

**Speech by EU Ambassador Guy Ledoux
at the Awarding Ceremony of the European Union Peace Journalism Awards
July 8 2015**

**Sec Teresita Deles, OPAPP,
Chairman Iqbal, Bangsamoro Transition Commission,
Dean Raul Pangalanan who has been named as Justice of
the ICC,
Atty Camilo Miguel Montesa, Centre for Humanitarian
Dialogue,
Ms Rose Anne Belmonte, COO, Philstar.com,
Ms Rowena Paraan, Chairperson, National Union of
Journalist in the Philippines (NUJP)
Chancellor Sukarno Tanggol, Mindanao State University,
MSU
Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps,
Collaborators and partners of the EU Peace Journalism
Awards,
Friends and fellow peace advocates,

Distinguished guests, ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the awarding
ceremony of the European Union Peace Journalism
Awards. This is the first time that the European Union
Delegation to the Philippines is awarding prizes to media
professionals engaged in peace journalism and I would like**

to share with you the reasons why we have embarked on this initiative.

First of all although these Awards seek to recognise the work of journalists who contribute to peace at any time and in any place, but it is no coincidence that this event is being held at a time when peace for the Philippines is in the balance. We are at the point where years of hard work for peace by many people, including some in this room today, are awaiting endorsement by the legislative branch of the Philippine government.

These Awards primarily seek to recognize the role of journalism in promoting peace and the different categories of prizes are a reflection of the fact that this can be done in so many ways, and using different media. Journalists promote peace not just by singing its praises or supporting peace initiatives. Perhaps their most important role is to clarify and present the facts in an easily digestible way that allows regular citizens to make up their own minds.

We have also seen another approach that involves simply dragging the horrendous cost of war into the cold light of day for everyone to see. We have been presented with the real cost of war; in terms of human life and limb; in terms

of financial resources that could have been utilised so much better elsewhere; in terms of economic and developmental losses and finally in terms of lost education for the next generation.

At times it is as much what journalists avoid writing than what they actually write that counts. In a media world where sensational news sells, the temptation for a journalist to raise the heat of a story or exaggerate the facts for effect must be strong. We can only ask that the media pauses for a while before inadvertently stoking the fires of suspicion and mistrust, or playing into the hands of those who wish to sow hatred and perpetuate prejudice and discrimination.

Beyond recognizing the role of journalism in promoting peace, the European Union Peace Journalism Awards were also conceived as an encouragement to journalists across the country to seize the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their country. Their contribution is particularly needed just now as the Philippines takes a decision that will have such an impact of the prospects for peaceful coexistence, development and prosperity for all the diverse communities that make up this wonderful country.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the European Union to continue to support the Mindanao Peace Process, both politically and in terms of development assistance. I also confirm that the European Union has responded positively to the request of the Peace Panels for the EU to mount an Election Monitoring Mission whenever the plebiscite envisaged in the Bangsamoro Basic Law is called.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The value that the European Union places on the freedom of the press and freedom of expression cannot be overstated. Journalists are prime actors in ensuring the free exercise of these rights and as such deserve special protection in our societies. These Awards are also conceived as recognition of the dangers that journalists face in carrying their duties which are central to a functioning democracy. The European Union remains concerned about the extraordinarily high number of incidents of Filipino journalists being the victims of violence and even paying the ultimate price in carrying out their duties. Through these awards we salute them.

I would be remiss if I did not recognise the contributions of our partners in making the European Union Peace Journalism Awards possible: the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, our major partner for tonight's awarding ceremony, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Mindanao State University – Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao, the Konrad Adenauer Asian Center for Journalism ACFJ, the Photojournalists Centre of the Philippines, philstar.com, Center for Community Journalism and Development. All the collaborators and partners have consistently attended monthly meetings for the Awards since latter part of 2013. I also like to give special thanks to the College Editors Guild of the Philippines, the Philippine Press Institute, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters sa Pilipinas and the UP-EURO for their support.

Let me conclude by addressing our distinguished colleagues from the media. Firstly I would like to thank you for choosing to present your work for consideration by the Jurors of the European Union Peace Journalism Awards and for the daily work that many of you carry out in the service of peace. I know that you are often called to present

the facts without fear or favour, without colour and without bias.

Well, I would like to contradict that and say that in my book it is OK to be biased in favour of peace. It is just fine to be prejudiced against war. Our own histories have taught us as much. Finally, at this time when your country is within striking distance of great peace dividends, you as media professionals have a special role to play in society. I am sure you will all rise to the occasion. Peace will be such a good story to tell.

Thank you