

Democratic  
Progress  
Institute

# **Conflict Resolution - The Philippines Experience**

A Comparative Study Visit Report

20th – 27th June 2015



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## **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June - Arrive in Manila and Welcome Dinner**



*The Delegation arrives in Manila and has their Welcome Dinner  
at The Peninsula Manila Hotel, Makati City*

## **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June - DPI Welcome Roundtable Meeting**

**Venue:** The Peninsula Hotel Manila

**With:** **Kerim Yildiz**, DPI Director

**Eleanor Johnson**, DPI Head of Programmes and Research



*Discussing the Comparative Study Visit agenda at the Democratic Progress Institute's Welcome Meeting*



*Democratic Progress Institute Director Kerim Yildiz welcomes the participants to Manila and discusses the key lessons to be learnt from the Philippines experience of conflict resolution*

**Kerim Yildiz:**

On behalf of DPI I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have taken time out of your schedule to be here with us. I know at the moment you must be quite busy. We are delighted to be here in the Philippines as we believe hearing from the politicians and the negotiators will be an invaluable experience for you. Many of you have been on our previous Comparative Study Visits to South Africa, Northern Ireland and Berlin and therefore have been able to see the huge benefits of listening to the experiences of other countries that are going through a peace process. This visit has had to be postponed twice more recently because of the elections in Turkey and so unfortunately we have come at a time when Congress is not sitting and therefore a lot of the statesman are out of the country. Eleanor will talk more extensively on the agenda shortly.

I will first mention some issues that have been raised from my research into the peace process in this country and the extensive talks I have had with the actors in the Filipino peace process. It is different from other visits we have done in the past not least because it is so far away. We are very thankful for you all being here and we hope the trip will contribute to DPI's work. I will give you a brief explanation about the state of the peace process here in the Philippines. In 2008 the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Philippines (GPH) resumed peace talks in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia when they were supposed to come together to resolve the issue. However, lawyers in the Philippines went to the constitutional courts to claim that the agreement was not constitutional so the agreement was blocked. Since 2008, and

even before, there have been many negotiations and they have taken advantage of lessons from other countries and utilised the Chatham House rules, which must be paid attention to. We do most of our meetings with these rules in our mind. Although we are in the midst of waves in Turkish politics we are all interested in the solution process itself and that is why we do these activities. We have a smaller group with us than usual because in the southern regions there are security problems. The MILF have surrendered some of their arms but there are still negotiations with these groups and the process is not finished. I do not want to make you afraid but in the Mindanao region people are valuable because of kidnapping but we have taken all the necessary measures and protection will be provided by the Filipino army and the MILF. There will be no problems but they have asked us to keep the size of the group small. We will have free time for the rest of the day and I know you must be tired so I do not want to take too much of your time. Eleanor will now explain the agenda, venues and events.

**Eleanor Johnson:**

Hello everyone, I am going to give you an overview of the agenda which is in your packs along with background material on the speakers, venues and organisations. We will be in Manila until Wednesday morning when we will move to the southern region of Mindanao. We have a free day today and brunch is scheduled after the meeting and dinner will be over the road this evening at 19h30. For today you may like to visit the Ayala museum across the road which comes highly recommended and documents the history of the Philippines. Alternatively there is a great Green Belt shopping mall close by.

Tomorrow we will be meeting with some influential speakers and key representatives of the International Contact Group (ICG), which I'm sure you are all aware of as Turkey is a member. The ICG is the first ever hybrid mediation support initiative whose members include Turkey, Japan, the UK, Saudi Arabia and four NGOs. We will hear more about international actors supporting the peace process from them. We will be meeting members from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) which is an international NGO supporting the peace process and they will be hosting the lunch which will follow the roundtable. After that, we will travel to Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and later that evening we will be having a dinner with the Turkish Ambassador to the Philippines and representatives from the United Nations (UN).

On Tuesday we have another early start for the House of Representatives (HoR). You will have heard about the landmark Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) which is currently being debated in the Congress as it is very current and in the news. You should have some of the technical information relating to the BBL in your packs and a full copy can be provided on request. Later on Tuesday we will be meeting with media personalities, senior columnists and journalists and will be discussing how media can influence and support the process. There will be a dinner with OPAPP that evening where you can ask more detailed questions

On Wednesday we will be meeting early to catch our flight to Cotabato City which is located in the Mindanao region. We will meet the Generals of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (6<sup>th</sup> ID) and will be

having Round Table Meetings with MILF in their camp while we are there. We will be accompanied by local people from the CHD and we will be going directly to the camp guided by security. In the afternoon we will meet groups from the civil society to talk about their work in the Philippines followed by a dinner reception accompanied by CHD.

Thursday is a busy day and we will be having meetings with the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) and Chairman Iqbal who you may have already heard about with his role in putting together the agreement and the drafting of the BBL. We will have a meeting that evening alongside dinner with the International Monitoring Team to hear about the role of third parties.

There will be one more Roundtable Meeting on Friday morning with the Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and then we will leave to go back to Manila and back to this hotel. We will have a lunch before an internal meeting which is very important for DPI to share your suggestions and feedback on the visit. There is opportunity to go to 'Intramuros' that evening, which is the old Spanish colonial town and many of you have been asking about it. We will have a cultural dinner there with traditional dancing. On Saturday, which is the final day before flying back to Turkey, you may need some free time to rest or enjoy your last day in Manila.

I hope this gives you a good overview of the upcoming week and just come to speak to me if you have any specific questions.

### **Kerim Yildiz:**

This is a great opportunity for DPI and as you can see we have a rich agenda and will be meeting some very important actors. We are trying to focus on the main issues and there are some important lessons to be learnt. For example, international powers are supporting the process and the role of the third parties is key.. Three days ago the MILF symbolically decommissioned some of their weapons and three countries including Turkey helped to support the MILF.

I have drawn more than 20 lessons from the process in the Philippines including the transition from negotiations to implementation. We have experienced game breakers and spoilers in this period which can sabotage the peace process. There are some concrete lessons we should take from the Philippines. For example, the Islamic movement did not trust the government and the government in turn did not trust third parties like Malaysia as they said they were on the side of the MILF. International actors such as Finland, Norway, UK, Turkey, Switzerland and Japan are making important movements in the region in order to solve these issues. The secretariat of the peace process, set up by the Filipino government, has asked for funds from other countries and the European Union. This is not because they are poor but because they want to ensure impartiality. They are at a very important point in this issue as peace talks went on for 17 years and it needs a solution. Up until last year there was a huge problem in the process and I got the opportunity to speak with Madam Miriam Ferrer<sup>1</sup> for two

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<sup>1</sup> Miriam Colonel-Ferrer is the current Chairperson of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel (GPNP)

hours who stressed the importance of having other parties. This is one of the biggest peace processes alongside Northern Ireland and South Africa and so you must take a learning opportunity from this week. Ask yourself shall we trust each other? Shall we trust the system? They have been working on this for a very long time and Turkey has made its own contributions to the process. The establishment of these relations aid the process, Turkey took part in this International Contact Group, which is the first of its kind. DPI and CHD are important in bringing the expertise to the peace process and the governments and experts were able to come together to make peace a success in this country.

Blair and Major said at the beginning of the Northern Irish peace process that they thought they could solve the issue alone and US involvement was not wanted. No country can easily accept help but in the back of your mind you must know that we cannot solve this issue alone. Turkey may come to this point soon as it is only natural. No armed group will surrender its arms to its enemies and so we need a mediator. Talks in the peace process are mostly held in the kitchen or behind the scenes but there are certain issues that can be discussed in front of the people. With issues of ceasefire, talks can still happen in private but we must have third party involvement to maintain transparency. We examined this in the George Mitchell case and I asked him how it happened. He said the preparation had already started but the English government was not sitting at the table. There should be a preparation process and often this is painful but in order to kill the pain you should pay attention to these experiences and learn from their mistakes.

I believe in this week we will find the opportunity to talk about the lessons I have drafted.

First is the lesson outlined above about the role of third parties. Second, it is about public engagement. The best guarantor of the peace process is the public and so the parties in the conflict must remain integrated with the public. There is a time for confidentiality and also a time for transparency but eventually in the end there must be transparency. Thirdly, we must see here that even when parties lose the struggle they take it back up and continue.

Number four is that lawyers are very important because they must implement the political decisions. The politicians make the decisions and tell the lawyers to make it work. If we are not careful, however, the lawyers can use their position as a weapon. Number five is the process itself. It is best to go from one point to another and to gain strength in order to concentrate on the issues. As Kieran Prendergast always says it is about how to get from here to there. The sixth lesson we learn is about internal negotiations and they are always the most difficult if the leaders are not committed. Timing was another very important lesson; the time frame should not be a principle. It is always better to have milestones rather than deadlines. This is a real problem in Turkey because deadlines are never met.

A lesson in conditions is that parties will go against you if you put conditions on everything. It is difficult to get things to happen when you are making preconditions. We learned this in Northern Ireland and South Africa and now here in the Philippines. Another

point is the framing. Do not let one party define the problem, you must reframe the negotiations or you will make things difficult for yourself. Simplicity is important and it is necessary to keep the framework simple so the public and parties can understand. We can use sophisticated and complicated language but you must put yourselves into the shoes of the public and ordinary people on the street. The other issue to always keep in mind is Confidence Building Measures (CBM) which appears over the course of the dialogue or negotiations and in informal relationships. This is the principle which is important to take the process further but it takes time to build the trust.

Another lesson is to look forward looking at solutions rather than looking backwards at the problems. You must go into negotiations looking at how you can see the solution on the other side not how to defeat the enemy. In our view it is important because people do not go into negotiations looking for compromise and we recognise that you are talking to your enemy and it is difficult. Another lesson is that there are always hardliners and we must keep this in mind as they could be a spoiler. Other issues include power sharing and also transitional justice, which for the people in this country are both very important.

I will finish by stressing the importance of being inclusive; we need to make sure everyone has a voice in the peace process in order for it to be fruitful. I will leave you with the bicycle theory: whatever happens you cannot let your bicycle fall. You must push the peddles and even if it is going slowly you cannot stop. By keeping going, by not letting it fall you are saving a life. If it does fall it is very difficult

to resume the process. Even with difficulties we must keep going.

*End of Session*



*The Delegation spent the afternoon at Greenbelt shopping mall  
Kadir İnanır and DPI Director Kerim Yildiz*

## **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting: The Role of International Contact Groups in Conflict Resolution**

**Venue:** The Garden Rooms, Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, Manila

**With:** Representatives from the International Contact Group:

**Ali Saleem**, Senior Programme Manager Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines

**Yudai Ueno**, Japanese Embassy in Manila

**Thomas Phipps**, British Embassy in Manila

**Davut Ocak**, Turkish Embassy in Manila



*Thomas Phipps from the British Embassy in Manila explains the importance of third parties in conflict resolution to the delegation*

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Good morning all. Firstly I would like to welcome our friend Ali Saleem from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines (CHD) and our other speakers we have here today: the representatives from the embassies of Japan, the UK and Turkey.

Just for our guests I want to give a quick introduction of DPI and what we are doing here in Manila. This is a Comparative Study Visit and is hosted in cooperation with the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and also with a huge help from our partner organisation CHD and I would like to thank Ali Saleem and Mary-Louise Castillo for all their hard work.

This Comparative Study Visit is a continuation of our other studies around the world including South Africa, the UK, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Germany. We are very much interested to learn the lessons within the Philippine peace process. Our group consists of representatives from the three main government parties in Turkey and also academics and journalists. Joining us also are the 'Wise Persons' of Turkey, appointed by the President to support the ongoing peace process in Turkey. Today we very much hope to look at the role of the International Contact Group (ICG) and third party actors in conflict resolution.

First, I will put forward a few questions. We would like to ask why the ICG was established and how were the members specifically chosen. We understand the ICG is one of the first hybrid organisations set up to assist the peace process from outside the

walls but how does this work? How do the state and non-state actors complement one another? And, in your view how essential is the role of third parties in reaching a sustainable peace agreement? I will now give the floor to our friend Ali Saleem to introduce himself.

**Ali Saleem:**

Good morning everyone, I am the representative from the CHD in the ICG. We have attended about 22 rounds of negotiations. Each round lasted a minimum of five days and some rounds went on for around 2 weeks. I have previously worked with the UN for about 6 years in different countries in peace making and peace support work. First I should ask my colleagues to introduce themselves.

**Yudai Ueno:**

I am from the Japanese embassy and represent my country in the ICG. We are famous for being silent in meetings but I'll do my best to answer your questions!

**Davut Ocak:**

Hello, I represent Turkey in the ICG and help to play a mediation and facilitation role in the conflict.

**Ali Saleem:**

The ICG was set up in 2009 as a confidence building measure as the war had broken out the previous year. MILF demanded a third party actor as mediator as a condition to returning to negotiations. The ICG is well regarded as a group of independent internationals and is a unique hybrid mechanism with state and non-state actors

sitting together. There is equal representation with four states and four civil society groups. There is CHD which is Manila based, Muhammadiyah an Islamic organisation from Indonesia, Community of Sant' Egidio based in Rome and Conciliation Resources which is London based and we also have representatives from Turkey, Japan, the UK and Saudi Arabia who all regularly attend meetings.

Why were we chosen? Japan is known for its support in peace processes, Turkey's role was desired in order to promote rights of the Muslim minority in the peace process and there was a need to ensure a Muslim country was part of the team and so Saudi Arabia was chosen. The INGOS brought specific expertise. For example CHD can help in a mediation role, providing advice and Muhammadiyah brought knowledge of the Sharia mechanism and knowledge of Muslim affairs. Therefore it was a selected group of actors who could add value to the process. Other groups and countries such as Norway are part of the peace architecture but not the ICG.

Overall the process is run by the two negotiating panels from the MILF and the government. The ICG were given a mandate by them and norms to follow. Our support and advice is confidential but we try to make sure we balance it out. We obviously cannot provide full briefs but we try to inform the other side of what each other are thinking in order to work together and make progress. Our support to the peace panels is very strong and we make notes, arrange meetings, bring in experts and draft documents which is a unique power of the ICG. We are bound by confidentiality and

not much comes to the public sphere but we have no right to say anything.

Just to add my own perspective; we function on the basis of complementation. We complement each other, the state and non-state actors. It's not complicated in terms of functioning because the protocols we have developed help us to work well and the negotiating parties have gotten used to the reality of a third actor in the negotiation room.

**Yudai Ueno:**

As Ali explained the ICG is a very unique organisation and our main aim is to find the middle ground between the parties.

**Davut Ocak:**

Let me explain the functions of the ICG. It's a hybrid group and must work together with the facilitator Malaysia. There is a really thin line between the facilitator's role and the role of the ICG and a couple of times we have nearly crossed the line. The ICG was very useful in the negotiation process and my colleague from whom I took over played a huge role in Kuala Lumpur. From what I have seen so far, there have been several times when the meetings have almost come to a stop and there is quite a tension and the ICG sometimes can diffuse this tension.

**Ali Saleem:**

Davut has made an important point about the state that has taken the responsibility to facilitate. Obviously you sometimes find yourself crossing the line when we are simply doing our job. The

facilitator realises that we are not there to derail the process and they heavily rely on us to get things done. At the end of the day they are a state and cannot help to reduce the tensions and the formality. In order to reduce the difficulties there must be a mechanism for this to move forward, bring conversation and bring about possible discourses between the parties.

**Thomas Phipps:**

I represent the UK in the ICG and for three and a half years since the first round of negotiations I have sat through around 900 hours of talks. Since February 2012 there has been huge progress. In October 2012 they signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and since then have signed the four annexes which make up the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).

Why was the UK asked to join? Unlike Japan, Australia and the US we have a very limited presence in the Philippines. Back in 2008 the peace agreement was declared as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court here and around that time it had been 10 years since the Good Friday agreement. Our expertise was ready to be shared. Powell had left government and set up a think tank. The devolved government was established and decommissioning was in progress so we invited the MILF and the government peace panel to spend time in Belfast to learn lessons from our experience.

The MILF decided to get extra support in the form of a third party mediator. Each of the members of the ICG had to be agreed by both panels. The MILF wanted the US to be involved as they

believed they would have leverage over the government but of course the Government of the Philippines (GPH) vetoed them. The Australians were suggested but MILF vetoed them due to their counter terrorism programme. They both wanted Ireland but they do not have an embassy so we were second choice I guess.

The hybrid system brings advantages and disadvantages. The lines between state and non-state actors have become blurred. Initially state actors were involved with government and the non-state actors with MILF but not anymore. What has been very important is the role we play as individuals and we no longer feel like eight organisations but eight individuals.

States are able to exert more leverage over the government and the non-state actors each bring their own expertise.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

I am sure we have lots of questions but I would like to ask three questions to our speakers. First, if you could explain more about how state and non-state actors were able to work together and complement each other. Secondly, how was the ICG able to aid the government to reach a landmark agreement with the MILF and also how were the ICG able to rethink and establish the role of women in the peace talks?

**Thomas Phipps:**

To the first question, when I was first involved there was still a reticence to put too much down in writing on the part of the state actors. Four of us are located here in Manila and the others

are located elsewhere. As we are spread geographically email has been so important though we are still reluctant to stop writing. A WhatsApp Messenger group for the ICG is our primary mode of communication which feels less formal than writing emails but it works really well.

**Ali Saleem:**

A lot of our work and procedures have to do with individual relationships. We trust each other. I can ask Tom if we can press this issue and if he can help me out because as a non-state actor we have less leverage. It is okay to ask for help and the role of complementing each other has taken over and we have an understanding to respect each others' position.

Some of the ICG actors were the first ones to talk to the government not about secession but about negotiation and to try to put in place mechanisms to develop skills and knowledge. Also, we wanted something to fit in the framework of the constitution and we have achieved that hopefully. There is also the Malaysian facilitator who supports the process and the ICG and wills the continuation of the process.

With states like the United Kingdom we can arrange meetings like this so the international community understands that the process is on the right track and often it is the media who are two or three weeks behind the game. We must stay in constant contact to remain up to date on the situation.

**Thomas Phipps:**

First thing to say is that our mandate derives primarily from Malaysia and to provide support for the facilitator and both peace panels. Understandably the government were reluctant to have involvement. Like any sovereign state, GPH were reluctant to expose their domestic process to the influence of outside actors. The UK knew about this reluctance from their experience when they did not want international actors but then we had Canadians and the US and then the EU and we understood the value of third parties. We have been very careful never to offer solutions. What we have always done instead is offer our experience like the issue in Northern Ireland. We addressed it like a mirror so the party can better reflect on their own challenges by looking at the experiences of others. Sometimes it is extremely frustrating if the answer to an issue seems obvious but we can only offer hints and suggestions about how actors can frame their approach. We have to be careful not to push solutions. However, if you look at the agreement and compare it to the Northern Irish example there are lots of similarities.

We cannot lose credibility by offering a solution that would seem to favour one side over the other.

**Davut Ocak:**

We tend to have less confidence in INGOs and it took some confidence building measures to assure mutual trust, which is the most important thing. When we have information we share it and we work as one. States cannot do everything and we cannot talk to MILF in the way that NGOs can. They can help where it is not appropriate for us to intervene.

**Ali Saleem:**

On the government side we have success in the way of integrating women into the negotiations. The government delegation is often three very strong women. On the MILF side there is not a lack of will but a lack of people and they do not have female panel members but as we move toward implementation they are working to moving women to the forefront. MILF were reluctant to integrate women because, culturally, they could not deal with women in the negotiation room. Our job is to make it easier to work with them before they could not look at their female counterparts for cultural reasons but the situation is slowly improving. We have had conversations with MILF and taboos and stereotypes came out as they did not know how to talk with or about women. We have projects to promote dialogue and women's involvement and there are other actors who are not members of the ICG who have long standing commitments to creating space for women's participation.

**Thomas Phipps:**

Here we are as four male representatives of the ICG and so we are not a great advertisement. There is only one woman on the

panel but this is by chance and we cannot claim to have made contributions to the greatly positive role that women have played in this peace process. We should stress the role of Emma Lesley who is the representative for Conciliation Resources in the ICG but unfortunately she is not based in the Philippines. She has played an extremely important role. At first I was not sure if the way she approached the process was of value. The mechanism for peace is very formal and even how we sat on the panel was very structured. Emma has relentlessly tried to break down this structure. There was one member of the MILF panel who was particularly angry and aggressive so in one of the meetings Emma returned with a collection of 'Angry Birds' balloons on sticks and she handed the birds on sticks to each of us and said whenever he rants hold up the balloons. For me it was so inappropriate! I was nervous but actually the opposite was true and we cut through some of the tension. Bringing that human side is something you cannot teach as a talent and as a stuffy diplomat I certainly cannot bring that talent. So I guess what I want to stress is that we can all bring different things to the table and that's why having diversity is important.

**Ali Saleem:**

Just to clarify, the ICG's goal is negotiation and we can try to advise parties and see that the agreement is signed but ultimately the decision is theirs. We can merely suggest things.

**Participant:**

Thank you so much for this information. I would like to ask a few questions. When are you, as a third party actor, needed? When there is a conflict does somebody say "we need a facilitator" or does

it come more naturally? When are the times facilitators are needed and how do the actors reach the decision? Do they bring forward the demand publically and openly? In reality, how does it work and how do they come and ask? Secondly, you are a mixed group and the state actors have different concerns because they usually bring forward their national interests whereas the non-state groups usually focus on the solutions. Does this create internal conflicts in the ICG?

**Participant:**

We have talked about the facilitator Malaysia so can you explain how they fit into this architecture? Can you give concrete examples of women's projects which have helped the process go forward? Also, what is the role of the media in this? Has there been a platform to bring women's rights groups and feminists together? Finally, have you set deadlines in the agreements that must be met or is it an ongoing process?

