



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 11 November 2013

## **New EU support to the Philippines' peace process**

European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, has today announced new EU funds of eight million euros to contribute to the economic and social recovery of conflict-affected areas in Mindanao (The Philippines). The announcement was made during his first ever visit to the Philippines (10-12 Nov). The aim of the visit is to further advance bilateral development co-operation between the two parties.

The contribution will be channelled through the Mindanao Trust Fund and will support activities to promote confidence-building, peace and demand-driven governance. Around 300,000 people have already benefitted from 141 projects implemented by the Mindanao Trust Fund which is 70% financed by the European Union (European Commission and Sweden).

The EU, as the main donor to the Fund, is a long-term supporter of the Mindanao Peace Process, both at political level and by providing assistance to the region.

Commissioner Piebalgs stated: *"I am pleased to see their rapid economic growth in past few years. However it is now important to deepen the economic reforms and make this growth more inclusive. The EU is ready to support the Philippines on its path to reduce poverty, strengthen the rule of law and support Mindanao's Peace Process"*.

During his visit, the Development Commissioner will visit an EU funded project at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The project aims at improving the laboratory facilities to control the quality of fishery products exported by the Philippines. As a result, the value of fishery products exported by the Philippines has increased by 45% in five years (from \$289 million in 2007 to \$419 million in 2012). The project is a component of the EU Trade Related Technical Assistance which received a € 18 million grant support over a 12 year period.

The Commissioner will also hold high-level meetings with Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Secretary Teresita Deles, Socio-economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balicasan, Energy Secretary, Carlos Jericho Petilla and Foreign Affairs Acting Secretary, Laura del Rosario. The agenda of the Commissioner's visit also includes a meeting with the President of the Asian Development Bank to discuss how to enhance collaboration between the EU and the Bank in Asia, Central Asia and the Pacific.

## **Background and key results of EU-Philippines' cooperation**

Over the last two decades, the EU has been a major development partner of the Philippines and has contributed € 640 million (PHP 37 billion) of grants to combat poverty.

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EU development assistance provided to the Philippines is closely aligned with the Philippines Development Plan 2011-2016 and delivers annually about €40 million of grant funding.

The main sector of the EU development assistance to the country is health. The EU supports the Universal Health Care Agenda of the Government providing free health care to the poorest Filipinos and improving facilities and health services. Some of the results include:

- 85% of Filipinos are already insured (including the poorest 40%).
- Child mortality halved over the last 15 years which was a focus of EU assistance over the same period.
- Life expectancy has increased

The EU is working jointly with the Department of Health to address remaining challenges, particularly on maternal health and access to health services for indigenous people. Other priority programmes support directly the national good governance agenda, trade integration and job creation

The bilateral EU-Philippines programme is complemented by additional funding - most of the time channelled through civil society organisations - to address issues such as social issues, the environment, attention to indigenous peoples, human rights and migration.

## **EU Support to Mindanao**

A particular emphasis is put on conflict-affected Mindanao. The EU is a long-time supporter of the Mindanao Peace Process. High Representative Catherine Ashton welcomed the signature of the Framework Agreement in October 2012.

The *Mindanao Trust Fund-Reconstruction and Development Programme (MTF-RDP)* is a multi-donor trust fund which aims to assist in the economic and social recovery of conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

It supports activities which promote confidence-building, peace and demand-driven governance. Specifically, the programme, which began in 2006, has been implementing small, community-based infrastructure projects. This includes multi-purpose buildings, livelihood centers, solar driers, farmers' pathways, water and sanitation systems and core shelters, among others.

The MTF-RDP is a mechanism through which development partners pool and coordinate official development assistance in conflict-affected communities in Mindanao.

## **For more information**

Website of the European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/piebalgs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/index_en.htm)

Website of DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid – cooperation with the Philippines:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/philippines/philippines\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/philippines/philippines_en.htm)