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EU confirms willingness to participate in International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao

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.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union 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."

High Representative Ashton added that since the end of 2008, the EU and its Member-States had provided more than €14.5 million (approx PhP 820 million, at current exchange rates) in humanitarian assistance to help civilians displaced by the conflict in Mindanao.

EU Ambassador Alistair MacDonald said in Manila that "Mindanao has a tremendous potential to be a prosperous and peaceful part of the Philippines, for the benefit of all who live there, whether Moros, Christians or Lumads. But this potential can only be realised if the vicious cycle of conflict and poverty can be broken, and if local governance can respond to the needs of the people and provide effective services to all."

The Ambassador also said "I am delighted that in addition to our longstanding development and humanitarian cooperation with the Philippines in general and in Mindanao more specifically, the EU will now be able to help more directly in the peace process, joining the efforts of other international and local partners, both in the IMT and in the International Contact Group."



The European Union (EU) numbers 27 different nations determined to shape their future closely together. Over a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have, together, built a zone of peace, stability, progress and solidarity. The EU is a model for overcoming conflict and promoting reconciliation through close co-operation to achieve common goals, while respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity. But the EU is not focused on itself. Its ambition is to share its achievements and values with countries beyond its borders.

The European Commission (EC) is the EU's executive body.

Background

The peace talks between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front broke down in August 2008, leading to an upsurge of violence which displaced several hundreds of thousands of civilians. Since then, exploratory talks have resumed in 2009, but there is still a great need to build confidence, a context in which international support is of great importance.

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.

The International Contact Group (ICG) was established in September 2009, with a view to assisting the Parties and the Facilitator in carrying the peace process forward. 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 €6 million in total (approx PhP 5.4 billion, at current exchange rates), focusing on rural development and the environment, agrarian reform, and the health sector.

In addition, the EC has provided some €21 million (PhP 1.2 billion) in grants for livelihood support and rehabilitation for civilian victims of conflict, and some €23 million (PhP 1.3 billion) 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 (PhP 39.4 billion), not including humanitarian assistance amounting to €52 million (PhP 2.9 billion) – most recently for the victims of Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng, for which the EU as a whole provided some €19 million (PhP 1.1 billion) in emergency assistance. In addition, the EIB has provided loans amounting to some €14 million (PhP 23.1 billion) for infrastructure and business-development projects in the Philippines.



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