**Ali Saleem:**

These are all good questions! Firstly how and when does the third party work? The ICG is a mechanism that is in play all the time and we do not require formal requests to get involved. There are multiple players, we are mostly based in Manila and we regularly meet with both sides. We can check the government's position and that of the MILF. Sometimes we formally get requests but that is quite rare.

On the question of national interests, because we are part of the mechanism everything internally gets neutralised. None of the

states involved in the ICG have strong interests here, just an interest in the solution. We often discuss projects and engagements internally and what happens is we all must consult with our own bodies but we make sure the only position which comes to the ICG is the peace position. We have multiple layers of management and all these layers must be taken into account but when I come to the ICG I bring only one position and that is the one of wanting to achieve a solution.

**Thomas Phipps:**

The point to keep stressing is that the mandate derives from the facilitator so we take our cue from Malaysia. We are utilised by the parties in the negotiations and one of the chairs of the parties will say that they are not making progress. So they ask if they can send the ICG away to draft texts for them to use. This is difficult as we cannot favour one side over the other even if we believe one side is more correct. Sometimes we take the initiative in the formal talks and we need to know what both sides are thinking. We will talk to one side and ask them if they understand where the other side is coming from. So, for example rather than the MILF saying to the government: “you are frustrating us”; we can say it in a more delicate way and act as a bridge. We have stopped the MILF from walking out on the talks. We cannot tell whether it’s theatre but we can sit down with them and relay their concerns to the government.

**Ali Saleem:**

The ICG is a confidence building measure and what we must understand is that the real champions are the panels and the chairs of these panels. It is their show and we just exist as a confidence

building measure to see success from the process.

**Thomas Phipps:**

As for the question of when did the parties ask us to be part of the talks, it was after the collapse of the first agreement. Unfortunately the agreement was declared unconstitutional. The conflict did not fully resume but because of the presidential nature of government it all changed after the elections. Unfortunately we are coming up to that time again. In 2010 there was a new government and in 2009 the parties decided to visit the UK and it may have been Jonathon Powell, Blair's Chief of Staff who first suggested the idea. The MILF at the time felt they could not trust the government and the Supreme Court (the state) declared the agreement unconstitutional. The MILF wanted them to bring the government to account. One of the things that helped the ICG come into existence was that the government was on its way out (the ICG formed in 2009 and there were elections in 2010). The first thing we did as an organisation was to try and build relations with next administration. Aquino fortunately looked at the architecture and agreed to it when he could have rejected it. The

Malaysian facilitator also changed their government. Their legitimacy was always questioned because of border sharing. In 2010 Japan invited the new administration to set the scene of what was to come and kept the process intact – this meeting was extremely influential and may have secured the process. It is possible that the ICG would not have been formed if the government had not been on the way out.

**Participant:**

What kind of support did Turkey bring to the table?

**Davut Ocak:**

Turkey is a member of the ICG and you understand the role we play as a mediator. Also the IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), a Turkish NGO, is part of the Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT). Turkey is also chair of the decommissioning process which is very sensitive and emotional right now as Moros really like their arms and so it is difficult. The reason Turkey was chosen was because of trust between the country and the Moros. So Turkey plays a huge role at both a substantive and political level helping with security amongst other things.

**Participant:**

Our problem in Turkey is that we do not have a third party. The Wise Persons committee has a different job in identifying the issues in the situation and currently the President and the Prime Minister are using a discourse which says that it must be a national process. However, as we can see here the process cannot only be national. It is very important for me to learn that Turkey is head of the decommissioning committee as they are willing to help in the Philippines' process but they are not willing to engage with the same process back home. We do not have such an enlightened path as you have and our biggest problem is taking support in the form of a facilitator. I would like to ask the Turkish delegate to write about Turkey's role as this would be invaluable for the government to learn the importance of third parties in a solution process. Only such young and enthusiastic people can be involved in the peace

process. They may be invisible but they are extremely important and I would like to thank them for their efforts.

**Ali Saleem:**

At least at CHD level we want to make an overall environment which is conducive to the peace process. Sometime we would say the engagement of all actors including Turkey is extremely important but unfortunately their actions are confidential so I cannot give you more details as a member of the ICG.

Often the initiators of discussion are the panels but we at the ICG offer an environment for the negotiations to keep going. The support mechanisms by no means take the process out of the hands of the two parties. They tell us when they want us to speak and we are at their service. The real champions are those who are getting their hands dirty.

The media is a stakeholder in this process so they are not a supporter but their role is critical. Something I failed to mention earlier is that you must have a national understanding of how you want the process to be resolved. The media can swing public opinion and we have a number of media initiatives to help gain public engagement. It's not an easy thing to tackle perception and preconceived frames of mind so we must engage the media to a certain extent. You must have a direct communication with them as they drive public perception.

**Thomas Phipps:**

Back to national interests – it's not that we (the UK) do not have a national interest, we do, but our interest is to see this conflict resolved. We do not have as many interests as we do in say Burma or Myanmar as there is a colonial aspect there.

Many senators ask us if there is a question of oil in the sea but we do not have any British companies in Mindanao so it's not an agenda of prosperity but more a security agenda. I used to work in counter terrorism and our greatest concern is that Muslim Mindanao becomes a permissive space for groups such as Al Qaeda or ISIL. Our work is not limited to government work in the ICG and we must be sensitive. Even if we were not a member we would still be working as conflict resolution much like Australia. We call it 'political conditions' work where we try to help the conditions improve to be conducive to peace. We will frequently meet with politicians to offer suggestions and talk about the process to keep a dialogue going.

We do a lot of media work and the ambassador often appears on television here. Our own process in Northern Ireland has got a lot of attention from the media and they have reported on the 'Ten Key Lessons' from that process.

Just a point on the young enthusiastic people, I think it was a conscious decision not to put four ambassadors in the negotiations because the dynamic would be very different and more formal. The ambassadors are very much speaking on behalf of the UK and it is

understood that we often speak from a personal perspective and are not held to account by our government.

**Yudai Ueno:**

We have a good relationship with the Philippines and the Turkish government and we want peace in the international region and that is our interest in this conflict. We particularly wanted to push education in the conflict areas of Mindanao and we have sent two people to Mindanao as part of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). In 2008 when the situation was unstable we decided to increase the number of our staff to show our commitment to the peace process to achieve everlasting peace and prosperity in the region.

**Participant:**

What kind of mechanisms did the government establish to publicise and socialise the process? Symbolically, what kind of stages did the process go through? We know the Irish example and the Good Friday agreement and that the decommissioning process was difficult. How did you manage to do this? You spoke briefly earlier of transitional justice and power sharing, how did you establish this? Also, it is not acceptable that you only have one woman as part of your team!

**Davut Ocak:**

This is the fault of the embassies that they did not send women and we would be in a much more prosperous position if we had more women as part of our team. Our current ambassador is female and she has done so much for relations between the two countries.

**Thomas Phipps:**

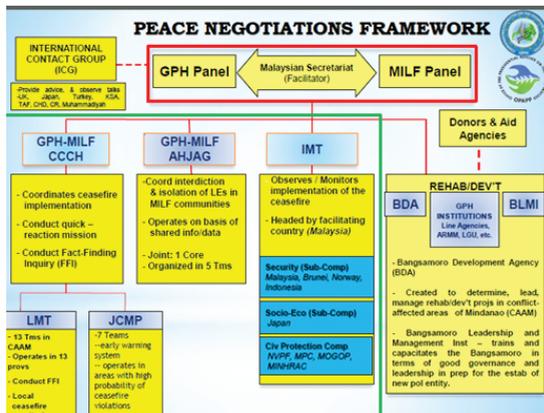
One of the reasons the process has made progress is not because the Filipino people have been supportive but because they have been ambivalent. Unfortunately in January of this year there was an incident that left more than 60 Filipinos dead. 44 of them were police officers and no longer were the public ambivalent. In fact they have turned against the process and in face of elections the politicians can exploit this public grief. Why ambivalence in the past? Mindanao is geographically and culturally far away from Manila. 90 per cent of the country is Catholic and so are not affected by the oppression faced by those in Muslim Mindanao. I am very careful to say this but unlike Mindanao the rest of the country has not experienced terrorism and the attacks are limited to the 2005 Valentine's Day attack carried out by Abu Sayyaf in major cities such as Makati. The conflict therefore feels far away and so publicising it was very difficult and we are still trying.

OPAPP use social media and Facebook and their website is a very good source of information with infographics which are easy to consume. The media do not bother as there is no public interest so socialising the process is so difficult. MILF have a more formalised structure and they are able to socialise the process internally quite easily and can reach out to 100,000 strong communities but they struggle to reach out more broadly. They have a website but there is no access to the Internet in a lot of the southern regions of the Philippines. Efforts to socialise the process have not been easy.

Now to speak about normalisation or decommissioning (we refer to it as normalisation because decommissioning is only one part

of the architecture). A very broad set of principles was agreed and between October 2012 and January 2014 the two parties created an annex of normalisation. The annex contains a matrix which divides the process into four phases and each have political milestones. I will explain the picture on the board (see diagram below), the peace process architecture looks far more complicated when written down.

This diagram outlines the formal process. The first thing to exist was the two peace panels of GPH and MILF. The IMT, which came before, was established in 2000 along with the joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), before even Malaysia was asked to facilitate the discussions. The IMT, the CCCH and Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) are all located on the ground. This is named the ceasefire architecture made up of the three bodies which oversee the ceasefire agreements and implementation.



2 Diagram of the Peace Negotiations Framework as perceived by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines

Just to explain AHJAG is jointly chaired by MILF and GPH military as part of the CCCH and they deal with law enforcement. These bodies are a means of communication and form a coordination mechanism. If GPH military want to move troops they must first get clearance from their counterparts in the MILF. For example if there is a criminal responsible for kidnap or ransom operating in area of MILF control the government must ask the MILF if they can enter their territory. The MILF have never actually engaged in joint cooperation but have contributed to catching criminals and have sometimes created a blocking force to allow the military to enter. The tragedy in January happened in part because the Philippine police ignored the ceasefire architecture and there was a criminal in the vicinity of one of the most restive MILF camps. The police believed there was a risk of information getting back to the target and I feel strongly that the ceasefire architecture is the most important thing. But it is context specific. This would not have happened in Northern Ireland.

That was the first architecture, then Malaysia was asked to be the formal facilitator of the peace talks and then the ICG was established in 2009. After this the parties agreed they wanted to form a new part of the architecture, the Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), that would independently review the implementation made up of international actors and chaired by Alistair Macdonald and the members include IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation from Turkey) and the Asia Foundation. The role of this group is to produce reports on whether the group have implemented the agreements. The greatest challenge is to maintain independence. The ICG's role is more proactive and we can help the process

whereas as the TPMT just make reports and step back.

On the process of normalisation, there are three bodies to address the issue. The first is the joint normalisation committee. The normalisation annex and matrix describe four phases and during each phase of normalisation a different percentage of weapons are decommissioned and a certain number of forces demobilised. The Joint Normalisation Committee looks after oversight. They monitor the political milestones which are linked to commitments that the government will provide training and development programs mostly in areas such as agriculture and farming. The objective of the four phases is unrealistic and they will fail to complete normalisation by 2016 in my opinion. This is because of delays which have made the timeline change. The exit agreement is signed and once - or if - the new Bangsamoro is elected and the parties agree that the other is meeting expectations and the MILF has completed decommissioning, at that point the whole architecture ceases to exist. The first phase is legislative, the second is from passing legislation to endorsing legislation in a plebiscite, the third phase is the establishment of a new police force or rather police reform and the fourth is the exit phase where the ceasefire architecture disbands.

On the question of transitional justice, this was one of the most difficult issues and the two parties could not agree on it. The Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) are international and chaired by the Swiss. The mandate is to establish how transitional justice can be addressed and not to actually address it. The report is almost finished and then we must see how

to implement the suggestions. This will be down to discretion of both parties as with everything else.

There is also an International Decommissioning Body (IDB) headed by the ex-Turkish Ambassador who works with a Norwegian general who oversaw the process of decommissioning in Nepal and Sudan. In the first ceremony of decommissioning which we saw last week the IDB was responsible for the safe keeping of weapons.

*Break for Lunch Reception hosted by Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue*



*The Participants speaking with Davut Ocak from the Turkish Embassy in Manila*

**Kerim Yildiz:**

We have a half hour left and still there are many questions. So if the participants could begin with their remaining thoughts.

**Participant:**

What is the actual role of the facilitator? When was it involved and why was it involved? Also I asked earlier and would like to know, in these mechanisms are there any projects regarding women?

**Participant:**

I have several short questions to put forward. Your role is a kind of mediation on both sides but what is your relationship with grass roots people on the street? Secondly, is there a body to deal with the victims or the families of the victims of both sides and from other political parties? Also, what is the role of parliament in this peace process?

**Participant:**

I would like to hear something about the economics – peace is a matter of investment. What can you tell us about this?

**Thomas Phipps:**

The first question was about the role of the facilitator. The last President asked Malaysia to get involved. It is interesting that they were chosen after concerns with them sharing a border with Muslim Mindanao and a territorial dispute over Sabah.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sabah is one of the two Malaysian states on the island of Borneo and its north and north eastern border is shared with the Philippines. The Philippines have a territorial claim over much of the eastern part of Sabah

Malaysia had already played a successful role chairing the IMT so it was a pragmatic decision. There were links between Malaysia and secessionist Moro groups. Malaysia does of course have a national interest, but again this interest is to see the conflict resolved and perhaps there is a *quid pro quo* that the Philippines would end its territorial claims but this is yet to be seen.

Malaysia's role is that they record everything in the talks and then they produce formal documents for terms of reference. They play a secretariat role but the facilitator himself has at times played a more proactive role. The last Malaysian facilitator, the individual, was removed by the government and the current one plays a very quiet role. He just brings parties together and now, as trust increases, has been able to help. The MILF know they need Malaysia's support as a guarantee and he has more influence over the MILF central committee than any other actors. The GPH realise that and so must respect the facilitator.

**Ali Saleem:**

Technically if you are bringing a rebel group to negotiations, someone must vouch for its commitment and Malaysia could provide this. By bringing Malaysia into the peace process it has tied its hand and controlled its engagement in the Philippines. They bring the two parties to Kuala Lumpur and build the formal negotiations. There are normally 40-45 people brought together over 10 days and it is a huge pressure for Malaysia to look after these talks. Over time Malaysia has proven its credibility and it has also showed the public that it is an honest broker.

**Thomas Phipps:**

As a practical example on projects concerning the role of women, the UK has been helping to promote a project with Conciliation Resources working with four different women's groups on the ground. When the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) emerged we organised through the four women's groups. There were 75 consultations involving 2000 women across Mindanao to help explain the process and create a women's agenda. The BTC subsequently adopted these provisions and now we are capacitating the women to help them play a roll on the ground in the political process.

The NGOs act as a bridge for us. There is resentment in the Philippines because there are no local NGOs in the ICG which drew criticism. As the process has moved beyond the peace agreement the relationship with local CSOs has increased and state actors such as Japan and Australia help by speaking to people on the ground. Each of us spends at least one week per month in Mindanao speaking to groups.

On the subject of victims, the TJRC are engaged in this process. One of the challenges of the process is Filipino politics and the way the state is organised and the administration, the Supreme Court and the Parliament. The agreement is between the administration and the MILF and must be endorsed by the other two branches of government (the Supreme Court and the Legislature). Parties in the Philippines do not exist formally as it is a very individualistic style of governance. When Blair won a huge majority he would always have been able to push through the peace process but here

the system is so confusing. The president's leverage over politicians has declined significantly and we need to get this done before midterm elections as the power of the president is decreasing day by day. He is struggling to get legislation through the House of Representatives and Senate but the president is very committed to the process. He sees it as a legacy and has a very strong connection to it and his enemies are attacking him because of it. In Cotabato everyone is supportive of the process but the problem in Manila is political.

On the economic dimension, as I said we have no UK companies lining up to establish businesses in Mindanao and the main impact of the conflict is a drag on the economic development. It is a question of untapped potential such as the rich agriculture in Mindanao. As the process is stabilising we can see new companies such as those from Japan trying to set up businesses in Mindanao and the World Bank has signed off millions of dollars of investment in coffee plantations. We can see private sector investment but it is difficult to convince the politicians that there is an economic imperative to get the conflict resolved as there is a seven per cent yearly growth.

The most compelling argument is that the Philippines is an archipelagic country and the army is currently much bigger than the navy or air force which is nonsensical for national security. If you want to help defend the Philippines you must get rid of some of the huge army and build up naval forces. So there is more of an external security imperative than an economic imperative.

**Ali Saleem:**

Let's look at this architecture - there are multiple layers of engagement. Both parties made significant development in building this to create a solution. The ceasefire mechanisms were criticised after January but it has survived. Multiple bodies have been created and they do have international involvement. This started first with both parties making a commitment to come together. Now the process has come home after the MILF demanded an international element and now there is a national ownership of the process. It has gone through phases national to international to internationally recognised and has now come back for the implementation process and the role of international actors is very specific. All mechanisms are expensive which is important for durability as both parties are well invested in them. Money certainly has a role to play.

**Participant:**

Does the ICG have contact with other groups in Mindanao and how do you deal with them? How do you think the peace process will go in terms of giving up arms and progression?

**Participant:**

What is the role of Turkey in terms of disarmament? And secondly, I am a journalist and I wondered about the media. In Turkey we are in a position where the media is compromised. Do the media here suffer the same fate?

**Thomas Phipps:**

The media is very free in the Philippines and the tragic action in January meant that some politicians and media outlets have been

able to exploit public grief, unfortunately. How do we deal with the media in this dynamic? There is a body which plays a significant role in convening journalists to talk about terminology and to try and capacitate journalists to be more responsible when reporting on the peace process.

**Ali Saleem:**

Once you have developed the strategy of communication it is important to provide the journalists with what you want the public to see. You must develop a momentum and the press can help to do this. There are institutional challenges and with the independent media you have a stake holder who plays a critical role. We have partnerships with media organisations and we engage with them to help the editors make informed decisions on the peace process. You need to develop trust and you must have a larger picture in order to take the whole country forward to where the people start believing the peace process is normal. To be honest, learning from the experiences of other countries, information consumption is so important. We need studies and surveys and then a strategic relationship between peace panels and the media in order to show how you want to take the country forward. Intervention depends on the understanding of consumption patterns of listeners or viewers. Today this is possible and with these tools to design a future and move forward we could be in a good place. In Mindanao we have two layers of engagement. One is trying to engage the audience in the ongoing peace process and the other is spoiler management. We are working with these groups and the government to contain spoilers. Outside the current agreement groups may have difficulties with

their own peace processes, there is the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) peace process which has stalled but we continue to support security between the MNLF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

**Participant:**

What are the incentives of the other armed groups?

**Ali Saleem:**

MNLF has its own peace process which is separate to that of the MILF.

**Thomas Phipps:**

There are many other groups. There are so many layers of armed groups. You have the MNLF which has weapons and their peace process is subject to review. They are looking for ways to combine the MILF and the MNLF process. The main faction of the MNLF group is supportive of the process but the charismatic founder of the MNLF opposes the process hugely. There are groups listed as “terrorist” organisations such as Abu Sayyaf which is more criminal than ideological these days as most of the main ideologues have been killed. We have no engagement with them.

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) is another splinter group which has pledged allegiance to ISIS but this is more about power and resources than ideology again. The focus of the parties is to keep these groups as illegitimate but those disillusioned with the process may clutch onto the more radical elements of the groups. From a UK security process if the peace process falls

apart some of these more dangerous groups could garner popular support.

**Ali Saleem:**

Things are quite murky in a long term conflict and it is hard to identify between all these groups. It is extremely hard to give a judgement on whom exactly to go into talks with. Conflict is an extremely difficult context and you must look at it creatively to find entry points.

**Davut Ocak:**

Besides the MILF, the biggest actor is the MNLF and it has its own peace process which has halted. There is contact between the two groups and they are getting together trying to resolve their difference. The MNLF has five different sub-groups with varying support. The MNLF lost quite a lot of public support after the break down of their negotiations in the 90s and they failed in the public eye, though their support varies geographically.

As for Turkey's role in decommissioning, the IDB was previously headed by the Swiss and also includes Norway and Brunei amongst other states. The role of the IDB rests on political milestones and for the IDB to move forwards so must the process. The reason Turkey was invited by the government and especially the MILF was because handing their arms over to a non-Muslim actor would be impossible. The first phase of the decommissioning process for the IDB was the production of an inventory which was handed over to the Turkish chair for safe keeping, and also its role was to hold

names of MILF combatants and the inventory of their weapons. The second phase is handing over weapons and the verification of this. The final part is putting those weapons permanently out of use. The manner in which to do this is undecided yet and must be agreed by the parties further down the line.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you so much for this very useful and rich discussion in terms of the normalisation architecture and the role of the ICG. The issues mentioned are very much related to what we are dealing with in Turkey and certainly this morning we have drawn a lot of important lessons from the ongoing process and we will learn more lessons over the course of our stay. I would like to thank all of our speakers and friends from the embassies.

*End of Session*

## **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting: An Overview of the Philippine Peace Process with the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process**

**Venue:** Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process

**With:** Mr Senen Bacani, member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel (GPNP)

**Ms. Anna Tarhata Basman**, legal counsel for the GPNP-MILF peace process



*Atty Anna Basman, Mr. Senen Bacani, DPI Director Kerim Yildiz, Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process*



*Roundtable Meeting with the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process*

**Senen Bacani:**

We would like to welcome you all here today. Unfortunately our Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles is out of the country and cannot join us today but she sends her apologies and warmest regards. I would also like to introduce Anna who is part of our legal team at OPAPP and hopefully together we can answer your questions. But first we would like to show you a brief video about our work here at OPAPP (audio visual presentation shown).

