lead the Humanitarian, Rehabilitation and Development Component of the IMT, and this participation will be finalised once appropriate terms of reference have been agreed with the Parties in the peace talks.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-president of the European Commission, said: "The European Union attaches great importance to helping promote peace and development in Mindanao, and has long been active in providing both development and humanitarian assistance in the conflict-affected areas. The EU was honoured to be invited by the Parties to assist further in the peace process, by taking part in the IMT, and I see this as a very important contribution which the EU can make, together with other international partners, to help promote peace, security and prosperity in Mindanao, and to help strengthen the long-term development of the Philippines."

Since 2008, the European Commission provided more than €14.5 million (approx PhP 820 million, at current exchange rates) in humanitarian assistance to help civilians affected by the conflict in Mindanao.

Background

The peace talks broke down at end 2008, leading to an upsurge of violence which displaced several hundreds thousand people. Since then, however, the talks have resumed with Malaysia as facilitator. But there is still a big need to build confidence, hence importance of international support.
The International Monitoring Team (IMT) was deployed in 2004, and by 2008 included personnel from Malaysia (Third-Party Facilitator and IMT Head), as well as Brunei, Japan and Libya. Norway has also indicated its willingness to participate in the IMT, subject to agreement on Terms of Reference. In addition a number of local and international civil-society organisations will take part in the Civilian Protection Component of the IMT. Revised Terms of Reference for the IMT agreed in December 2009 include four components – Security, Socio-Economic Assistance, and Civilian Protection components, as well as the Humanitarian, Rehabilitation and Development component which the EU will now lead.

With a view to assisting the Parties and the Facilitator in carrying the peace process forward, the International Contact Group (ICG) was also established in September 2009. Its members include Japan, Turkey and the United Kingdom, as well as a number of international NGOs.

EC development assistance grants to Mindanao since the 1990s have amounted to some €96 million in total, focusing on rural development and the environment, agrarian reform, and the health sector.

In addition, the EC has provided some €21 million in grants for livelihood support and rehabilitation for civilian victims of conflict, and some €23 million in humanitarian assistance, particularly for internally-displaced persons (IDPs). A number of EU Member-States have also been active in providing development and humanitarian assistance in Mindanao.

More generally, the EU has been a long-standing development partner of the Philippines, both in development assistance and in humanitarian assistance. Total EC development cooperation grants for the Philippines since our cooperation began in 1976 have amounted to some €705 million, not including humanitarian assistance amounting to €52 million (most recently for the victims of Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng, for which the EU as a whole provided some €19 million in emergency assistance). In addition, the EIB has provided loans amounting to some €414 million for infrastructure and business-development projects in the Philippines.