

Peace process in Mindanao to continue with or without BBL passage – DEPADev

MANILA – Despite apparent setbacks in legislation pushing for a Bangsamoro entity, proponents of peace in Mindanao believe efforts for political reform in this Philippine region should continue.

Atty. Benedicto Bacani, Executive Director of the Cotabato City-based Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) said peace in Mindanao is much larger than the legislation of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law, and that lawmakers and socio-political groups should continue their work in pushing for political reform.

Bacani said this during the launch of the Democratic Party Development (DEPAdev), a project being undertaken by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office (KAS) with the IAG to prepare the future autonomous Bangsamoro for a meaningful autonomy.

DEPAdev aims at contributing to the establishment of a pluralistic political landscape in southern Philippines.

Funded by the European Union, the DEPAdev project specifically aims to empower Muslim, Christian, Indigenous and other underrepresented groups for active political participation under a parliamentary system through the formation of political parties.

Benedikt Seemann, KAS Philippines Office Resident Representative, affirmed that “this 18 month project is a non-partisan approach in which seminars and training activities will be implemented for existing political parties, members of civil society groups and members of both, religious and non-religious groups throughout Mindanao”.

“We, at KAS and IAG, with the support of the European Union, support the building of political parties to empower civil society in what will be the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. The empowerment of civil society groups is the key to success [of the peace process] regardless of the precise design of any basic law,” Seemann said.

“We will continue to advocate for political reforms that will be conducive to the development of political parties that I think is key also to finding a political solution to this very, very long conflict in Mindanao,” Bacani added.

Ambassador Franz Jessen, ambassador of the European Union Delegation to the Philippines, said the EU will remain supportive of this advocacy.

“We take things step by step and we will see how things develop next week. We have a long-term commitment to the peace process and our support will continue as has been going on for years in the past,” Jessen said. Since 2007, the EU has invested more than P650 million in programs that contribute to the peace process in southern Philippines. ##