As you know in the Philippines we have two houses of parliament, the House of Representatives (HoR) and the Senate. The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is under discussion in the HoR and we hope it will pass sometime in August, and we hope to put it forward in the Senate in the last week in July. Then there will be deliberations, and we think the law will be finalised in late September or early October. The plebiscite would then be at the end of January. The regular elections we have will be in May 2016 so there is barely any transition period, and what we are looking at today is that the President wants everything in place in his term before the May elections come around. If Congress wants a longer transition period they can postpone their elections.

Those are the two scenarios we are talking about at the moment but we are not seeing any approval. We are sure there will be approval but the question is will there be substantive changes to the bill which must be in accord with the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB). Do you have any questions?

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you very much. I'm sure we will have lots of questions so I will put it to the floor.

**Participant:**

Can you please tell us the role of your organisation? Who are you as an organisation and do you have any procedures for establishment by the order of the President or by law?

**Senen Bacani:**

OPAPP was created by an executive order; there is no law establishing this office. It is a cabinet level office but created by the President. He set us up with certain guidelines or headlines to follow. There are around 300 people working for us mostly located in this office. This office is in charge of following the talks with insurgency groups fighting the government. The main talks are with MILF and with the communist New People's Army (NPA) those are the two major tables, there are more but these two are the main concerns of this office. We are the negotiating party on behalf of the government.

**Participant:**

What is the role of the communists?

**Senen Bacani:**

They do not really have a role. It is simply another negotiating game, there are seven tables in total but there are two main one, with the MILF and with the communists. So it is a separate issue.

**Participant:**

Will the historical justices be overcome in the agreement do you think? And how will you achieve this?

**Senen Bacani:**

In the agreement there is a committee for transitional justice which was established in September last year and in August of this year they will give a set of recommendations to the negotiating parties. We do not have details yet but they will come.

**Participant:**

With regards to the constitution, do you need to change it? And is there internal conflict in the government?

**Senen Bacani:**

We were given guidelines to work within the constitution and within the CAB. We agree that all the articles are within the constitution but there are some lawyers who disagree, and we must consult with constitutional lawyers before signing the law. The leading members of the group which helped in drafting the constitution have given us support, saying this is in accordance with the constitution which was framed in 1986 and approved in 1987.

In terms of the politics in the HoR, there is a definite majority of the President's party. In the Senate together with coalition partners of the president's party there is also a majority but it will be harder in the Senate to pass this law because of the politics. Some senators want to run for president in May 2016 so some are publically opposing the bill in order to capitalise on public grief about the situation.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much for having us here. What is the role of the armed forces in these peace negotiations? And secondly, do you have any operational duties and where does the budget come from, who funds it? Who is the last decision maker; is it the chairman, is it the head of state? At the beginning you said that the President of the state gave you headlines, what were they? And there is a coming election - what is the percentage of the people supporting the peace process and what is the most disputable subject of the process?

**Senen Bacani:**

The four guidelines were first, to work within the constitution, the second is to be inclusive, the third is to learn from lessons of past and the fourth is that all parties must agree.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have been very supportive of this whole process and we have had a working ceasefire for several years. For the last three years there has been no violation except for one unfortunate incident in January this year.

In terms of the feelings of the people, inside the proposed territory of the Bangsamoro there is overwhelming approval of the BBL and the entire process but outside there is disapproval. In Manila and the islands because agreements in the past have not been implemented properly and some of the issues are quite divisive it is not a popular process. Inside it is okay but regarding the public outside there is a problem. There are some issues questioning the constitutionality of the agreement and another issue is that they say we are giving too much money to the proposed BBL. Some say we are creating

another government and this will not be constitutional within the unitary framework.

Major decisions lie with the president and other decisions, more minor ones, come down to us.

We do not have one line of funding but have to rely on different departments of government to implement the provisions of the agreement that come under their remit.

**Participant:**

Are there any operational activities in your office?

**Senen Bacani:**

Yes, we oversee the implementation of the BBL, and we are very active in engaging the lawmakers in terms of clarifying the issues in the BBL. Even though we do not have a direct line to Congress we are responsible for all the provisions of this proposed law.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

One of my first questions is how important have third parties been in these talks?

**Senen Bacani:**

The Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT) is very important. In fact, this is the major difference between the past agreements with the MILF like that of 1996. There are still questions of implementation in this agreement but there is a third party independent team to monitor the compliance of both parties which was created when we signed the annex. This is really the final stage

of decommissioning and we must see substantial compliance. This is the important role of TPMT.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Another question is, is diversity important in negotiations? Is the role of women important, for example?

**Anna Basman:**

We did not have to worry about gender issues because the majority of our staff, peace chairs and lawyers are women. Thus in the BBL there are a lot of provisions regarding women and there will be reserved seats in the Council of Leaders and in the parliament. Also, budgets will have sections devoted to the protection and participation of women. We did not have many problems as a government but there was a little problem initially with MILF, but in the end they also agreed to gender provisions in the BBL.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

How important is transparency? Is it more important than confidentiality? In my opinion the most important guarantor of the peace process is the public.

**Senen Bacani:**

We try to be transparent and consultative and we have had more than 500 consultations with all of the different sectors of society, mainly in Mindanao but elsewhere as well. This is to make sure we have the input of every sector. During the negotiations we were given some hints but they were confidential until we signed the

agreements. After, we published the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the four annexes on our website. Between confidentiality and transparency we are more towards the latter, except for the very key and controversial issues which we keep to ourselves, but many of the issues were discussed in public.

**Participant:**

In this department you solely focus on the peace process; what is the composition of personnel in terms of background and how do the public perceive your department and your contribution?

**Senen Bacani:**

As far as the public is concerned there is a general acceptance of the role of this office and the people here. There is mixed backgrounds amongst the personnel here; there are lawyers, people with their background in political science, technology and finance. We have different agencies to assist us in any special issues that need expertise so there is no need for a specific orientation in this department.

**Participant:**

As far as I understand the BBL is about local governance. Therefore my question is will it affect the level of democracy in the Philippines?

**Anna Basman:**

Actually because of the proposed law the issue of federalism has come up in terms of democracy quite a lot. It is better to look at all the different options. In our constitution there is a provision for two autonomous regions and at the moment there is only one, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. If any more emerged

there would have to be a change in the constitution.

**Participant:**

How will the Bangsamoro parliament work and how is the autonomous region different?

**Anna Basman:**

There would be a halfway body that would synchronise laws between the Bangsamoro government and the Philippines government. In a lot of areas the Bangsamoro government have legislative powers but there will be a forum to make sure laws are synchronised.

**Participant:**

How would you engage with other actors like NGOs, intellectuals and universities? Are there any mechanisms and how would you use these to help the process?

**Senen Bacani:**

We have had a lot of consultations with all these groups and workshops with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the police, the military, insurgency groups and the church. We did not leave anybody out in terms of consultations. We even spoke to other insurgent groups and local government leaders of the indigenous people as they make up a huge portion of the southern region of the Philippines. Sometimes their inputs were contradictory and so sometimes we must make a judgement call in terms of what would be more suitable for the Bangsamoro.

**Participant:**

After the decommissioning, which took place on Tuesday, did you have any action plans to help normalise these people?

**Senen Bacani:**

There is a lot of ongoing work on that and we know it will not happen overnight. The combatants have been used to having arms for the last 40 years or so, thus it is important to show them how they can go back to a civilian life with dignity and respect. We are looking at social packages for the ex-combatants and the communities they originate from. It is still a work in progress and we need to see what happens to the normalised people. Some want to go back to school and we have provisions for them and working capital for those who want to gain a new profession. It will take a lot of effort to show that it can be done and this will take a few years to sustain. They must see that there is a life with dignity and respect awaiting them and this is the only way they will give up arms.

**Participant:**

As far as I understand, in the short term you are experiencing some legal trouble. I am a constitutional lawyer and I would like to know where the most important disharmony lies. Is it a clash with sovereignty, is it going against the unitary state? What are the more technical terms of the lawyers and do they actually have a case or is it political prejudice?

**Anna Basman:**

There is no legal case, I think it is political. The main concern is the fear that the region will want independence later on and will desire physical and fiscal autonomy and want to break away. But they do not need the agreement to break away. The BBL is, in fact, a way of clasping together as one government. There are suggestions to put stronger words in to maintain sovereignty.

**Participant:**

Will everything be clear after the plebiscite?

**Senen Bacani:**

The plebiscite will be very simple: do you want to be part of this region or not? So, we are doing a plebiscite in the whole region but it's just a yes or no question.

**Participant:**

Which kinds of powers will be carried out by the local government?

**Anna Basman:**

In the agreement there is an annex on power sharing. There are certain provisions of power for the Bangsamoro government and there are exclusive powers for Parliament. As far as political autonomy is concerned, there is a provision based on a formula for fiscal autonomy that will be automatically appropriated, so they will not have to renegotiate the amount each year. The formula sets that up. The money from the resources earned in the area will be decided by formulas regarding revenue sharing.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Can I go back to one of my earlier questions which relates to our country. When did you realise that you needed international intervention or help?

**Senen Bacani:**

I think a lot of the international involvement happened after 2008. There was an agreement with the MILF which was declared unconstitutional. If I may add, in 1997 there was a ceasefire agreement and in 1998 there was a new president who brought with him a policy of 'all out war', and he was eventually ousted. In 2001 there was a new President Gloria Arroyo who tried to convince the MILF to continue with the negotiations and Arroyo asked Malaysia to join as the observer.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

How did you overcome the resistance to foreign assistance?

**Senen Bacani:**

In fact it was the president who started the process and there was no opposition locally. There was not too much resistance. Primarily the role of Malaysia was as an observer, but now there is a lot of international involvement.

**Participant:**

Can we change the subject to practical matters? For example, are there political prisoners? Will there be an amnesty in the future?

**Anna Basman:**

We do not decipher between political prisoners and normal criminals but in the normalisation annex there is a provision for reviewing their cases and hopefully resolving them. After the plebiscite and the passing of the BBL there will be a presidential proclamation instating the general amnesty.

**Participant:**

Could you tell us about the judiciary system within the BBL?

**Anna Basman:**

In the Filipino constitution, one of the things it provides is courts in the regions. The objective of the BBL is to expand that remit so the judiciary is made up of the local courts and civil courts which will remain and also to introduce sharia courts and tribal courts. These will look at property and family law. All of these courts will remain under the administration of the Supreme Court.

**Participant:**

Back to the constitutional discussion, am I right in saying this is a secular country? And now we have a country that will implement sharia law? Will this go against the provisions in the constitution?

**Anna Basman:**

In the constitution we have a secular separation of church and state but we also have freedom of institutions and you can also freely practice your religion. Some argue you cannot implement sharia law in a secular state but there are religious laws in the Philippines. For example, we do not recognise divorce because our country is

mostly Catholic but Muslims can still divorce.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

What were the main challenges you face today? Also, what was the role of Turkey? Lastly, what are the legislative limitations of the local parliaments in the BBL?

**Senen Bacani:**

The involvement of Turkey, as I mentioned earlier, is in the ICG together with other states and NGOs. Its second involvement is through the IHH (Humanitarian Relief Fund) which is part of the Third Party Monitoring Team and also in the Independent Decommissioning Body the chairman is Turkish, the former Turkish Ambassador to NATO.

On this idea of limitations of the local parliament. Mostly this is about the exclusive powers which will not be devolved to the Bangsamoro. For example, they cannot tax as this power belongs to central government and I think any law which will affect international commitments and agreements they cannot interfere with but apart from that they enjoy most other powers. Also some national laws cannot be contradicted by the Bangsamoro parliament.

Challenges? I guess this is the easy part. The hard part is implementation and some of this will take years. It will require a change in mind-set of the people and politicians but hopefully it will take less than a generation. Over time it will happen. Providing sustainable livelihood is a challenge as there is always

unemployment in countries but it is important to eliminate the prejudices and bias of the past. This is a long term education and the main challenge is implementation.

**Participant:**

In the 40 year long war you experienced in this country can you explain more about where the pain and suffering was concentrated - where were the lives lost?

**Senen Bacani:**

In the video, we saw that 120,000 people died between 1970-1996 and more from 1996 onwards. The majority of those were from the two parties, the AFP and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) and it will take a lot of time for these wounds to heal. We can only do so much. Especially for those who were directly affected or their parents or families were killed - it will take a long time.

**Esra Elmas:**

I am curious about how you changed public opinion and what are the ways in which you can influence the support or the dynamic?

**Senen Bacani:**

From the start the public were very supportive. But in 2015, the incident meant there was a lack of trust and there were questions of whether we could trust the MILF. As I said earlier, inside the territory there is dominant approval but outside there is still a negative view. One of the questions was how we can convert the negative response to a positive one. A lot of it is about a lack of

information. Only 20 per cent say they know enough about the peace process to make a decision. So, a lot of the disapproval is amongst people who are ill informed. We must express it in simple terms. It is not easy to communicate. We try putting adverts in the papers but it's difficult. Times are turning and we hope by the time Congress pass the law there will be a majority of people even outside the territory that approve it though there will always be people who disapprove.

*End of Session*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz and Atty. Anna Basman,  
legal counsel for GPNP-MILF*



*The delegation in the Office of the Presidential Adviser  
on the Peace Process*



*The delegation visits Manila Bay*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz addresses the delegation and Her Excellency Esra Cankorur on the importance of working together towards a solution process in Turkey*



*Dinner Reception Hosted by Her Excellency Esra Conkorur,  
the Turkish Ambassador to the Philippines, attended by  
Cynthia Veliko, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Representative in the Philippines and Davut Ocak,  
Turkish Embassy in Manila*

## Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June - Private Tour of the House of Representatives

**Venue:** House of Representatives

**With:** Feliciano Belmonte, Speaker of the House of Representatives



*Speaker of the House Feliciano Belmonte take the delegation on a private tour of the House of Representatives.*

The Speaker of the House gave us a brief history of the House, which is modelled after the American structure as the Philippines was governed by the US and in 1902 when the first Filipino Assembly was born. In 1946, Filipino independence from the United States was declared and the First Congress of the Republic was created. After Martial Law ended in 1987 a new constitution was codified which revived the House and the Senate. The Speaker then went on to explain the composition of the House and Senate and the legislative process of how bills become laws.



*The Delegation are taken on a private tour of the House of Representatives and the exclusive legislative archives*



*Private Tour of the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines with Speaker of the House Feliciano Belmonte*



*Turkish Participants on a tour of the House of Representatives*

## **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting: The Role of Media in Conflict Resolution**

**Venue:** The Garden Rooms, Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, Manila

**With:** Ms. Marties Vitug, Editor at Large of Rappler

**Ms. Ces Orena Drillon**, renowned Filipino broadcast journalist

**Ms. Angela Casauay**, journalist on politics and the peace process for Rappler



*Roundtable on the role of media in conflict resolution with renowned Filipino journalists*



*Ms. Marites Vitug, Angela Casauay, DPI Head of Programmes and Research  
Eleanor Johnson and Ms. Ces Drillon*

**Eleanor Johnson:**

Welcome to our guests and thank you so much for being here. I apologise that today we are a smaller group than expected but thank you so much for Ces, Angela and Marites for coming to share your experiences. Firstly, if you could introduce yourselves and then I'm sure there will be many questions to follow.

**Ces Drillon:**

We are delighted to welcome you to Manila. I am Ces and I have been a journalist for 30 years now as well as a TV presenter and a reporter for ABS-CBN, the largest station in the Philippines. We are also seen in North America and the Middle East in countries such as Saudi Arabia, where there is a high concentration of Filipino overseas workers. I have been covering the peace talks since I began

and way back in 2008 I was kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf, and after nine days I was set free. Me, my camera man, assistant camera man and a guide who was an academic studying the rebel group were held hostage. Because of that experience I feel I have an extra responsibility to follow the story of Mindanao.

**Angela Casauay:**

I am a journalist from Rappler, the first purely online news source in the Philippines, and I have been following peace process with MILF for three years. I follow all the little agreements and the deadlocks in the peace talks. I am relatively young and new to the game, although I have really been on the ground and been interacting closely with different actors in the current negotiations in the peace process.

**Marites Vitug:**

I have been a journalist for more than 30 years now and I co-wrote a book called *Under the Crescent Moon* on the rebellion in Mindanao which came out in late 1990s. Presently, I am Editor at Large of Rappler giving occasional analytical pieces so I look at the process from a distance unlike Angela. Previously I edited a magazine and wrote for newspapers, and in between I wrote books.

**Participant:**

Why did you choose to write a book about this region?

**Marites Vitug:**

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I wanted to understand Mindanao. It is so different from where I come from which is another island called Luzon. I am Catholic and I wanted to understand why there is a conflict. I travelled there when I became a reporter and became more interested. The book is mainly about the poverty experienced there. They are not driven by ideology and religion but by economics. They were neglected for many years by the central government. It was only later that they got money for schools and roads but more needs to happen to help their situation.

**Participant:**

Apart from the economics what other problems did they face? Did they have a different language, for example?

**Marites Vitug:**

We only had one group at first in the region, the MNLF, but then they split and they had differences in leadership amongst other issues. So the MILF is composed of members from certain provinces like central Mindanao, and the MNLF is now mostly concentrated in Sulu. They have different tribes and this is a difficulty.

**Participant:**

We want to know if the press is free here because there is a problem with the government in our country and the press are repressed. Do you feel like this?

**Ces Drillon:**

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No, there is too much freedom here! We are known to have the freest press in Asia but the irony is many journalists die here and we are ranked second next to Iraq on that scale but at the same time we see freedom of the press.

**Participant:**

How does that happen?

**Ces Drillon:**

Most of the deaths are in the provinces, outside the capital and most of them are community or local journalists. The people in power take matters into their own hands. The politicians and police kill the journalists who are against them. There is a problem, but the problem remains outside the capital. The problem is that some journalists sell their programmes and they market them so that means they are on someone's payroll. This creates the problem that they can be bought and there is a certain bias in the media regarding local politics. But in the coverage of the peace process it is really very free and democratic.

**Participant:**

Can you criticise the government easily? What happens if you do?

**Marites Vitug:**

Yes, nothing happens. No one is penalised and no one loses their jobs. No journalists are in jail. It used to happen in the 1970s when we were under martial law but no more. In fact just 3 months ago there was an incident where 44 special police were killed and this created a standstill in the peace process. There were so many

outcries against the government for even trying to make peace with the MILF - some say it was over sensationalised at the expense of the peace process by the press but there were definite criticisms of the government seen then and nothing happened.

**Participant:**

What about the sources of media - are they owned by the state?

**Ces Drillon:**

There are still government radio stations, but the private ones are much stronger and these companies, they have other businesses.

**Angela Casauay:**

There are broadsheets owned by politicians, and locally they own certain broadsheets and radio stations but it is not a huge amount.

**Participant:**

Nothing happens to their businesses if they speak out about the government?

**Marites Vitug:**

In the former administration of Gloria Arroyo the businesses would suffer but not anymore. Among the privately owned media groups there are some who are careful not to be too critical and others are very critical there is a range and they are not all critical.

**Participant:**

Nothing happens to any of the papers that are the balanced ones? Are these more favoured by the government?

**Ces Drillon:**

Some of our news centres are very critical of the President. Two of them have been criticised publically by the President in speeches. He insulted them but they are still in existence.

**Participant:**

Can you talk about the Mindanao separation? Can the media agree that the rebels should separate and do some journalists support the secessionist policies?

**Angela Casauay:**

It is not banned but personally I do not think there are any people supporting secession in the mainstream media. I cannot speak for every journalist but I believe this to be the case. As of this moment my answer is no but maybe back in the 70s there were people who were agreeing. Now the situation is nearly over so I do not think anyone openly supports independence of the region.

**Participant:**

Are the journalists from Mindanao expressing these sentiments?

**Angela Casauay:**

There are sympathisers who understand the historical context and the reason why they would want independence but they do not actually support the movement; at least not at this moment in time.

**Participant:**

Do the Muslims have their own media outlets?

**Angela Casauay:**

The MILF have a website and lots of journalists that cover the process use that website in order to check what is happening. Also there is a particular radio station which is used by them regularly but I do not think the MILF own it.

**Participant:**

Is there pressure on the MILF to put certain things on their website?

**Marites Vitug:**

No, they are free to post what they like.

**Participant:**

Can you describe the Muslim community here? Are they thought of second class citizens and is there a prejudice in the media?

**Participant:**

I would like to know more about your kidnapping.

**Ces Drillon:**

I was there to interview the new head of Abu Sayyaf after the previous head was killed. I was told he was a former MNLF commander and that now they would be more direct than under the previous leadership. The Abu Sayyaf was formed from young idealistic Muslims, some of whom fought in the Afghan war and they were tired of the MNLF because they were granted autonomy, but the MNLF were not delivering on what they promised. This meeting was a trap and I was kidnapped. Three quarters of a million dollars was paid in order to set me free. They did not harm me

physically but there were threats and they made me believe I would be beheaded.

**Participant:**

Are many journalists kidnapped?

**Ces Drillon:**

There were two other film makers who were making a documentary there was a time when several foreign tourists were snatched from Malaysia.

**Participant:**

What about the image of fighters? Are they seen as freedom fighters?

**Ces Drillon:**

They have no ideology - they just wanted money - though I never met the leader the Abu Sayyaf and they are just bandits. But the MILF, I respect them. I covered the MILF and it was very different from the MNLF because they are much more organised than the MNLF. Before it was very much one figure, Nur Misuari, who represented the entire group but the MILF split from the MNLF. If you look at areas with high incidences of poverty, there is where the Muslims are concentrated. It is the root cause of what they are fighting for. If you look back in history when we were colonised by Spain, they never were colonised and that is why they say there is continued injustice felt by the Muslims.

**Participant:**

Do they trust your objectivity if they do not have their own media? Were they always able to get coverage?

**Marites Vitug:**

In the 1980s I visited them in the camps and published them in the national newspapers. They have always got coverage but it is mostly the fighting and the war which was going on that got coverage or the sensational moments such as the fire in Sulu.

**Participant:**

Were the MILF able to express themselves in the national press?

**Marites Vitug:**

After martial law in 1986 when we recovered our democracy the press became free and you could interview the MILF.

**Participant:**

How often did you interview them and how often were they in the press expressing themselves?

**Marites Vitug:**

It is all about the events of the peace process and if it is moving forward they are in the news, if there are attacks they are in the news.

**Angela Casauay:**

Reporters do organise trips to their headquarters and they have a spokesperson. The news speaks to Chairman Iqbal, the chief

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negotiator. You call him if you want to know about the peace table. There is discussion at the moment is in Congress which means you can also speak to the political directors of MILF. They are always available by text or phone if you already have an established connection with them.

**Participant:**

I would like to know about social media, what is the role of the social media in the process? Also, does the government inform the press regularly about the goings on of the peace process?

**Angela Casauay:**

Here in the Philippines there is OPAPP who have their own in house communications team giving regular updates on the process. OPAPP is very active on social media. The negotiations are high level and intellectual so the problem before was that people did not understand the process. But in January the Mamasapano Clash sparked such public outrage across the country and in an ironic way made people aware of the process. So right now the awareness is high but the kind of awareness is the problem, it is not positive awareness.

Most of the talks are behind closed doors and we are given general updates, but we need more. I covered the talks in Kuala Lumpur between GPH and MILF. When they spoke I would tweet, if they walked out I would tweet, if they argued I would tweet. It is about live updates. In addition, in a certain way the media helps the negotiations, because before there really was not enough awareness even in the advanced stages. In Kuala Lumpur, for example, there

was a discussion about how to appropriate resources and I was the only one there! There was a deadlock in the talks for months but what the media does is try to get the side of the MILF and the media would actively seek out their position in order to help the process progress. We can just go to Mindanao or call them.

**Participant:**

Do the media affect the government?

**Marites Vitug:**

Yes, definitely. It can affect the process in a negative way as there is a bias against the Muslims. Some columnists and commentators are prejudiced and some are fairer. The prejudiced ones belong to the big radio stations usually and also there are national politicians who are anti-Muslim so when these senators speak they are quoted online.

**Angela Casauay:**

As for social media it is not just personal accounts. We also produce an infographics as an explainer because no one will read a technical ten page document. We produce these and, although they are designed for the youth, everyone can appreciate it and this is how we use social media to engage people. Rapplars' official account has 920,000 followers and can retweet us as journalists to reach a wider audience.

**Marites Vitug:**

We have quite low internet penetration rate of internet at only 30 per cent of the country currently has it but the smart phone is growing and hopefully the growth will be fast.

**Participant:**

What about the leftist movement we have heard about?

**Marites Vitug:**

Yes, we have an underground communist party but they are much weaker.

**Participant:**

I want to ask about the conflict that we discussed with OPAPP yesterday. Where was it concentrated and who died?

**Marites Vitug:**

Yes, the war was always in Mindanao and it is very difficult to distinguish how many were military and how many were civilians amongst the casualties. There are estimates on the website of OPAPP which say that 50 per cent were MNLF, 30 per cent were AFP and 20 per cent were civilians.

**Participant:**

Do you think the peace process will succeed and if so, why?

**Angela Casauay:**

The situation is that the law is now in Congress and the issue is not whether Congress will pass the BBL but the kind of law will

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be passed. They are making changes to the BBL currently. Let's say they pass a law that is acceptable for the MILF, there is still a very limited time for the transition period. It must be over by 2016 when there will be an election and under the law the regional elections must be synchronised thus they have just over one year left. They are trying to create a completely new government which is a difficult task, so right now it is a very pressing issue.

**Participant:**

How many Mindanao representatives are there in the current government? In the past have MILF stood for election?

**Angela Casauay:**

About 70 out of 204 representatives are from Mindanao and there are maybe around 10 or 15 Muslims. There is not a lot of them and they do not represent MILF. They may be sympathetic to their cause but they are not members. If the law is passed then they will be elected. Former MNLF members may be in the Congress but there is currently only one. The two groups are very different, however, and they cannot claim they represent MILF.

**Participant:**

Why are there not more representatives if so many people support them?

**Angela Casauay:**

Right now they still identify as a revolutionary movement but if the law is passed they will choose to go into government. In fact, they have already created a political party.

**Participant:**

Will public opinion concerning ISIS change the process?

**Angela Casauay:**

MILF have expressly said they do not condone terrorism.

**Participant:**

Why has the process taken so long?

**Angela Casauay:**

The MNLF and the government signed a peace agreement in 1996 and were supposed to pass a law in 2001 but the MNLF claimed they watered the bill down because of amendments in Congress so they did not accept it. The leadership was also very corrupt it was not only the fault of Congress. Now the MILF is looking for a more powerful autonomous government but there will be a transition government before the parliament is established and if they only have one year what will they prove?

**Participant:**

Are you hopeful?

**Angela Casauay:**

I am, but I think it will get difficult before it gets better. The idea is to create the new government by 2016 due to the law of election synchronisation. It is not set, and you can extend it, but the political atmosphere is not in favour of postponing the elections.

**Eleanor Johnson:**

If there are no further questions I would like to thank you all so much for answering the many questions we have had today so thoroughly and taking time out of your busy day to be here.

*End of Session*



*Roundtable meeting with participants representatives from the media including Ces Orena Drilon, renowned ABS-CNN broadcaster, Marites Vitug, Editor at Large for Rappler and Angela Casauay, Rappler*

## **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June - Dinner Reception hosted by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process**

**Venue:** Aracama Restaurant, Bonafacio Global City

**With:** **Hon. Luisito Montalbo**, Undersecretary of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP)

**Hon. Yasmin Busran-Lao**, Undersecretary of the Government Peace Negotiating Panels (GPNP) in talks with the MILF

**Mr. Wendell P. Orbeso**, Peace Programme Officer at OPAPP

**Atty. Anna Tarhata s. Basman**, Legal Counsel for the GPNP-MILF negotiating panel



*Hon. Yasmin Busran-Lao addresses the delegation about her experiences of the conflict in Mindanao*



*Undersecretary of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process Luisito Montalbo welcomes the delegation to the dinner reception at Aracama Restaurant*

**Luisito Montalbo:**

Hello everyone and thank you so much for joining us for dinner this evening. I would also like to convey a message from Secretary Deles who welcomes you all to Manila and is saddened that she cannot meet with you on this trip as her duties have taken her out of the country. We are fortunate because on this table we have a lot of different people with different experiences: Yasmin Lao who has worked on the peace process and has been a champion for human rights for many years, Anna who I believe you met yesterday and is part of the legal team that supports the negotiating panel and also Wendell Orbeso who heads the team that provides security to the ceasefire agreement.

Our office has been open now for 20 years and I believe we are the only office that wants to close sooner rather than later. That is because when we close it means our job has been completed. I hope you all enjoy the dinner and feel free to ask questions about our experiences with the peace process.

**Participant:**

What suffering have you had to go through during this process?  
What was life really like in Mindanao?

**Yasmin Lao:**

I was just saying to our guests over dinner that the Bangsamoro problem has a long history of anti-colonialism. I come from a conflict affected area and as a young girl my family and I had to run away because of armed groups burning our schools. During that time martial law was declared and the conflict was exacerbated by religion. New conflicts emerged as there were vigilante armed groups from the Christian and Muslim sides. The conflict is not a religious one but religion was used by politicians to advance their cause. However, discrimination and violence have always existed between the majority, the Christians, and the minority groups which were mostly Muslims but also tribal groups. There was one main tribe, the Moros, in my community and there were others but we were always peaceful. When I was young and we had Ramadan my friends would fast with us and when it was Christmas I would join them and it was no problem. But when martial law was introduced under Marcos religion became a tool of oppression. There was so much tension and a lot of killing. Before the conflict we were not in economic hardship in the region but during the conflict barter trade was stopped which

was the way our economic system worked. Poverty came and a lack of education came with it.

My father was an educated man and was appointed First Minister for Justice and we had to come to Manila to continue our education. When I came to Manila as a young girl, I was 12, it was the first time I experienced discrimination. We were the only Muslims in the neighbourhood and in school. That is when I found out that the majority, Christians, who had never met us had preconceived ideas planted by the parents about Muslims and Moros. For example, one story was that we beheaded people and that we had tails! We saw that they had other ways of doing things. They ate pork, for example, but they were no different. I guess the Muslims have the same bias against the indigenous people because they are less educated and have darker skin because of the history of slavery there was a bias. As a child the discrimination was very traumatic and people would sit far from me on the bus. I knew I was a decent person so it was difficult for me. I had to ask people about their attitude and why they were against me. I had to really understand their prejudice in order to make friends. They would say 'when we were young our parents tried to scare us by saying: if you don't go to bed we will give you to the Moros'. And this is where the prejudice came from. We wanted to go home but our parents said there was no home because the conflict had destroyed it. We met other Muslims who had fled and they found it difficult to find housing and schools. Even when you wanted to ride a taxi and you were wearing a headscarf they would not stop for you. It was very difficult to find our place. Even the teachers thought I should not be in the classroom and this discrimination lasted through college. Out of that experience I have

devoted my life to peace building. The question is, if that happened to our family how bad would it be for the less fortunate? My dad was a high ranking government official and I went to private school so really I had an easy life compared to many others.

I joined the women's peace group because I thought it was important to start with the women. Christian women, Muslim women, indigenous women were talking together about fighting the conflict. So after that we went home despite the conflict and we started to talk to society groups. We are nine in the family and we all went home together. The tension was still there and the insecurity. When we saw a soldier at the checkpoint they would do whatever they wanted. Sometimes they were drunk and they would point their guns and if you were lucky you would stay alive but some were not so lucky.

Then we heard about the rebel groups which formed when I was young after there was a massacre of Moro military recruits. The activism among Moros started in 1968 and most of the Moro leaders were from the university. So when I was young I heard some of the discussion and I heard movements and now I realized that those were the people going to the mountains to train. Then I found out that the government started peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Tripoli with the help of Gadhafi. The analysts say that President Marcos went to Libya because the Moro leader resides there and they talked without a mass consultation. The agreement was just between two leaders and this formed part of the dictatorship that happened at that time. The Tripoli agreement was not well known and of course it did not succeed.

The mother of the current President Corazon Aquino formed the revolutionary government and started the more democratic peace talks by going down to Mindanao and talking with the groups. Then after her, President Ramos continued the process and we had the 1996 final peace agreement but one group rejected it and that group was the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who broke away. And so the break away group moved forward due to the original organization being corrupt. Formal peace talks began with the MILF in 1997.

So as you can see every government has had a different peace strategy and the next President's strategy (President Estrada) was 'all out war' and to kill all the rebels. If he killed them all he thought that the struggle would end. The peace talks that had started with Ramos and the MILF were destroyed by the Estrada war period. There were so many refugees in the camps as people ran from the conflict and my community became a big camp and all the schools became occupied by displaced people. That is when I saw the real dehumanising experience of armed conflict.

Staying in a very small room with other men, your dignity as a woman was compromised and so that is the impact of armed conflict. It varies - the experience of women is different than the experience of men. For example if there is no lavatory it is much more difficult and humiliating for women. I have seen cases where people have died and their children have had to be taken in by strangers. There are cases where women were raped at such a young age and had to marry because they were pregnant, which is a catastrophe for infant and mother death. Even the humanitarian

groups were not well organized, they were also a problem. Not all of them had a good understanding of the situation and the help was not given to the right people.

**Participant:**

Today we heard about poverty and its huge effect on the conflict. Can you explain about this? And are there people that profit from the war and want to continue it?

**Yasmin Lao:**

There are people who profit from war such as the arm sellers and even the grocery stores that are funding the communities.

**Participant:**

What was the turning point in the negotiations?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

I did not realise there was a war in Bangsamoro and it was people like me in Manila who were making decisions for a context they did not understand so my decisions would be very wrong. Because the discrimination was so widespread people had little sympathy to find a solution.

Why is it working now? Because the President wants change. The break through came when the President met with the chairman of the MILF who saw the sincerity of the President which helped to push forward the process. The challenges of the last five years were plentiful but because the trust was so strong they were able to withstand the challenges. It was really a matter of showing this

sincerity that was very crucial.

**Yasmin Lao:**

I think it is very important that the people around the process come from civil society. In the past when the peace negotiations were going on military fights would breakout and no one would understand. This miscommunication harmed the process so people must be informed. Another important step, without which we would not be where we are now, is the introduction of third party mediators. There are points where the two parties do not trust one another and a third party must come in to bridge the gap between the differences.

**Luisito Montalbo:**

What it really takes is strong leadership around the President to move the process forward. We are here today as we have learned from the failed signed agreements of the past. Now instead of the agreement not being clear there is a clear decommissioning process with MILF. Also, the BBL was forged almost completely by the Bangsamoro people so there is a stronger sense of ownership amongst the Moros.

The bigger challenge confronting us is how to build a national consensus because at the moment there is only a small group of supporters. That challenge will continue even if we are able to establish the Bangsamoro region. Part of the challenge of gaining the consensus is getting people to realise that the law is within the constitution. Sometimes it is not a question of law but it is coming from discrimination. While it is not a religious conflict it

is clear that the divide is between Muslims and Christians. So how do you gather a national consensus of the Christian majority to be supportive of a Muslim minority law? Education of the young and media play a very strong role.

**Yasmin Lao:**

To make peace an important political platform must have politicians that believe in the peace.

**Participant:**

How were the preparations for the basic law? What did you do behind the scenes?

**Anna Basman:**

The substance of the BBL mostly came from the peace agreements and from the annex on power sharing. In the negotiations the parties also agreed to form another body, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC), which is composed of 15 members who are residents of the different provinces of the Bangsamoro.

**Luisito Montalbo:**

We have two houses of parliament and both are deliberating on the BBL. In the lower house it is already at the plenary level and in the upper house it is still in the committees. When Congress resumes the session in July we hope it will be passed in one or two months.

**Participant:**

Will there be amendments made to the BBL?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

Yes, amendments can happen at every level. The contentious one at the moment is the ‘opt in’ provision because that is a level of continued expansion that is a major issue for both parties. This provision would allow other areas the opportunity to opt into the Bangsamoro region and this would take considerable power from the central government.

**Participant:**

The symbolic decommissioning process obviously happened last week. Can I ask, did you ask the MILF to disarm before talks with the government?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

One party cannot feel they have won over the other. The ceasefire architecture was part of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and it was clear the agreement would lead to a political settlement. The MILF would not decommission fully without a political settlement.

**Participant:**

You were talking about strong leadership, what would you do in the absence of this?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

In other countries I think you can rely on institutions but this was not possible here. The institutions are not strong enough so we are very much driven by the policies of our national leaders. That is why if we make a mistake in the next election it could destroy the

process. We are trying to do everything we can while the President is still the President and put as many strong institutions in place as possible.

**Participant:**

Do third parties help and was it difficult to accept that foreign parties would intervene with internal domestic politics?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

Of course they help but if we are not able to do it ourselves it will not be sustainable. The third parties are not interfering. We invited them to participate and they cannot join without an invitation which must be agreed by both parties. There are clear parameters on what they can and cannot do and at the end of the day it is the decision of both parties. The main role that the monitors play is when there is a break down and someone needs to bridge the differences.

**Participant:**

What is your expectation for the law? Will there be obstacles and will there be amendments? Also would it be compatible with sharia law?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

The President remains to be very popular and even if he leaves we believe the President has enough political capital to pass the law before this time.

**Anna Basman:**

In our constitution we do not have absolute secularism. We do have clauses that ensure that there is no support for only one religion but every citizen is free to exercise their own religion. Those constitutional provisions have been translated into the law. For sharia law, even without the BBL we already have sharia law in the Philippine legal setting. Sharia will be put in place in the Bangsamoro should it be passed. But it is allowable in our constitution and should there be any question about constitutionality it goes to the Supreme Court.

**Participant:**

How did you handle the attack of January as the government?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

It really brought to the surface the social and political divides in our country and some time had to pass before we could continue in order for emotions to settle. We had to stage many fact finding missions and enquiries to have a better understanding and now we are in a better place and can move forward.

**Yasmin Lao:**

I think it strengthened the relationship between the peace panels because both of them were attacked.

**Wendell Orbeso:**

I look after the security and military side of the peace process including the ceasefire and security mechanism composed of the government armed forces (AFP) and the MILF forces. I was at the base where the attack happened with members of the Third Party

Monitoring Team (TPMT) just before.. We had moved to another MILF camp and no one expected it to happen because the military and police forces were not aware of the operation. Because of this incident our time line has been affected and the decommissioning that should have happened in March only happened a few days ago. When that happened all the security personnel of the AFP and the MILF were on the same side and it strengthened the relationship of the security forces on the ground. There are different versions of events but the security forces of the two groups are united.

**Participant:**

How are you raising awareness and broadening bases of the peace process?

**Luisito Montalbo:**

For the media it is about getting a face of the Bangsamoro. We need to show unity and get away from an 'us versus them' scenario. We are working with the Department of Education to teach Bangsamoro history in elementary schools but we do understand that it is a generational problem

*End of Session*



*Dinner hosted by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process attended by Under Secretary Luisito Montalbo, Undersecretary of the Government Peace Negotiating Panels Hon, Yasmin Busran-Lao and Peace Programme Officer at OPAPP Mr Wendell Orbeso*

## **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting with the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines**

**Venue:** Headquarters of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Camp Sioncco Awang

**With: Major General Edmundo Pangilinan**, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Commander  
**General Catapang**, Chief of Staff to BGen Pangilinan

**Brigadier General Carlito G Galvez**, Chair of the Government of the Philippines Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (GPH-CCCH)

**Brigadier General Manolito Orense**, Chair of the GPH Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) and member of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID

**Colonel Dickson Hermoso**, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Division Inspector General

**Captain Jo-ann Petinglay**, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Public Affairs Officer



*Arrival at Cotabato City Airport*



*Arrival at Camp Siongco, headquarters of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry  
Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines*

**Gen. Catapang:**

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning on behalf of the Major General of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (6<sup>th</sup> ID). I would like to welcome you to Camp Siongco, the headquarters of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID. We are delighted we could greet you this rainy morning to share our experience of lasting peace in our country. We have two briefings, the first by Colonel Hermoso to give a talk on the current efforts of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID and secondly the chair of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) will speak about the ceasefire arrangements. First, I will pass over to the Director of DPI to say a few words.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you so much for a very warm welcome. I would particularly like to thank the Major General and all his colleagues. Before I

introduce our delegation I would like to congratulate you in particular on how you have advanced in peace. You have helped the political establishment to take the peace process from a very difficult point to where you are today. I would also like to congratulate you on bringing two parties together today and this is why the Turkish and Kurdish delegation have been so keen to come here and why we have worked so hard to get here with our friends from partner organisations such as Ali Saleem.

We are aware of the violence and the conflict that has taken place here. We are here to learn from your mistakes and from your successes. In our country we have a similar conflict that has taken the lives of people and has affected our everyday existence, our futures and the economy. We are going in the right direction and our government has taken our conflict from a very difficult point to where we are today and our delegation here is representing all our society.

Let me introduce us briefly. The delegation consists of members of the three main parties of the government including the governing party and the opposition parties. Among us are very distinguished members of the media, academia and civil society. I have no doubt that there are important lessons to learn during the course of this Comparative Study Visit and we look forward to your briefings. Thank you very much once more for your warm welcome and hospitality here.

*The delegation was shown an audio visual presentation produced by the 6<sup>th</sup> ID about the importance of striving for a lasting peace in the country. It included information about the 6<sup>th</sup> ID's history and formation. For example, their logo, the sword, represents the division in society and shows the strong force of the division the 6<sup>th</sup> ID. The presentation also explained the role of the division in supporting the process and defeating Islamic Freedom Fighters and other "terrorist groups". It explained the 6<sup>th</sup> ID's multi sector approach to good governance which is the ultimate goal and also explained how it continues to serve the people in Mindanao and promotes guardianship of the people and democracy for the region.*

**Col. Hermoso:**

To the head of the delegation of DPI, Kerim Yildiz, and my friend and the representative for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue Ali Saleem and the new addition to his team Mary-Louise Castillo I would like to say thank you for joining us. On behalf of our General and all of us here good morning. It is an honour to share with you our work towards peace in the region. We have been told you have had a meeting with OPAPP and so my briefing will be on the negotiations and how we support the transition from military to peace building.

There has been a paradigm shift here in the 6<sup>th</sup> ID to winning the peace from winning the war. The background of the problem is a result of colonisation. We were colonised for 300 years by the Spaniards and then by the Americans for a further 50 years. I would like to bring your attention to 1968 which saw the foundation of the Moro Islamic Movement which was a precursor to the Moro

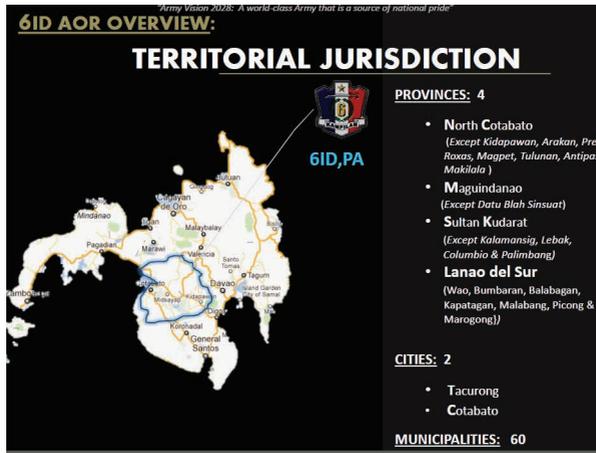
National Liberation Front (MNLF) which then split to Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1977.

We learned a lot during the martial law era and in 1986 over 20 years of martial law ended by the famous non-violent rebellion which was the turning point of the conflict. We came out with a new constitution in 1987 which saw the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

The traditional military approach is an eye for an eye and the cost of war shows this. In the war between the MNLF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) from 1970-1996 there were more than 100,000 casualties and in the MILF-AFP period of 'all out war' many people were displaced. The armed violence on the ground has significantly decreased and this has been contributed to by all sectors. The MNLF tried to get autonomy instead of working together with the AFP but now there is a lot more confidence and no displacement.

To understand the environment of where we are now, the area which we govern is central Mindanao which is comprised of four separate regions, two cities and 60 municipalities. We also do security operations to protect the facilities to create an ideal ambience for investment in the region.

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The MILF, who you will meet later, has a central committee which provides direction to its armed groups. Most of the members of the MILF peace panel come from the central committee. The most challenging part is that the conflict area is not just about MILF but there are many other players. The main problem between the government and the MILF can be politically resolved but the components of the different warring families cannot. They use the eye for an eye approach and this is one challenge is undermining the process as well as the presence of terrorist groups in region. Typical in an MILF dominated community the firearm proliferation is rampant and the civilians are all affiliated with kinship to the different groups. Law enforcement is difficult as these groups band together against the AFP. The MILF is supporting the peace process so have not committed violent acts recently. The basis of the ceasefire agreement was the 1997 agreement on the general cessation of hostilities and out of that came the Tripoli

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4 From the presentation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – a map outlining the territory of Muslim Mindanao

agreement. The next important agreement was in 2008 when the Memorandum of Agreement Ancestral Domain (MoA AD) was deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court but now we have hope for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL)

A third party conducted a survey in the core territories that will join the Bangsamoro asking 'how well do you think the AFP is fulfilling its role as a provider of public services?' The response was all positive in most areas.

The government's security agenda brought security sector reform. There was a strategic basis as we involved stake holders in drafting this plan. The guiding principle was the permanent eradication of all armed conflicts by shifting the solution to people centric. There are no shortcuts and we make sure that we adhere to human rights and International Humanitarian Law. We also engage several sectors of civil society and we adhere to the primacy of the peace process and have a role in post-conflict reconstruction. Our practical end state is that the MILF is dissuaded from resorting to armed conflict and only engage in peace talks.

Phase one is addressing the 'Armed Threat Groups' , the second phase is normalisation and the final stage is to win peace and this is how we will do it. Our President took office in 2010 and we started our strategy the next year. For the first three years it was about addressing the armed threat groups and the second three years is normalisation. We hope the process will be finished before our President leaves office.

We create social pressure for the MILF to subscribe to the peace process, we also employ deterrence and contingency plans to help them engage in negotiations instead of fighting. Towards the other armed groups it is our plan to prevent them from establishing terrorist bases. Mindanao is bordering Indonesia and Malaysia where this is an issue. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) is a group which detaches itself from the MILF due to its misunderstanding of their aims. The BIFF is on a quest for an Islamic state. We will try to stop them and others from gaining more space and we will do this by credible deterrence, which is the threat to use force. We will also do this by engaging with civil society and media outlets to create social pressure.

We are not just reactive and we do have contingency plans and we anticipate the moves of the armed groups. To shape the operation environment we have huge information operations and we engage influential leaders such as clan leaders. We can understand their problems, advise them and they listen to us.

Are we heading towards the end state? My assessment is the MILF have realised the futility of armed confrontation and choose to go to the negotiating table. The greater majority of them are pushing for this the engagement and key leaders support the process. The Mamasapano incident on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015 saw an operation that killed 44 policemen, 18 MILF and four civilians. It showed the complexity of the GPH-MILF process and it challenged the faith of both parties.

The good side of the process was seen just recently on 16<sup>th</sup> June of this year when we had a ceremonial decommissioning of MILF members. 75 MILF arms were commissioned and 145 of their combatants.

What if the peace process fails? What if there is a premature pull of forces from this area? It would be bad for the community because there is also non traditional work that we engage in. We mobilise the community and interact with them in tandem with the local chiefs and executives. We assist the Internally Displaced Peoples and of course we want to have an orderly, honest and peaceful election. We do other non-traditional roles such as disaster reduction and environmental protection. As part of our security sector reform this will end in 2028 with the aim of having a credible army that can join with other armies in the region. Our performance is being reviewed on how we win the peace and engage with society. We are assessed every month and that in brief is how we support the peace process in this part of the country.

**BGen Galvez:**

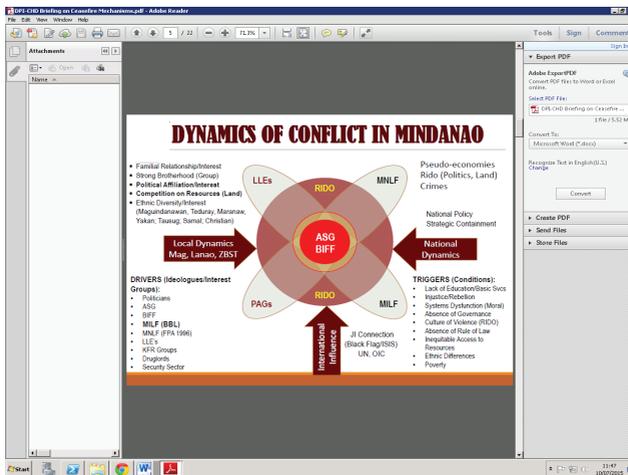
Good afternoon everyone. Firstly it is my distinct honour to be here today and I would like to thank General Edmundo Pangilinan and the Chief of Staff General Catapang for bringing us all together. It is really my distinct pride and honour to present to you as part of the DPI Comparative Study Visit to discuss the peace process with you.

Thank you so much to the Turkish people for giving us the expertise in the peace process. We have the Ambassador from Turkey as the

head of the International Decommissioning Body (IDB) who was essential in the June agreement and also Turkey is a member of the International Contact Group and the Third Party Monitoring Team.

I will talk a bit about the ceasefire mechanism. The conflict region and the most problematic area is the ARMM which consists of different groups; the MNLF, the MILF, Abu Sayyaf, the BIFF and we also have private groups and groups of organised crime. The peace process is multi ethnic we have lots of tribes. There is a feeling of discrimination in the Muslim areas. In central Mindanao we have separate traditions and practices but the problem is very pervasive.

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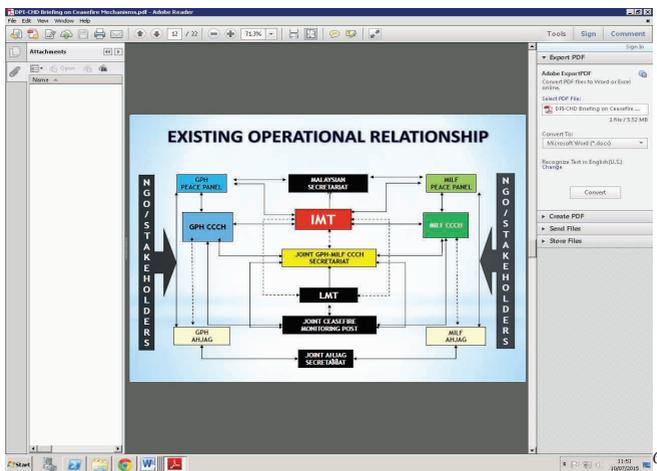


There are two distinct actors of conflict but there are six distinct armed groups with different connections. The interests and actors

5 Diagram from the 6<sup>th</sup> ID presentation outlining the groups and dynamics involved in the conflict in Mindanao

are diverse with a mixture of local politicians and armed groups. The conditions here are poor due to a poor economy and there is a culture of violence.

I will quickly outline the ceasefire architecture. The normalisation architecture as you can see has a greater role for third parties. Through the civil society organisations and the diplomatic core it is important to continue peace building in a pre-emptive context to offer education and mentorship.



6 Diagram from the 6<sup>th</sup> ID presentation outlining the normalisation architecture

In practice this mechanism usually works well. We took quick action particularly quickly in the Mamasapano incident which showed a failings of the system but reinforced the importance of a joint ceasefire team. We also engaged in post-conflict activities to renew the trust and rebuild broken relationships.

The annual trend for armed skirmished has declined and was zero in the period 2012-2014 unfortunately there was the one incident earlier this year. The ceasefire mechanism has encountered some challenges and there will be future challenges. Currently the impasse of the BBL in Congress is a challenge as it means we can feel the tensions in the region and the presence of other threat groups can disrupt the ongoing peace process. There is also the existence of conflict and clan feuds amongst Moros and between Moros and Christians. Another challenge is the diminishing support for the BBL and the upcoming local elections that can create social rupture and political division. The involvement of the diplomatic corps and developmental partners is crucial; they are the idols of the people of Mindanao. One of these members is Turkey and this is important for the implementation structure.

I will finish with a Ronald Regan quote: ‘peace is not the absence of conflict it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means’.

**General Galvez opens the floor for questions:**

**Participant:**

As I understand from the presentation you have relations with the MILF. Is there any confrontation within the military structure?

**Col. Hermoso:**

I have a degree of authority to speak on the subject as I was head of the governing committee for a while and there was difficulty getting discussions because of the high levels of distrust. This is the reality of conflict but we transformed the relationship, not over night but over a decade, to show them that the AFP and the government were sincere about peace.

**Participant:**

What was the public opinion on the matter?

**Col. Hermoso:**

The height of the conflict was in the 70s and the public was highly polarised. They formed their own armed groups when the agreement were being made, nearly 30 years after the conflict, we had to explain to the public that the peaceful way is a better approach. You need to bring the people together and into the loop to let them know what the peace process is and what the aim of having this kind of solution is.

**BGen. Orense:**

That is only in the conflict area of Mindanao but the development of trust has not reached much further in the Philippines. The country is archipelago and we have different island groups so people from the southern islands are just getting their information from the

media. They perceived the Moros as enemies. Even now the people are very sceptical of the Muslim group. This is something we may not be able to tackle. It takes someone to come to Mindanao and see for themselves and we cannot really blame them because they have a different picture of what Mindanao is all about.

**Participant:**

First of all thank you for sharing your experience. I am really surprised to hear army members and a soldier talking about peace and this is a great gift to us. My question is how was the army convinced that winning peace was better than winning war? Can you give an example of the turning point?

**BGen Pangilinan:**

You are hearing soldiers talk about peace because the people who are affected by conflict are the soldiers. They are on the front line and their families are in danger so we want to win peace rather than win a war. We are practically involved and we are all stake holders in the process. From NGOs to local governments everyone is getting involved now. In the presentation we explained that we have shifted towards winning the peace but this is involving everyone this time. Now we still do combat operations but we also do more non-traditional military operations. For example, last week we opened a mosque in an area that was affected by the peace talks. We also built schools, medical and dental services, anything that can help. We do more now rather than usual combat operations.

**Participant:**

Thank you, it was really very interesting to hear from generals on how you build the peace and this is so valuable for us. My question is about ceasefire it is a very technical issue, I know, but how have you really carried out this ceasefire? I know there are lots of written agreements but how is this really implemented?

**BGen Pangilinan:**

As previously said by the Chair of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) we cooperate on all our operations. We also coordinate with the peace agreement. If we notice violations by the other side we put a complaint to the joint committee and wait for them to evaluate and we give them feedback. Together with third party bodies we are able to maintain the relationship and this is how we conduct operations. It's simple but we teach this strict implementation and adherence to the peace agreement to our soldiers.

**BGen Galvez:**

We have strict engagement on the rules of adherence. There had to be a change of the mind set of the people including the soldiers. Trust is gained if they see the soldiers implementing the agreement dutifully. The 6<sup>th</sup> ID really implemented the rules of engagement and the ceasefire mechanism and then there is respect.

**BGen Pangilinan:**

The policy guidance of President Aquino and the guidance on the primacy of the peace process have been translated into the strategies

and into the specific actions. These have been implemented down to the lowest rank of our soldiers on the ground.

**Col. Hermoso:**

If I may add, the perception of the armed forces is that they are built to destroy but as the General said we take the mandate from the President who is the Commander-in-Chief. We follow instructions. Our soldiers are also part of the ceasefire mechanism and that's how we help to implement it. Our commanders are being helped by civil society to undergo peace building training and courses in development. It is hard for us to shift our thinking because our paradigm is to win wars but we are not fighting an external threat now we are fighting our own people. We have to shift and this is how we must transform.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you so much once more for the extremely useful and important briefings. We have learnt many lessons and I have a number of questions.

In the very beginning when you were at war with MILF did you have any back channel of communications with them in order to manage the incidents? Also during the course of war or after how did you refer to them? As terrorists, comrades, friends, brothers?

**Participant:**

Before you reached the paradigm of winning peace did you burn the forests and did you destroy the villages? How many losses have occurred and how long did it take to change the mind set?

**Participant:**

I have 2 different questions. Will the emergence of ISIS, on a social and psychological level, bring a new perception of the Muslim community? Secondly, now your government is working for peace, you were mentioning the risks of the elections. So if the new government does not want to move on with this process what are you going to do?

**Col. Hermoso:**

Let me go back to the question of back channelling. My experience shows that back channelling is much more effective than the formal talks. On the negotiation table it is just a formality of what was agreed in secret or in a form of covert diplomacy. This kind of diplomacy is much more tangible than going straight to the table. I was part of the negotiations and the results of the back challenging became the real agreements that were brought to the negotiating table.

What do we call our adversaries? By their names and not their ranks. In the MILF there are no ranks so we call them by their first name or brother.

As for the atrocities, there were villages that were victimised. I will relate this to my experience because before I became a soldier I was a native of this place. In the 70s they tried to turn it into a religious conflict but our leader did not want to succumb to this. When soldiers did not abide by the rule of law mosques were burnt. But both sides were victimised and this is an important issue to solve with the challenge for transitional justice.

What is the influence of ISIS? The present crop of leaders of MILF are moderates so they want a solution. The problem is that we do not see any other leaders being trained and the young leaders may succumb to ISIS. We hope this will not happen if the agreement is passed.

The security sector will make sure of a free fair election and we hope a new law will be passed but the political and social factors will be taken care of by other agencies.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much for your detailed explanations. We have experienced many deaths because of the conflict created in the south-eastern part of the country there are families whose relatives have been killed. How do you help the families of the combatants?

**Participant:**

Thanks very much for your hospitality. I am a former Member of Parliament and the co-spokesperson of the Kurdistan Women's Congress. We have had many discussions about the role of women whilst being here but what do the soldiers consider the role of women to be? Secondly, I would like to add that the peace process cannot be sacrificed for the election process. So do you think that you are currently at an irreversible point in negotiations and the elections will not derail it? And finally, what is the perception of the rest of the country towards the peace process? Some of the speakers said that the rest of the Philippines are not as interested as the public of Mindanao and it was mentioned that this is a challenge for the future. We know that geographically you are the

people experiencing the problems so what about those outside of Mindanao?

**Participant:**

Also, how do you ensure the coordination between the central government and the army, how do you communicate?

**BGen Pangilinan:**

I am very interested in the role of women in the peace process and in the army. One of my logistical officers, in fact, is a woman. Also my spokesperson is another lady and they could speak better about their role. This is not only about how they help us but their role in promoting peace, not only internally but projecting it to other groups and specifically to the MILF.

**Capt. Petinglay:**

Hello, I am the Chief of the Division's Public Affairs Officers. We female military members have a big role in the efforts for peace. We feel more hurt when we see women and children being killed and so we are the soft side to the military. We must bring softness in a very manly organisation. We are doing our best to making the mission of the armed forces successful. As females we are very proud to be part of the process and hope for the success to continue.

**BGen. Orense:**

I will lead on the question of the families. There is a huge sacrifice that the soldiers make as most of the year they are away from their families. They live with the community and every time a battle occurs it is unfortunate that the families are affected. We have to

exclude the families from the operational area but we are really trying to observe human rights and International Humanitarian Law with our rules of engagement

**BGen Galvez:**

One of the discussions in the negotiations about the aspects we have to consider was about education and empowering women. This country is beset by conflict and the power of females is very important. There are good characteristics held by women. I observed for a week in Sulu the Muslim household and the women cared more for their families they did all the chores, they are teachers and social workers. They also have a great impact in solving the conflict in Mindanao and they are peace makers and builders. These roles are mostly being populated by women.

Secondly, in avoiding collateral damage we have strict rules of engagement. When I was a commander we exercised precision engagement and if this is adhered to there would be no collateral damage. If you kill one “terrorist” there will be another tragedy which is that of their family.

As for back channelling, in my experience it is more effective. Bathroom diplomacy, we call it. Mindanao is a very jealous community. There are arrangements that must be kept secret until the time is appropriate for it to come out.

**BGen Pangilinan:**

Can I add more on the breakdown of families? It is very true that it is one of our problems. The reason for the trust in the army is

our strong family ties. It is said that a strong family is a successful army and we need to build on how we can strengthen the family even though the majority of us are away from our families. Even though they are on the side lines they want to push through and they inspire us. We are sacrificing ourselves because of our families and to a certain extent our country. There is a need to have a strong family who we can lean on in times of trouble.

**Participant:**

My question was that how will you ensure these families of the militants who were killed have peace? In our country there is resentment among these families towards the armed groups.

**Participant:**

Esteemed commanders I would like to ask a question regarding the sustainability of this peace process. You adopted a very positive and humanitarian attitude and thank you for enlightening us about these experiences. Although it is not directly connected with the conflict in our country we have learned lessons from all your approaches to the conflict and they are very valuable. As a country, Turkey, we are highly interested in what is happening in the Philippines not because we are Muslim but because we are human and I hope the process will continue to set an example to other countries.

I want to ask, formerly they were your enemies and now you call them by their names or you call them brother. You were once developing strategies to kill them and now you are doing human rights training. First you wanted to win war and now you want to win peace. You outline that you were mandated by the President

and you need a strong President to help with this change. It is uncertain what would have happen if the President didn't have such a will. Did you have the opportunity to force this process even without the President? I want to know if you have the power to force these changes or did you only have the mandate from the President.

**Col. Hermoso:**

Going back to the first question, in the Philippines the problem is not about the armed groups but it is about human insecurity, about ignorance, about the economy and about justice. The hatred that lingers in the hearts of our people of Mindanao, which has different ethnic groups, is about the victims of the conflict. It takes time to heal as it did with the MILF. We must build confidence and we must show sincerity both ways.

About the role of women we consider women and children as the battle field. Not only the men bare the brunt of the conflict but the women and children are stuck or need to emigrate or need to find food. In the past mostly our negotiators were women to better tackle this issue.

**BGen. Orense:**

The Philippines has a different mentality and a different way of coping with loss. Particularly our women, mothers and wives. When misfortune comes they resign to their faith they give it all to Allah. Even the Christians. They do not take revenge. On the other side, the families of the Governor and the Mayor provide financial support to the families who experience loss.

**Col. Hermoso:**

The role of the security sector is important and we must silence the gun. The military or the security sector must be involved. Regarding the election results and whether it will be an irreversible point. We must ensure a peaceful election because the outcome will last six years and this will secure the process. The effects of the process in Mindanao are seen by the rest of the country as a pain in the toe nail that has an effect on the whole body.

We follow the chain of command and we are just one link. Whatever the order is it will cascade down the law and the chain. The powers of government; the Supreme Court, the legislative and the executive branches decide the peace process. The negotiations are a part of the executive branch so it is up to them. The legislator translates this peace process into law and it has different committees that debate the law. The judiciary is important to make sure the law is in the ambit of the constitution.

**BGen. Orense:**

The army must be involved, however. No matter what and they will always be involved in policy making because without the army there will be a weak government. The army are on the front line and in negotiations.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

If I may ask you, in your view how important is the cessation of hostilities and should the agreement come first before the negotiations?

**Participant:**

What is the budget of the military for building the peace? What is the main mechanism of appropriating the money? Is the money coming from the central government and how do you control this budget?

**BGen Pangilinan:**

What should come first the cessation or negotiations? There is no such rule but in our experience the GPH and MILF we were able to push through with the peace process because there was a cessation first and there was already an agreement between both parties. Then the negotiations went though monitored by third parties such as the Malaysian government and other countries. So in our experience the peace process here saw the cessation first.

On the second question, here there is no specific mention of budget on the peace process. We work within our former budget but now we shift more to building mosques and schools and bridges. It's not coming from our own pockets though. When we build mosques we ask for assistance from the government and the local governments and they provided us with materials and we provide labour. The funding is coming from other agencies.

**BGen. Galvez:**

The cessation must come first because without the ceasefire the negotiations will be managed by force. The negotiations would be negotiated through the wrong terms but now, instead, there is a position of understanding. Between 2011 and 2015 there were no skirmishes and you have seen the development in designing the

Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) and the annexes and the formulation of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). There were so many break downs and hostilities in the early 2000s and even to 2009. There was no headway in the negotiations so there should be a ceasefire to stop unnecessary loss of life.

**Col. Hermoso:**

When we do our best to create negotiations we do it one step at a time. We have five peace tables. In the MILF talks we go for ceasefire but in our talks with the communists we do it in small steps. We have a unilateral suspension of military operations which is often emulated by the communists.

On the budget, the AFP is just a bureau of the Department of National Defence and the ceasefire mechanism is under the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP). They have a different budget. There is more budget for non-traditional roles such as peace building activities to build spaces for peace and confidence.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much. As for the AFP I want to understand their role clearly. We have learned that 120,000 people lost their lives in the conflict, who were those people can you give statistics about these people? Do you have obligatory military service? Do you have Bangsamoro soldiers in the army? And were there any coups in the army?

**Participant:**

Regarding decommissioning, you are dealing with an organisation that relies on guns. Can you talk about their psychology? Do they feel a sense of surrender when they must normalise and what is replacing this force and their arms? Can you describe the psychological landscape of the soldiers? Finally in the AFP was there a dramatic reform? Did you undergo reform to harmonise with the peace process?

**Col. Hermoso:**

The break down of casualties is that most were the combatants of the MNLF and some civilians and of course the others were soldiers. We do not have conscription, this is a voluntary army. If you want to join, regardless of religion or ethnicity, you can join. In the martial law days there was conscription of all men who were 18 years old and able bodied.

Yes, of course there were several coups. The 1986 coup d'état was peaceful when Filipinos of different origins came to Manila to support the removal of President Marcos to form a revolutionary government headed by the mother of our current President.

On the psychology of the MILF combatants, in some parts of the southern area, the Moro area the Muslim brothers prefer their guns to their wives. They can swap their wives but not their guns. They are not fascinated with the vertical conflict but with the horizontal conflict between clans and families. The lack of law enforcement means they need guns to protect themselves. It is a cultural sensitivity of the brother Moros. We do not use the

term Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) because it implies that they must lay down their arms. We do not use the word surrender, we say turn in. There should be social and economic reinsertion and reintegration to compensate for this. We must begin the mainstreaming of MILF combatants to give education to the kids and we have intervention programmes for the poorest that need help. The reciprocal action under the UN millennium goal is that they send their kids to school as school is free here and also that they make sure mothers in childbirth or post childbirth go to a clinic. In the future hopefully we will have the BBL which will include social and economic reintegration of the MILF combatants into the community.

**BGen. Galvez:**

With the decommissioning I believe the MILF and GPH peace panels are really preparing the ground for the equity of the process.

**Col. Hermoso:**

On the last question about reform, the policy agenda of the President includes not only the armed forces but all other armed groups. In the future there may be a national commission to regulate the armed groups. We have had so many experiences already in our security sector reform. We must also upgrade the army in terms of capability and not only in material. We must upgrade human resources and train our soldiers to be professional. We train them on peace keeping missions and we teach them how to become soldiers of the people. This is not only a military camp but a peoples' camp. We need a modern army that is a source of national pride to create an environment conducive to peace.

**Ali Saleem:**

Each time I come here I feel like I am being welcomed home so thank you. While we continue with the political show in Manila we see here the unsung heroes of the peace process. They are not keen to get any recognition. On having conversations with them in the early days many the people around this table and their organisations were suspicious of talking about peace but today we have real champions of peace. And on that note I would love to say thank you for allowing us to come into the camp and making this exception especially for our Turkish brothers and sisters. We know that this is a huge privilege and we would also like to thank you so much for the opportunity and the security you have granted us for travelling round Mindanao. I really hope you continue with the work.

*End of Session*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz addresses the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry division and the participants*



*Members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Commander General Edmundo Pangilinan, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Commander, General Catapang, Chief of Staff to BGen Pangilinan, Brigadier General Carlito G Galvez, Brigadier General Manolito Orense, Colonel Dickson Hermoso, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Division Inspector General*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz and Nazmi Gur discuss the role of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID with Colonel Brawner*



*Roundtable Meeting with the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Camp Siongo Awang*

## **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June - Dinner Reception and Roundtable Meeting: The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution**

**Venue:** Pagana Restaurant, Cotabato City

**With:** **Jerome S. Aba**, Suara Bangsamoro

**Datuan Magon**, United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)

**Mahdie Amella**, Mindanao Action for Peace and Development (MAPAD)

**Tusoph Lumamba**, United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)

**Duma Mascud**, Mindanao Human Rights Action Centre (MinHRAC)

**Joey Macalunas**, SHIELD

**Atty. Anwar Malang**, DILG

**Johnathon Christian Garcia**, Kanagib



*Roundtable with representatives from Civil Society Groups discussing their own personal experiences of the conflict and peace process with the participants*

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Welcome to all of our guests we are so happy that so many of you were able to join us. We are honoured to be here and we have a very distinguished group from Turkey with us. They range from members of parliament from all parties to civil society activists, lawyers, journalists and Wise Persons. Thank you to our friends from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue for arranging this meeting and all the meetings in Mindanao and Manila. Thank you guests for taking time from your evenings to share you experiences with us. We must bear in mind that it is Ramadan so if you can tell us a bit about yourselves and your organisation and then everyone can break their fast.

**Datuan Magon:**

I come from the United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) which is the biggest Muslim civil society group and forms part of the Third Party Monitoring Team.

**Mahdie Amella:**

Thank you for visiting. I am from Mindanao Action for Peace and Development which is based in Cotabato City. Our programme is about the peace dialogue and we are engaged in the post conflict areas in Mindanao. We are involved in all dialogue between the Moros and the indigenous peoples here in Mindanao and we are also involved in joint normalisation between the GPH and MILF.

**Duma Mascud:**

I am from the Mindanao Human Rights Action Centre (MinHRAC) and we are very much engaged in human right matters in the

region. We are operating in central Mindanao and our group has a civilian protection proponent.

**Jerome Aba:**

Good evening, I am from Swara Bangsamoro which means voice of the Moro people. We are working with people in the organisation and in the region as a human rights group. We are an observer of the peace process on the national democratic front. We are not political but we do not support the BBL in Congress because we do not believe it will help the Moro people. Their problem is landlessness and the big corporations taking their livelihood. We need to help the people by helping their prospects.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Can I ask a first question? We have been briefed about the BBL in Manila but we are told it will not be correctly implemented on the ground in Mindanao. What are your thoughts?

**Jerome Aba:**

We support the peace process but we said that the peace process should represent the Moro people. The Philippine government must stop their militarisation in the Moro community. Why should we sign the BBL or the normalisation process? They GPH are always present in our community and after the fiasco in Mamasapano when they said they that they were targeting a terrorist group how can we trust them? How can we believe them when they are all against the Moro people and there have been many human rights violations? There were many documented violations on the ground such as the burning of houses and religious buildings. The BBL

does not reflect the genuine solution of the Moro problem. We have to support the basic law that was drafted by Bangsamoro Transition Commission. After they submitted this law to the office of the president they made amendments straight away. After a week they already agreed on the new version which does not answer the problems of the people here. Many of the Moros here in the Philippines are farmers and it is important that we push genuine land reform in this bill.

**Datuan Magon:**

There are many ways to look at this in the context of the MILF. Is it a sovereignty fight? Some say it is ideology based or religion based. We support the current BBL legislation in my organisation. We had a project with Conciliation Resources and we conducted consultation asking youths about their perspective on the BBL. My organisation contacted 40 different groups and we included these suggestions into the BBL when we were consulted. With the BTC We helped to draft the law so we think ours is a legitimate assertion that the BBL is for the Bangsamoro people.

**Participant:**

What is the real participation of the people from the society? How has society really supported the process and what mechanisms are there for not only NGOs but grass roots people?

**Atty. Anwar Malang:**

The people need to use their power and they were part of the counsel that drafted the BBL. Basically everybody is supportive of the BBL but the problem is that it has stalled in the Congress and

it was a question of whether it would push through. Last week the MILF laid down arms and said they would not declare war despite the BBL stalling. It was really the civil society organisations (CSOs) and the NGOs who tried to conduct consultations to show how important it was that the BBL included everyone and everyone could have their say.

**Datuan Magon:**

Specifically we are doing community information dissemination and on the ground there are radio programmes giving people updates on the status of the peace process. However, because we are in the third world the radio stations must be funded by INGOs. The community cannot grasp the concepts so we need to bring the truth of the process to the people on the ground. At the moment it is very political and too difficult for ordinary people to understand.

**Participant:**

My question has to do with the concept of peace for the ordinary people living in the Bangsamoro. What does peace mean for them? Is it the organisations or do you always need the strength of the NGOs to push through the needs of the people? What is the role of the NGOs independently from the MILF?

**Duma Mascud:**

We have to convince the people that the peace process is the right solution. The war in Mindanao began in late 60s and it covered almost all parts of Mindanao. After the brutal conflicts and the losses we were convinced the solution must be a peaceful solution. We support the people to make sure their rights are protected. They

are not protected from any attacks in war. They have been attacked by planes, tanks and we try to convince the civilians to come to the table with a peaceful solution. We are very much involved in distributing goods and foods and as a matter of fact and this week we are distributing goods to internally displaced peoples.

I would like to talk about how the communities define peace. Some say that peace is the absence of war. It is not only the absence of war but the absence of oppression. We were oppressed by the Americans, by Japan and by the Philippines but we hope that through the negotiations we can have peace, free from oppression. During my work the Philippines government declared martial law and we were victimised. Our families were killed by the massacres perpetrated by the Marcos government. Our communities were burnt to the ground and people inside the mosques were massacred. Most of my relatives were involved or even died during the massacres. After more than 40 years of the government we must have peace. We are supporting any kind of peace. We do not know if this BBL will be passed by the Congress. Most of the people are expecting that it will. The MILF have already tuned over their arms and their men have decommissioned. That symbolises the sincerity of the MILF and we are waiting for the government to show theirs.

**Jerome Aba:**

I would like to clarify that we believe that the participants in the process are well educated but when we go outside the Bangsamoro area they do not understand our struggle. Since it is a people's struggle there are good links with the MILF and civil society organisations. There is a common desire to address the common

grievances of the government. We can sustain the peace if the current leader of the MILF does not compromise on the grievances of our people. If they do then other groups will not follow them.

The MILF say the BBL is the only way we will see peace but on the other hand they say they will not accept a watered down BBL. The series of consultations constructed the bill but now it is in Congress to become a law.

**Datun Magon:**

As long as the BBL is representative of our needs we will support the MILF because they are the only organisation that has the mandate to represent the grievances of the Bangsamoro people.

**Participant:**

It is clear that the groups here are composed of human rights experts but are there any people among the supporters of this cause that are in the prison? Any journalists that are being tried?

**Duma Mascud:**

We are not only informed but we are very much involved as a civil society. We support the cause of self determination though peaceful means. We are one on that subject. As for the violation of human rights in the 70s, there were so many violations and there were so many 1000s of people being massacred. Every afternoon when the soldiers were drunk and they would just pick up women or children to satisfy them. The people were being raped by soldiers. Civilian houses were being looted but under Aquino these things have subsided. That is the good thing and that is why we have very

much been involved in the campaign for peace. There has been a huge injustice on the part of the Bangsamoro people. That is why we are involved. So many Bangsamoro people are being detained we have documented some but not all. There are some in the prison of Central Mindanao. There are many people being suspected. If he is a Muslim then he is victimised, he is seen as a terrorist already. This kind of thing has been happening on the ground.

**Participant:**

The actors of the peace process said they will deal with these issues with the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission. Will this be useful to you?

**Participant:**

My question is about the past conflict, since the agreements there has a state of non-conflict so how are we educating the new generation about the process?

**Participant:**

My question is to Jerome, as far as I understood the law which has been stalled in Congress was amended 110 times is this correct? What kinds of amendments have been created?

**Jerome Aba:**

Yes, the BBL in the Congress is now being changed and the updated version of the BBL that was agreed by the MILF and GPH has become 'House Bill 5811' which must be approved by the Congress but it is not the same as the BBL that first went there.

### **Datuan Magon:**

Before I start I would like to say we have had many colleagues sued and arrested. With regards to healing the wounds of the past, in the peace process there are provisions for transitional justice and a committee which is headed by a member of MILF and GPH. They can only recommend however and they cannot act. These can only be put to effect when the Bangsamoro government is established.

Regarding the new generation in terms of peace, we are all agreed that negotiations and political settlements is the only way to solve the Bangsamoro question. At this point in time we are capitalising the youths. We have to manage them and their frustrations. If their emotions take over we do not want them to become radicalised or turn to ISIS. We have to look at all possible options and we must be patient. As a Muslim we are advised to put our trust in Allah but he will not solve our problems. What we achieve depends on how we are working and how hard we fight - that is when Allah's service will come to us. We are only doing our tasks as a Muslim and right now our task is negotiations. Our task is not killing, it is not terrorism, not radicalising but going through the peaceful means by supporting the passage of the BBL.

### **Participant:**

I would like to continue on the BBL. There are the preparation stages of the BBL, it is discussed inside the sub-committees and it was given its final shape in Congress. From your perspective though, how did the process happen practically? As a civil society actor, how did you manage to contribute?

**Datuan Magon:**

We know it is a legal document and that is why we cannot act at the moment. What is happening now is that it is still in the level of the ad hoc committee. It is premature yet to discuss the amendments because now it is the work of the legislators. We are hoping and praying that the bicameral negotiations will present a good solution on the ground. We will attend the public hearings in Manila in order to bring our ideas and perspective. In Cotabato City some of us send consultation here and others are hosting rallies in support of the BBL. We also have petitions of positions that we give to members of the Congress and we went to Manila to talk to senators to give the position of the youth. The problem is that since Manila is very far and we do not have enough resources to fly there all the time we must have networks in Manila that communicate with us. We have mobilised 1000s of people in Manila to help us but it is a challenge.

**Participant:**

The 6<sup>th</sup> ID talked about a paradigm shift. They said that they are in a new stage now and they are trying to win the peace but what is the role of the MILF and the NGOs in the army's efforts to win the peace. Do they take other organisations into consideration or do they see the MILF supporters as terrorists? Also we asked them whether the process is now at an irreversible stage, what are your thoughts? Lastly, how organised are the people inside NGOs here?

**Ali Saleem:**

According to our notes, there is no single movement in Mindanao there are multiple resistance movements which were established at

the end of the 1990s. What is your relationship with other groups? What about the relationships between themselves?

**Participant:**

After 9/11 there were strong operations in this region and you paid heavy prices. Did this kind of intervention radicalise the Islamists?

**Duma Mascud:**

Yes, there are some other organised groups like Abu Sayyaf and they are in the island provinces. Also there is the BIFF and the MNLF and this is why the government and the MILF have been repeatedly calling the people to pass the BBL. They are calling for everyone, every group, every individual that the Bangsamoro government would include, everyone that is allowed to join. If this law is passed, but not a diluted one, everyone would have the opportunity to join in the Bangsamoro region. The original struggle of the Bangsamoro is already spread out and we must be able to bring them together.

**Datuan Magon:**

With regards to your question it is the internal peace and security plan of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID that they will not fight in the ‘eye for an eye’ way anymore. They are continuously consolidating their people and their troops to understand us as NGOs. They try to work with us and we like to think we are neutral and impartial. We are moving in parallel because of the one common interest. With regards to the second question the conflict between the communist party and the government is based on ideology, the other category of conflict is “terrorism” seen in clashes with Al Qaeda or Abu Sayyaf, there is the

category of conflict which is between criminal elements of society against the government and there is also clan based conflict and family to family conflict in the indigenous regions of Mindanao. However, with the MILF it is a sovereignty based clash and that is how it is classed. So they are all different and distinct.

Now, after 9/11 everything has changed. There has been radicalisation around the globe but the leader of the MILF wrote a letter to President George Bush through the ambassador stating that they are not a terrorist group but a revolutionary organisation asserting themselves under the sovereignty based conflict. The MILF is balanced; it is not moderate but certainly not extreme. The presence of radicalism is not there. There are sympathisers but because the MILF were able to give good interpretation of Islam they can make sure this radicalisation will not happen amongst their troops.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

We would love to continue but we have to end here after a very long day. I would like to thank you for the incredibly diverse discussion you have brought in terms of the role of the civil society and the peace process.

*End of Session*



*Dinner with representatives from Civil Society, Pagana Restaurant, Cotabato City*



*The delegation was taken on a tour of the cultural centre of Cotabato celebrating Ramadan*



*The delegation sample the cultural food prepared for them by the Muslim community of Cotabato*

## **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting: The Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) and the Ceasefire Mechanism**

**Venue:** MILF Military Camp

**With:** **Sammy al Mansoor**, Chief of Staff of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF)



*Roundtable Meeting with the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces including Chief of Staff Sammy al Mansoor*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz and the Chief of Staff of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces*

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

Welcome everyone and Happy Ramadan! We are very much thankful for the Turkish government being here because since the start of the process they have been there - in the ICG and in many other bodies and right now the International Decommissioning Body (IDB) is headed by your wonderful ambassador. He is doing so well in helping the decommissioning of the AFP and our organisation MILF.

If ever there is a question from you I am very much ready to answer it and we are very thankful for you coming even in Ramadan. If you ever come into problems here in Mindanao we are always ready to help you out there.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Perhaps you already know but this group consists of members of all parties in the Turkish Parliament, as well as members of the Wise Persons Committee appointed by the president. We have members of the civil society, actors and think tank members. We are very grateful for you hosting us and we have already seen in Manila how the process is taking place and we have heard the perspective of the government side and we are in Bangsamoro particularly to learn the perspective of the MILF. One of the reasons for carrying out this comparative study is seeing how you went from war to peace. What were the successes and the challenges? Also, we want to learn about the experiences of decommissioning and drafting laws. We will have lots of questions about military structure, though we are not experts so bear with us!

**Participant:**

Before and after the peace negotiations how would you describe your own structure in your own organisation? In terms of the targets after the peace process, how did you structure it, and did your activities change?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

Actually now we are preparing in Mindanao and particularly in the Bangsamoro territory for the passage of the BBL. After the signing of the first agreement we had the general cessation of hostilities and the situation became quite peaceful. Although there was a recurrence of the fighting when there was a rupture of leadership in Manila. There was a certain effort to come back to the negotiating table later when the President was ousted in 2001 and the Malaysian facilitator was brought in which helped convince the MILF leaders to go back to the negotiating table and eventually they acceded to the request. Then after that there was a situation where fighting erupts again. The AFP bombarded us in the camp and at the time we were making prayers every night. Even then after that, the Malaysians still demand that we have negotiations and this led to having a memorandum agreement in the Bangsamoro which was then declared unconstitutional then the fighting erupts again because our fighters were angry in North and South Cotabato. In short the agreement was signed under the leadership of the current President and the signing in Manila was attended by all members of society. This time the thing that makes the environment conducive to peace is Malaysia as part of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) as we need someone to monitor the situation on the ground. That's why the Framework

Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) were signed by both parties. This is all still holding because of the presence of the IMT so the implementation of the agreement is monitored.

**Ali Saleem:**

When was the transformation?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

We observe that the negotiations are going somewhere good; the MILF have only just initiated to organise our political party. We must help to transform our camp from a fighting situation to a political situation and this is very important to reverse the mind-set of the combatants. If we do not organise the MILF, after decommissioning what will the combatants do if they have no abilities? We have this political party to ensure that they have a life or something to do after the normalisation. If not they may revert to their original principles or their original activities but with a political situation this won't happen

**Kerim Yildiz:**

To follow up, currently there are 1000s of fighters and the idea is some of them will be part of the political or security sectors. Will they work in coordination with the current state armies?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

Unlike MNLF who wanted integration of their forces into the AFP we want a creation of the Bangsamoro police. We want a separate government so we do not have this policy of integration

like the MNLF. If we are going to use our forces we will use them in our territory and they will be accountable to our people. In the organisation there is a joint peace and security team and this team will help with the policing of the region until the Bangsamoro transition period is over.

**Participant:**

You are talking about the symbolic decommissioning, but you want to continue as soldiers afterwards. Are there any provisions that say the MILF can be part of the regional forces and what does this mean for normalisation?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

This decommissioning is a part of normalisation but it also has other components. One is to put our firearms beyond use then we must retool what is in their mind. Retooling is a term we use when describing the retraining of our soldiers to give them different capacities. After that we will have them integrated in the Bangsamoro police force if they are capable.

There was a provision like you said, but the agreement almost collapsed because of this. The desire for a police force is still being debated in Congress and we want the Bangsamoro to be organised under one police who will be based in Manila, and it will be part of the national police force.

**Participant:**

Under which exact conditions did you need the third party and how did you convince the central government to have a third party?

Were these teams able to give you what you wanted? You also said more talks started after the law was deemed unconstitutional but you have the same law now. If it is again overturned by the Supreme Court is there a possibly conflict will come back?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

I will answer your last question first. It is possible that automatic conflict will occur but it is very hard to answer this question because every war is political in nature and has a political objective. This objective must be decided by the central committee of the MILF and if they decide that war is best then maybe it would happen. It is not really in the remit of the military wing of the MILF to understand this. As I said war has a political objective which must be defined by the central committee.

As for third parties, firstly Malaysia came in as a facilitator because it was asked by GPH and they had to convince us. The International Contact Group (ICG) was a response to the breakdown of negotiations as we insisted that there must be a group to monitor all our activities and the government acceded saying they would create the ICG. The IMT was introduced because a ceasefire without a monitoring body is hopeless. We needed the IMT to look at the negotiations and the agreement. The government was very hesitant as there was a perception that the foreign intervention was bad but we insisted that if they wanted the negotiations to succeed the IMT was essential.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much for receiving us here, as we know this is

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not usual protocol. Now there is a ceasefire and I guess 1000s of members of the armed forces are in the disarmament programme. Are there any training programmes to divide them into who will do what after they give up their arms? Those 145 combatants that were decommissioned, did you train them?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The 145, they were mostly the veterans of our fighters. They were all aged 45 to 65 and we again used that word “retooling” to return them into society; we train them, we teach them and we take them to lectures about what is happening in the Bangsamoro. They are now civilians and there is a policy that after the creation of the political parties all the members of the MILF commissioned or decommissioned will become an automatic member of the political party.

**Participant:**

If everything goes well and if the Congress accepts this version of the BBL there will be a referendum, and in January it will be put in force. In terms of the resources in Bangsamoro and the underground resources what will happen? This is not clear in the BBL and a lot of people here do not think that the BBL answers the need of the people. The MILF say they will take the democratic path and establish rules of cohabitation but are you forced to accept the BBL?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

Madam, I learn you have a meeting with brother Iqbal later and if I may say this question is under the remit of the negotiators so

it is better to pose your question there. I beg your pardon for not answering.

**Participant:**

This is a quick question, how do you finance your operations?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The revolutionary organisations have many options. One option is when we established MILF we had a programme of self-sufficiency we use our own resources and each member contributes five pesos each month which is a way of surviving. Muslim organisations also donate to us and in the time of Ramadan we are collecting money from our members. If we have 500 members and every family gives 100 pesos this will be a big amount to sustain our retooling activities. We also have friends outside and groups that help us and we accept their support financially or in contributions of humanitarian aid.

**Participant:**

For 40 years they were warriors; how do you teach the combatants to get rid of the feeling of vengeance and hatred? How are you educating their feelings?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

We cannot avoid saying that this war is about fighting but it is about fighting for a cause. We always remind them this is not a war of vengeance or hatred but this is a war for the cause. The transformation of the mind-set of individual combatants is very hard. Last night we conducted our meeting and a series of

educational programmes and reorientation programmes will be conducted in them. We cannot deny the one who hurts or loses their family during the war holds onto the hurt. We are doing our best to have a healing process.

One of the proposals to heal this wound is that the government implement what we have agreed with them. If the government will not agree it will again be a huge problem. The decision of decommissioning was very difficult and people are questioning why we are doing this. The war is not finished and there is no certainty about what will happen to the BBL, so people question our decision to decommission. We explain to them the reason and so they see the point, but if the government continues to deny our agreement that will not help to heal the wounds.

Before starting the negotiations we managed to have more than one million people here saying they were willing to start the negotiations and we asked them to give the leadership a mandate so we do have the support of the majority.

**Participant:**

How do you arrange your relationship with the 6<sup>th</sup> infantry division (6<sup>th</sup> ID) they say sometimes they try and catch criminals and they have to ask you for permission to enter areas? How does this work and what are the limitations? What is the relationship between yourselves and the 6<sup>th</sup> ID?

**Participant:**

Just to open the question a bit, the officers of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID talked

about the transformation within the army and the transformation with their relationship outside - did you build any bridges?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

In the government there is a Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and all our relations go through this committee. On the issue of the relationship of handing the criminals over there is the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) which help to form a relationship in the peace process. Everything happens through this mechanism. The coordination option is to help them to tell us to vacate the area so they can access the area without hindrance, but we have no real connections apart from the two mechanisms.

**Participant:**

Thanks very much, many of my questions have been answered. What is the number of female fighters in your organisation? Do they have autonomous organisations and what is the role of the female fighters in the MILF? After all, you are a Muslim organisation.

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

There is one brigade of female fighters and their commander is a woman. They do not go hand in hand with the male fighters and they only work in terms of education, first aid and feeding the children of the male fighters. That is it they do not go into combat with the male MILF combatants, we would never do that to our women. We let them fight for us in the home, not outside the home.

**Participant:**

But do the women want to fight?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

We are experiencing they want to fight more and more but never would we let them.

**Participant:**

In the Bangsamoro region there are some other armed organisations such as Abu Sayyaf and MNLF and others. The representatives of the NGOs that we interviewed yesterday called them terrorists but how do you define them? And when the Bangsamoro becomes an autonomous region, what kind of relationship will you have with them? Will you try to destroy them?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The only group which is claiming to be revolutionary call themselves the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). They are not big and they are not well organised. They have a very low profile but we cannot kill them. As for the question about what will happen if there is an autonomous government, Islam has so many options. Number one we will approach them in the Islamic way and we will convince them that the Bangsamoro is the best way. After all our persuasion they may coordinate or join the Bangsamoro peacefully and then we will have to see what will be the next step. First we must approach them in the Islamic way and get into the right organisation to convince them that peace is best.

**Participant:**

What can cause troubles in the peace process? What will stop the peace process from continuing?

To what extent are your fighters willing for peace? Do they believe peace will take place and do they really want peace?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The biggest obstacles in the peace process if you are going to look at the negotiations are plentiful. There were many obstacles but we reached the CAB and until we reach the BBL there will be many more. The BBL was written through the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) and if you look back at the negotiations there were hindrances, but we overcame them. The hindrance now is the Senate. We have already finished the talks and we have signed everything. Everything is in place and the only thing remaining is the two chambers to accept it. We will hold our horses not to engage in conflict until it is over, so we must just observe the happening in Senate. During the negotiations with the old administration there were spoilers in the process; one was our former Governor of the region. He was the one who benefited from the war. Another one was the military as they are fighting us and the war allows them to get arms to sell and gain money.

**Participant:**

We know that during the war there were paramilitary groups? How do they destroy the region?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The paramilitary units are sometimes very destructive and they use these groups to destroy us. The Bangsamoro territory is very underdeveloped, poverty stricken and backwards because of the paramilitary and they do not observe the protocol of war or the Geneva Convention. These units have no knowledge of human rights violations.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Did you sign the Geneva Convention?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

The MILF signed a document in the Netherlands banning war crimes and this is still active.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

In Turkey we also have armed groups and there are talks of a ceasefire. How important is it that **the** leadership of both groups have a direct or indirect channel of communication and a relationship for the purpose of decommissioning, and for the purpose of moving towards the negotiation?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

Firstly, maybe it's a question that the armed groups must really be willing to engage in peace talks with the government. Then there is no problem with the leaders being outside the process protecting them but if the group is not inclined to engage with the government they may have difficulties. There is a saying that you can imprison the man but not his principle so as long as the leader

and the group and the fighters have the same principles it will not matter whether he is present or not. If the group understands what they are fighting for it will be fine.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

In your experience, how important is it for the state and armed forces to communicate and how important is it to monitor the ceasefire?

**Sammy al Mansoor:**

We have experienced a local ceasefire and we are directly engaging with our counterparts. But without groups overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire and without outside monitoring it would be almost impossible.

On the question of leadership there are a few important factors to gain loyalty. The principles are the most important thing and what the leaders did for their people. If there is a political war the objective is the cause or the reason for engagement but this cause must be in complete understanding with its powers. The charismatic personality is important and this kind of leadership helps to gain followers but it is not everything.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

I understand that you have other important meetings so we will let you go but thank you so much for the real insight into the MILF and for answering all our questions.

*End of Session*

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*Roundtable Meeting at the headquarters of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces*



*The delegation with soldiers of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces at the MILF military camp*

## **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting: The Role of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission in the Peace Process**

**Venue:** Bangsamoro Transition Commission Office, Cotabato City

**With:** Members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission

**Hon. Chairman Mohagher Iqbal**, Chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Chief Negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

**Hon. Johaira Wahab**, Commissioner and Floor Leader of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission

**Hon Abdulhamid Benito**, Commissioner of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission



*Roundtable meeting with the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Hon. Chairman Mohagher Iqbal, Chief negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front*



*Roundtable meeting with the Chairman Iqbal, Chief negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front*

### **Chairman Iqbal:**

As chair of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) it is our honour to welcome our brothers and sisters from the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) and those from the Republic of Turkey. I would like to welcome Kerim Yildiz and thank the delegation for joining us and I would also like to thank Ali Saleem for facilitating the visit in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Firstly, the BTC is a creation of the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and was formed by the president. The creation was part of a side agreement between the MILF and GPH. Turkey is not near to us here in Mindanao and we view you as a super power. This morning's visit is a very important visit and we will stay with you for an hour. We are happy to answer any questions coming from you. After our 32 years of the struggle here and several years of peaceful engagement you can learn from our ups and downs.

Currently the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is still a battle for both sides in Manila and we do not know if it will pass. We are hopeful and we are striving for it to pass but even if it does not pass rest assured our struggle here will continue.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you very much. On behalf of DPI and our partner institute the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) we would like to thank you for the very warm welcome from the Honourable Chairman Iqbal. We are glad that our country, Turkey, even in a small way has helped the peace process in the Philippines. By taking an active role in the International Contact Group (ICG) it has been able to help and share its own experience of peace. We are here to share some of your experiences in terms of the peace process and also dialogue and negotiations in the Philippines. We are interested in finding a democratic solution to our conflict in Turkey with help from the experiences from the Bangsamoro region. This is one in a series of a few comparative study visits and others included Northern Ireland, South Africa, England, Scotland and Wales in order to learn from their lessons. It is important for us to learn not just from your experiences but also from your mistakes. We must broaden bases and prepare the society for the peace process.

**Chairman Iqbal:**

Thank you we will first watch a short presentation explaining our work with the on going MILF-GPH agreement.

*The audio-visual presentation explained the BTC's role in drafting the BBL in order to make sure there is peace for the people, which was sculpted by the people and that law really tackles their specific needs. On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014 the law was finally submitted to Congress for debate. The video discussed the BTC's engagement with civil society and the people throughout every stage of the process.*

**Ali Saleem:**

Thank you very much for the presentation, we will now go to the open forum.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much, I am a former member of parliament and I want to learn the following from you. As we saw in the presentation, the law has been subject to some changes in Congress. We learned this from the representatives of the NGOs that there have been 110 changes and some of the civil society groups were not in favour of these changes, particularly the changes regarding land reform. Can you explain this further?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

Let me first state the position of the MILF. The speaker of the house stated that the BBL will keep the same principles as the one drafted by the BTC and there are certain non-negotiable clauses but realising that Congress has plenary powers the MILF is open to some of the provisions changing in the BBL. The MILF should only accept a BBL that is faithful to the official one drafted by the BTC. We cannot accept a watered-down BBL.

**Johaira Wahab:**

As for the provisions that have been changed, the most important ones are those about the safety of Bangsamoro natural resources and the exclusive powers of the Bangsamoro over the minerals in the region. That's one of the major changes that have been made. The change in these provisions takes away the powers of the Bangsamoro government. They declare that their powers must be protected and such powers as those over natural resources in the region have been deleted from the existing substitute law which is a clear violation of their wishes. Another change is one set of changes in relation to the whole paradigm. They have taken away certain principles that form important parts of both the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). This includes changing or deleting provisions in the basic law that requires both parties regard others as equals and respect the competence of others. Also, certain words have been changed because territory has been removed because this territory is part of the sovereign state. The other change is the reference to central government instead of autonomous government. It is a question of terminology again. The opt in provision means that the territory can expand and the surrounding areas of Mindanao can petition in order to have a plebiscite but this is one of the most controversial provisions currently being debated in Congress. I will not go on to say all the changes but the bill contains tax incentives as well. The autonomous government would be allowed to give tax incentives to corporations to encourage investment.

**Participant:**

Thank you. I am a professor of constitutional law at one of the

universities in Turkey. I am very interested in the constitutionality of the BBL and when I return I will research it further. What are the main points of discussion regarding the legal questions? Is it possible for you to get the support of the constitutional lawyers in your country on this matter? While the BBL is still being discussed in the Senate could there be benefits of bringing in constitutional lawyers in to look at the law?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

First I will explain the nature of the BTC. It has four main functions, one of which is the task to draft the BBL. At all levels of engagement we make sure there are no unconstitutional elements. On both sides we have so many lawyers to help us to draft a law that will complement the constitution. We then proposed amendments to the constitution in order to create a real autonomy for the Bangsamoro people. The BTC has a symmetrical relationship with the government which means we work together to make sure the BBL meets their requirements of constitutionality, and our requirements of real autonomy. The Philippines is a country of lawyers but even among the lawyers there is a difference of opinion, even amongst the lawyers of the BTC. They say the heart of the Filipino constitution is about social justice and the BBL is about social justice, getting justice and freedom for the Moro people here in Mindanao and throughout the country.

**Johaira Wahab:**

Some of the changes were made to the law because of constitutionality. The provision establishing an auditing body, a civils service body and an election body was almost deleted. In

the matter of auditing, for example, it changed the function from external to just internal. In general we do have support from some of the constitutionalists but some professors have a different view.

**Participant:**

Thank you for meeting with us. Between the MILF and GPH there was an agreement and if this BBL is accepted the Bangsamoro region will become autonomous. However, there are not just Muslims here but also Christians and other ethnic groups. In the BBL what kind of provisions are there for non-Muslim groups and how are their rights protected?

**Abdulhamid Benito:**

There are three kinds of ethnic groups in the Bangsamoro: the Muslims, the indigenous people and the Christians and now there will be four kinds of judicial systems embodied in the BBL. First there is the sharia law and this is applicable only to Muslims. Second there is an indigenous traditional system which is applicable to our brothers in the indigenous communities. We have local courts which are to be used by everybody applicable to everyone. Lastly we have a dispute resolution system which will mostly be used for clan and family feuds. As for the BBL the supremacy of the sharia law shall only be for the Muslims and we must also make sure that this sharia law is consistent with human rights conventions. What about the case where one party is a Muslim and one is non-Muslim? If the two parties cannot decide between themselves where it is best to take their case, sharia law will prevail.

**Participant:**

Honourable Mr Iqbal, I would like to ask you a personal question. You have been in this movement since the 1960s and you have been the chief negotiator for a very long period of time in such an important process. From your own experience what stages have you been through? Can you paint a political story about your party and the counterparts with whom you were negotiating? What were the dynamics of the negotiations?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

My involvement in the fight for my people was during my days in Manila. As a boy back home I saw the suffering of my people and I knew something had to be done. The massacres were an eye opener for me as they killed people in places of worship. When I was in Manila my colleagues were concerned and the MILF was organised because many people feared the MNLF did not have what it took. But despite recruitment into the army I finished my degree in political science but after my Masters degree in 1972 I made the stretch to join the MNLF and I am still part of the movement today. In 1977 when the MILF formed I decided to join them because I felt more confident with them. As for my involvement, I started as an ordinary person here when I joined the military forces of the MNLF. I was first an active combatant and then was put in the political arm and later on I assumed the chairmanship of the committee of communication of the MNLF. Later I was made part of the peace panel whose counterparts were military generals from the AFP. Without the third country facilitator it was so difficult because they made the negotiations possible and they helped the negotiations resume after 'all out war'.

**Participant:**

I was wondering about the role of women in your organisation; are there specific provisions from them? Also when do you think there was a turning point in the peace process? Was it the involvement of third parties? What lessons did you learn to finally get you to an agreement?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

The fourth negotiator is a woman and she is the toughest of all the negotiators that I have faced. A woman by nature is very meticulous and nothing is left untouched. Out of the five negotiators not one is the same or has the same approach. So it is like facing five different individuals although they are acting on the orders of their party. They bring their own stance to the agreements.

The most civilised and practical way of finding an end to the Moro problem is through peaceful negotiations because everyone is a winner, but in war nobody is a winner. The toughest part did not involve me. The meeting in Kuala Lumpur which came to the agreement was the most important because it was no longer about negotiations but about implementation. We do need experts in negotiations but you cannot allow them to hijack the negotiations! To be a good negotiator you must manage your emotion and there are so many lessons to learn it would take me forever to tell them all.

**Participant:**

The draft law has stalled in Congress. What are you thinking in this state of waiting? Also, if this waiting continues in the future what could be the results? What if the process is postponed?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

First I will answer on the basis of the revolutionary principle. A given situation is exactly that, the situation that you are given. There is not anything we can do and I will follow it with an Islamic principle that whatever happens is up to Allah. The MILF central committee says that if the BBL does not push forward we must not accept it as a watered-down document but do not stop moving. We keep struggling. The other position of some members of the MILF is to have more people in Congress. They say this would be better than having nothing here. What is important is the FAB and CAB signed by the GPH and the MILF and facilitated by Malaysia from the international community says that the GPH must cooperate to meet their obligations to us.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences. I have personally learned so much from you so thanks again. We were talking about the negotiation process. I hope the BBL does pass but my question is about implementation; does the BTC have any plans for implementation?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

The implementation related to the BBL is as follows. After the two agreements were signed it says that the BTC should be set up and this would be ordered by the President of the Republic of the Philippines. The BTC was indeed organised with eight MILF and seven GPH representatives which drafted the BBL. It was a very long process but after that the BBL was signed by the BTC and was taken to the office of the president. For several meetings we could

not make headway and we were just waiting as it was handed over. Congress is still discussing it and if it is passed by both houses there will be a plebiscite for ratification. Then the Bangsamoro transition authority of 60 members will take over on the implementation. The dangers are that the BBL will be watered-down. The second danger is that the people do not approve. The last is that the Supreme Court declares it unconstitutional.

**Participant:**

Can you explain the structure and funding of the BTC?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

The BTC has 15 members, eight MILF and seven GPH but we work as a body. We have distinguished professionals from both sides but we make sure to work as a unit. After all what we are drafting is a proposed basic law that must work for both sides. I am the chairman and there are two deputy chairmen and we have six or seven committees: the political committee, the peace and autonomy committee, the justice system committee, the justice and security committee, the committee looking after the protection of basic rights and the transitory committee. There is also an amendments committee who deals with every decision made by the Congress and then there is an administration arm. Then we have a coordinating committee comprising of the chairmen of each committee. Each committee drafted provisions on the basis of their assignments which were all included in the law to the best of our ability. We also have a social and economic office and their function is to set up programmes in the Bangsamoro region to aid development such as institutional buildings, resource mapping, human rights projects

and assistance on the Bangsamoro development plan. We are made up of people from different clans and tribes in the Bangsamoro so as to be inclusive of all our people.

**Participant:**

You just said that you will use the sharia law for the Muslims and the state law for the Christians and the indigenous law for the indigenous people. What would be the kind of law for Muslims who do not want to wear headscarves or fast? What will their society be like?

**Abdulhamid Benito:**

The system of government will not be Islamic under the BBL. The BBL rests on the principle of equality of all the people. So, freedom of religion, freedom of press and freedom of assembly will all prevail in the eyes of the law. As we can see just driving around Muslim Mindanao, everyone has the right to pursue his or her own religion or system of belief and that is what I hope to see in the future.

**Participant:**

I would like to say thank you for the information but there are some question marks in my mind. You said the transitional commission cannot propose amendments to the constitution as it would be unconstitutional. This is an ironic situation. Secondly, there are clauses of the constitution that cannot be replaced so how will you work round this if it becomes an obstacle?

**Participant:**

Another question we have asked most speakers is whether the

process is irreversible or not? What are your thoughts? Could fighting continue if the BBL does not pass? Also, what was role of women in drafting the BBL? Were their voices heard?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

We cannot directly amend the constitution. It must be either be done by constitutional convention when delegates will be elected from all over the Philippines to propose these amendments.

The second way to do this is that the both houses make a constituent assembly to propose an amendment. These methods would both be subject to ratification by the people. Finally, there is a method provided in the constitution itself which says that the people can propose amendments through an initiative process. Thus the proposals made by the BTC must be acted on by other members of society in order to change the constitution and this would be very difficult to get support for.

As for the irreversibility of the process, that is our hope and our aspiration. That is why during the ceremony a week ago I said in a speech: ‘if you want peace then prepare for peace’. We would not have reached this point if we had not prepared for it. The most important documents are already signed but there are some people here who do not want peace including senators and the archbishops. Our belief is that the issue of peace will finally come.

On the question about female input, we have only four female members out of 15 in the BTC. In the Moro society women are indispensable because they are one half of the population. We are very protective of the women of course in Islam and the role of

women and men are complementary. Other meaningful frames of participation apart from the women are the non-Muslims. The recognition of the rights of the indigenous people is one of the most important provisions. We save seats in the committees and in the parliament in the new Bangsamoro government for the indigenous people and also to ensure gender equity. We have 10 sections related to women in the BBL. Firstly ensuring participation of women in parliament, in the cabinet and in other, local, special bodies. We also ensure women are taken into consideration in the health provisions of the development projects.

**Participant:**

Thank you so much for all your wisdom this morning. There is just one other issue to clarify about the provisions inside the BBL. How were women a part of the negotiations not just in the BTC?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

In the delegation of the MILF there were three women regularly part of the negotiations with appointed, formal roles. Women also play very important roles outside of the negotiating panel as part of civil society.

**Participant:**

This is a technical question. I am a lawyer and was part of the Wise Persons committee sent to the south-east of Turkey to assess the Kurdish situation. Since we are talking about the issue of autonomy, instead of limiting yourselves with such a basic law did you ever try to change the fundamental provisions of the constitution? The next President may not be pro-peace or may be weak so would it not be

better to ground yourself in the constitution in order to bind the constitution?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

The autonomy being given to the Moro people is the most important thing but we must engage with GPH. This engagement is made up of phases. Phase one included the decommissioning and after the government complies with this we are into the second phase of decommissioning which will take place after the ratification of the BBL. Right now the BBL is still in Congress; once the people agree we will decommission (35 per cent of our arms and troops). If the Filipino police is operationalized the MILF will not do it, however. It is a question of mutual trust and respect. Both sides will have to comply with all agreements before decommissioning.

**Participant:**

If all these negative scenarios are realised, do you feel safe with the existence of third party groups and the involvement of international monitoring?

**Chairman Iqbal:**

The international community are very helpful in so many way but the most important people here are ourselves. The organisation in the MILF is more important than outside bodies because governing peace is very difficult. There is no guarantee and the international community cannot guarantee peace so the most important thing is for ourselves to strengthen our own organisation against the situations that arise. However, without the international community we could not continue and we could not exist in the peace process

without them but the internal strength of the organisation is the most important thing.

Before coming to the end of our session we will give some tokens to our brothers and sisters to remember us in the office of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and to thank you for coming all this way to be with us and share our experiences.

### *End of Session*



*Chairman Iqbal gives DPI Director Kerim Yildiz a cultural token*



*Roundtable meeting with the Bangsamoro Transition Commission*

## **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June, Roundtable Meeting with the Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front**

**Venue:** MILF Camp

**With:** Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, Leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front



*Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, addresses the delegation*

### **Kerim Yildiz:**

First I would like to thank Chairman Murad for having us here. We are aware that the camp is usually closed to visitors so thank you so much for allowing us this opportunity. We have already heard from

the Government of the Philippines (GPH) in Manila and it has been good to get another perspective here in Mindanao. It is first important that the MILF started a new precedent of decommissioning arms and pursuing peace by non violent means. We have guests here with us from Kurdish parties in Turkey and other parties of government amongst others. We would like to learn from your mistakes when pursuing the process. We are at a very critical and important stage and the government has been trying to resolve the conflict for the last ten years. There is still a long way to go and so far DPI has visited a number of countries such as Northern Ireland, the UK and South Africa to learn from their experiences.

**Chairman Murad:**

On behalf of the central committee of the MILF and the Bangsamoro we would like to welcome you here and we are very glad that you, our brothers and sisters from a very far away place, seem to have a growing interest in the struggle in our part of the world.

We know that the Bangsamoro struggle has been one of the longest struggles because if you go back to the colonial period when the Spanish came to conquer the archipelago, our ancestors fought against the Spanish to fight and defend their honour as Muslims. Islam came here much earlier than the Christians and it came in strength in our area during the Ottoman Empire. We were already Muslims before the Spanish came and that is the reason why we have so many Christians here because they were converted. I also want to mention that the term Moro was coined by the Spaniards because when they came they were in the midst of a battle with the Muslim moors, the Moroccans. It was a long struggle and our

long struggle continued even after Spain gave over the archipelago to America. Then the Filipino government was made independent by America and we were made part of the government and were subjected under the law of Manila. This started the migration of the people in the north to the central areas like Mindanao. We were now a minority even in our own homeland and 1000s of civilians were massacred.

That was our struggle to defend our people and in the 1970s during the time of President Marcos we saw the beginning of the struggle of the Bangsamoro people. Despite the constant struggle against the government we decided it was important to open a dialogue and negotiations started in 1974. In 1976 we saw the Tripoli agreement signed and the intervention of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). We agreed to autonomy in the Tripoli agreement establishing an autonomous government for the Bangsamoro people. However, there was no agreement on how to implement the agreement and the GPH went home to unilaterally implement it which did not work for the Moro people. There were internal troubles within the MNLF because of this and factions began to break away.

In the term of President Corazon Aquino despite it being the 'revolutionary government' there was no progress and no agreement and the new President Ramos was elected and they continued the negotiations. In 1996 they signed another agreement to mark the final implementation of the Tripoli agreement. This was passed on to President Estrada but in the year 2000 there was a resumption of hostilities and an 'all out war' against the MILF.

There were the next rounds of negotiations but it was insisted to have a third party facilitator in 2001 and Malaysia was invited. So, we continued the negotiations and the meeting in Kuala Lumpur saw the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. All the diplomatic corps were there in the late afternoon but the day before signing the decision Supreme Court restrained the government and told them not to continue with the signing because it was unconstitutional. Everybody was shocked and the signing did not go ahead and in 2008 hostilities once again resumed. During this time we demanded that there would be an International Contact Group (ICG) established that will serve as a guarantor because what we were learning from the past was that if the GPH sign an agreement it will not be implemented without a third party. We decided aside from the facilitator there would be an ICG to make sure the agreement is made. The ICG is composed of four states and four INGOs. The members of the ICG play a very important role in the negotiations and they have acted as a bridge when there are difficulties. They have tried to use their influence with both parties in this process and they have been excellent. I think this is the first ICG made up of both state and non-state actors and we see that they both complement each other.

We created the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and the International Monitoring Team (IMT) composed of several countries such as Japan, Norway, and the EU amongst others.

This IMT is making sure that the ceasefire is implemented and that the situation on the ground is conducive to the peace process in order that people feel the peace process is on going and that there is

some development on the ground. The Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) were established in 2003 and serve as partners of NGOs trying to implement development programmes in the area. This gives motivation to people in support of the peace process.

The first meeting in Tokyo between the President and I was a turning point. Before the negotiations were moving but very slowly, but it seemed that there had been no substantial movement. After our meeting in 2011 it started to pick up - the trust and confidence was building. For us we saw the strong political will to move forward with the peace process and on the other hand we are trying to manifest to him our sincerity to solve the problem. The meeting created a momentum to move forward and subsequently began the road map to the agreement that we have now.

We are currently in the process of implementation and in the implementation process the MILF and the GPH have obligations. The GPH is obliged to implement what is provided in the FAB and the CAB and at the same time the MILF are also obliged to implement their obligations. We are translating the agreement into law and they are still facing so many challenges and spoilers in the peace process. They are trying to do everything they can to block the passage of the bill and just two days ago there was already a change in the agreement in the BBL. We understand that the process we are undergoing is important to the government and it is important in the search for peace. We are happy to help the government fulfil their obligations but we are facing so many challenges even on the ground.

We are still in a state of continued struggle. We are still struggling and we hope with the manifestation of our sincerity through the decommissioning of our weapons we will reach the end. Although it was a hard decision on our part we see that the BBL is still very uncertain but for us we want to demonstrate our sincerity.

I hope this has explained our current situation and we would like to thank you all for coming and meeting with me here at our headquarters and willing our peace process to succeed.

**Ali Saleem:**

Mr Chairman, thank you so much for that and for allowing us the privileged opportunity to be here. I am sure there are a lot of questions. Before we flew here I was told it was imperative that we met with you!

**Participant**

I am a former member of parliament from the Kurdish party. It is true that we definitely needed to see you and it has been a great trip. Chairman, I want to know from your own perspective of this peace process, what is an experience or a story that you will never forget?

**Participant:**

What was special about the MILF over the other groups? Also, the amendments about the minerals and resources, could they delay the process? Finally, I want your comments on upcoming elections and how that will influence the peace process.

**Participant:**

Thanks very much. So far we have heard many people talk but it was very influential to hear the story from a man like you who has had boots on the ground from the beginning. I have a question about the violence. When were you sure you had to use violence? When did your mind change?

Lastly, the impact of the third party was stressed in your speech. You emphasised that as much as you emphasised your decisiveness - is this the case? And is it obligatory to have this third party and if yes why?

**Chairman Murad:**

The first question from my brother about my personal experience of the peace process is an interesting question. Officially I was involved in the negotiations from 2001 when Malaysia had already intervened. I was Vice Chair for Military Affairs so I have a lot of experience in the organisation. One thing we, as an organisation, cannot forget was when our organisation was discussing with the government all night until midnight and we were able to sign an agreement to diffuse the tension on the ground. We signed the agreement at 12 and at 3am the AFP started attacking our camp. This was in 2000 and this started the resumption of hostilities and it was very unforgettable as we tried so hard to negotiate but 'all out war' began again. This is one of the most frustrating parts of the peace process. On the other hand there have been great moments such as the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and we could say to the entire Bangsamoro people that the solution was achieved.

The second question regarding the MILF and what made us so special. As I said we were once part of the MNLF and we split from them after the agreement to form our own organisation. There was a split and the MNLF continued to exist, but we forged the MILF. The MILF had strong leadership and this prevented disunity and provided cohesiveness among members. Another factor that made the MILF better was the four point programme which we have implemented. Number one is “Islamisation” because the majority of our members are Muslim and we have to make sure that they will practice Islam as Muslims. The second is the strengthening of the organisation. We try to strengthen the whole organisation from the central committee to the provisional committee to the village committees which are the lowest ranks of our structure. This is to make sure on every level we look after our people. Now we have a multitude of committees that were established to assist the community such as one on education and another on security. The third thing is a strong military. We keep on building our military and we are already training them to maintain a modest team of youths. We have a very strong military and we organise our people. We try to train more than 100,000 soldiers. The last point is self-reliance. We keep this in mind and make sure that everybody accepts the concept that he will work on his own and that he does not need help from anyone. This applies to the individual, a group or the organisation so all of this combined has made our organisation exist until now with the help of Allah.

Regarding the question about violence and when do we use or not use violence, we actually realise that violence is not the main solution to our problem. In fact, our late chairman has never let

us forget that negotiation is the main solution. When we have used violence in the history of the Moro people it was because we wanted to defend our homeland and our religion. For example, there was an incident during the massacres against our people where the Christian militias, supported by the AFP, killed 100s of men and women in the mosque. There were several people killed by the military and we had to kill to defend our people but we always saw violence as the last alternative. Maybe the negotiations would move forward and despite the resumption of hostilities, the MILF never wanted to stop moving forward with negotiations. We were just defending ourselves but we know in reality everything is solved by talking.

**Participant:**

We have talked to people from different aspects of the conflict now about why there was a change in attitude from winning the war to winning the peace. I would like to know how you adapted your mind-set from killing your enemies to wanting negotiations.

**Participant:**

How did you manage to defeat the AFP or at least hold them back from conquering your region? Was the fighting contained to the Mindanao region? One of the reasons behind the peace process was the war because the Bangsamoro people lost faith and as you just explained the army and the Filipino state had some double standards in terms of getting an agreement and implementing it so how do you trust them now? And lastly, despite you discussing being self-sufficient are you taking any support from other sections of society?

**Participant:**

Wherever there is a conflict there are some third parties which benefit from the war. Since the MILF have been struggling against the Filipino state has there been third parties trying to continue the war such as arm traders or other interest groups?

**Chairman Murad:**

As far as the change from the battlefield to the politics is concerned, it is about adapting strategy. The changes cannot be in bits it must be revolutionary but at all times you must hold onto your principles. On the battlefield and in the political arena you just adapt the same principles using a different approach in strategy. On the battlefield you have to make sure you are ready to confront the enemy and at the negotiating table you have to be in control. Negotiations are an extension of the battlefield. Both sides will be bargaining in the same manner but then the difference is in your attitude. There are no changes to the underlying principles because principles are not negotiable, you must maintain them.

As for going from winning the war to winning the peace, what they simply mean is for more than 40 years they have not won the war because you will notice that the Bangsamoro has not weakened. We are still strengthening. You cannot survive in the struggle unless people support you and that is why we have survived because our people support us. This has a negative impact because this is why even the small groups can exist because they find support amongst the people. Anyone will support those fighting the government and now what we see is the government know they cannot win. That is why they proceeded to negotiations. We cannot just kill the

other forever. As long as we achieve what we want politically we are willing to settle and we want to have a just peace.

People take advantages on both sides of the war and obviously actors gain from it. They try to manipulate because they want to maintain the status quo because they feel as if there is an advantage there. On a business or interest group level there is a big weapon industry in the conflict affected areas. Certain groups control certain business in the region, even in this army. So people are trying to push challenges in the peace process. On our side we try our best to handle them to make them feel that peace is a better alternative.

**Participant:**

I can see that many things have been clarified so thank you but I think we are in a historical moment here. The explorations are important for us so I want to clarify one thing which I think would be very enlightening. The third parties are a very interesting and important factor in our country. There is a lack of confidence in the peace process but the government are unwilling to invite in third parties. How did you convince you counterparts and what kind of methods did you use to show them that third parties were needed?

**Participant:**

Esteemed chair, I am a lawyer and I worked as a wise person in the south eastern region of Turkey. We know that you are experiencing an important moment because when the BBL is passed by the Senate you will be a unique example to the world. I want you to answer this question honestly.

You were talking about “Islamisation” yesterday when we met with the 6<sup>th</sup> ID they talked about the training and the universal approach of human rights instead of an “eye for an eye” approach. They want the army to be friends of the people and I thought they were sincere. Here you say the same thing, when you talk about “Islamisation” are you talking about giving the people to proper Islam or are you talking about a new kind of Islam?

**Participant:**

Thank you so much esteemed chairman. I am co-chair of the Kurdistan women’s assembly and you said that there was no confidence between the parties until the meeting in Tokyo. You carried out a face-to-face meeting and said that thanks to the president’s attitude you think he was sincere and maybe we can say that the meeting of the two leaders was very important. Was it very important to have the leaders of the both parties meet? We saw the same was true in South Africa and Northern Ireland so can you elaborate on the Tokyo meeting.

**Participant:**

Movements such as yours have two fundamental reasons for existence. Usually one is economic and the people revolt because they are economically oppressed and the other is about identity and the two may be combined. My question is which does your movement identify with?

**Chairman Murad:**

First on the role of the third parties, we came to learn their importance during the process itself. When we started we did not

realise it was important, we just talked it was fine. From 1997 to 2000 we just talked with the government without third party intervention and when we had a ceasefire we created a committee and asked for civil society to help us monitor it but there was no official third party. However, what we observed through the negotiations is that we would not come up with any substantial agreement because everyone was trying to manipulate to gain advantage. We saw that the government was trying to negotiate to gain power and we needed time to strengthen the arguments we had. We were both just buying time and it was going on for too long and there was no possibility of reaching an agreement. So in 2000 when the government started to bombard the camp in the “all out war” we already felt that we would not achieve anything out of the negotiation room. When the next government invited us back to the table we said we would only negotiate if there were a third party. Since the government was interested in having the third party because they wanted to go back to the table they approached several countries. Malaysia seemed to be interested and the Prime Minister sent a message to us to convince us. Of course we were not keen to go back to the table as the government just wanted to defeat us but then finally they managed to convince us with the condition of the third party. The third party bridges some kind of confidence but you have to be very sure that the third party has trust off both sides, if not they cannot be effective. In the negotiations there was a time when GPH accused Malaysia of siding with the MILF and the neutrality was always an important factor so this issue had to be resolved.

The issue of “Islamisation” is important because during the time

when there was an Islamic movement the people from the West thought it was terrorism due to their experiences. People wanted to change our name to remove Islam because whenever you mention you are Islamic you are also likely to be labelled terrorists. Our argument is that we do not need to change Islam because it is a beautiful term. It is sad that the image of Islam has been destroyed and we want to prove that Islam is not what the West perceives it to be - it is not terrorism. We want to “Islamise” our people, not to make them terrorists or a bad element of society but we want them to feel that their religion is theirs. We want them to feel that they can freely practice their religion to become good members of society. You also asked about the internationally respected human rights and if you trace it back it comes from Islam. Our religion is about protecting human rights and the principles of the religion are complementary to the Geneva Convention. For example, respecting lives, respecting women and children and respecting property are all principles propagated by Islam and international conventions. Our religion is the only binding force between us. We all come from different tribes but ultimately we have the Muslim identity.

The issue of trust and confidence is very important because unless there is a level of trust here nothing will happen you must always respect the other side. It was a real tuning point in Japan because what really happened was the president explained that he wanted peace and we explained that we wanted Bangsamoro people to be free to live as Muslims. If we could live freely there was no need to ask for independence. This created the understanding that we wanted to solve the problem not just fight a war of secession. I

could go on but it is getting late and we all must break fast soon but thank you so much for your questions. We have discussed so much today and I hope that it will help you in your endeavour to complete your aspirations in Turkey. We are so honoured to have you here and thank you again.



*Chairman Murad greets DPI Director Kerim Yildiz*



*Roundtable meeting with Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim*

## **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June - Dinner Reception and Roundtable Meeting: The Role of the International Monitoring Team in the Peace Process**

**Venue:** International Monitoring Team Headquarters, Cotabato City

**With:** Representatives from the International Monitoring Team  
**Major General Dato Sheikh Mokhsin bin Sheikh Hassan**, Head of Mission of IMT

**Colonel Mohd Hakimi bin Mohd Anuar**, IMT Head of Mission's Chief of Staff

**William Hovland**, Chief Operations Office of the IMT



*Major General Dato Sheikh Mokhsin, Head of Mission of the International Monitoring Team addresses the delegation at the roundtable meeting on the role of the International Monitoring Team in the peace process*

### **William Hovland:**

I will give a short brief on the International Monitoring Team (IMT) before you ask your questions. I am representing Norway and the Department of Foreign Affairs and I also have a background in the Norwegian army. The IMT is an impartial, neutral, independent third party and was established in 2004. What makes us special is that we do not have a supranational mandate such as a UN or EU mandate. We were simply invited by the two parties. We are non-combatant and have no enforcement powers. We consist of five contributing nations and report to the two peace panels. The facilitator, Malaysia, leads the IMT which has been there since 2004. Also Brunei and Japan have been there since 2006, Norway since 2010 and Indonesia since 2012. We are currently in our headquarters and our area of operation is Mindanao.

The IMT's role of responsibility is to observe and monitor the cessation of hostilities. We conduct field verification to validate any reported violations. It is very important on a daily basis that we coordinate closely with the GPH-MILF Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) and the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and also the local monitoring teams (LMTs)

You can break down our work into the following concepts: the preventive concept to avoid things happening, the conflict concept where we try to manage and deescalate the conflict and the post-conflict reconstruction. The socio-economic assistance component is led by Japan and their role and responsibility is to assist the parties to form development plans and help in their implementation.

There is also a civilian protection component to monitor, verify and report compliance or noncompliance and to protect the safety of civilians. This also helps to monitor the needs of IDPs and we support communities to handle grass root conflicts. There are many actors in Mindanao which makes it a complex area. Lawless groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the communist National People's Army (NPA) means there are many conflicts between these groups.

**Major General Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

As you can see our job here means we must be friendly with everyone and we have to go to them and be friendly to them even if you do not agree with their means.

**William Hovland:**

As you can see the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is the platform for the new Bangsamoro. In the five provinces if the referendum is passed the Bangsamoro region will be established. Other provinces in Mindanao can choose to be a part of the Bangsamoro if they like and the last survey we saw showed the Bangsamoro had a majority in most provinces. So, many regions may opt in but the referendum will reveal the true future of the region.

The main thing is that the IMT has the trust and respect of both parties. This ceasefire structure is still ongoing and then there is another phase of normalisation. The current security situation revolves around the ceasefire agreements but there are also criminal incidents such as family feuds land conflict.

In 2008 the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain was a failure for being unconstitutional and a full war broke out. The IMT actually pulled out when the fighting was at its worst but after 2010 IMT was again active with much fewer accidents. In 2013 there were only two incidents in 2014 there were five and the same in 2015 but these are minor unofficial numbers. The official numbers are much lower showing no incidents until the one in January this year.

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

This shows that the IMT works because when there is IMT the number of ceasefire incidents drop.

**William Hovland:**

The main incident is the Mamasapano clash, which I guess you have heard about, and the others are often because of land conflicts. These conflicts can start on such a low level like for example the cutting of coconut trees. We try to follow these incidents to see if they will escalate. These are all ceasefire incidents with fighting on both sides.

There are also 'non-ceasefire' incidents which are one side and are often bombings or attacks. On average each month there are around 15 incidents and this can be through the lawless groups.

For now we see the GPH and MILF are still supporting the ongoing peace process but even though there is support here, in Manila there is politics. For example, if you oppose the President you may also oppose the peace process because this is what will hopefully

become his legacy. Also, the BBL may be diluted which means the MILF may not accept it. We feel that the parties are true to the ceasefire but if the BBL were to fail it may change the situation.

We have more issues in the region with lawless groups who are not bound by the ceasefire architecture. Furthermore, NGOs or development projects are not targeting the atrocities in our area of responsibility. Even those that do may be extorted by lawless groups for money. There is quite a high kidnapping risk in the southern islands. This may increase in the run up to the next election.

### **Participant**

What was your view of the Mamasapano incident?

### **William Hovland:**

We heard about the incident and we gathered parties from both sides and went to the area. When we arrived, we tried to establish contact with the parties. The police went in during the night to capture a terrorist and they were able to get him and kill him but it was close to a MILF area so the police went in with the main effort force and had a blocking force against the MILF area. When these fights break out it is hard to stop you may see your friends get killed and emotions get the better of you and take over. There was no coordination between the police and the GPH or the AFP which is what is supposed to happen if they adhere to the ceasefire mechanism.

Were there ceasefire violations? Firstly, the question was if the MILF was harbouring a terrorist because he seemed to be hiding

very close to MILF. Then the question is did they know or not? Lawless groups do sometimes choose to be close to MILF territory because the government cannot enter the territory and they know this. We concluded the MILF did not know he was there but some of the members did know he was there.

The next issue is about coordination and the movement of the government police force in the MILF community. This movement must be coordinated before they go in as we know they chose deliberately not to coordinate before going in. Also the excessive use of force is another issue and we concluded that the government fired first so they violated the ceasefire agreement but then the MILF pulled back and manoeuvred round the police and attacked them from behind which was deemed a disproportionate and unnecessary use of force.

The last question was about looting of equipment from the police by the MILF. From what we can find it is a tradition to take military equipment. This is not a violation of the ceasefire because only looting of personal equipment is deemed a breach of the ceasefire agreement.

It was revealed that it was an operation planned by the US or at least they helped. It was denied at first but we now know the US helped to plan it and provided equipment to the groups and also there were US drones above the area. The Philippines and the US have an agreement to cooperate so this is a problem between the governments.

**Participant:**

Who finances IMT?

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

Firstly we are financed by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and the GPH. They pay for food and accommodation. Our own governments finance everything else, such as our travelling.

**Participant:**

According to our observations even if the BBL fails there will not be harsh clashes between the two sides. This is the impression we have got from our other meetings, can you verify this?

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

I say yes and no. The leadership of both sides say that it will be okay and the central committees agree but you have to remember that the command and control is very weak in the MILF. There are a lot of risks and there are few notorious leaders. There is no one else, so if the current leaders do something to make the peace talks break down it is our job at IMT to convince these leaders not to go home and not to leave the peace process. To keep fighting is one of our strategies and to bring development to the island is important. We must win their hearts and minds.

**Participant:**

Can you elaborate on these development projects? Will they improve the economic conditions of the area?

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

We go to the schools in the areas where there is no water with plans to use solar systems to bring them water and electricity so that they can develop irrigation for their family. On top of that we are also teaching them modern farming and fishing and helping them dry coconut. We are giving them capacity to gain a livelihood.

**Participant:**

What did you think about the other groups and their links with ISIS and what is their chance of invading?

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

There are insurgencies but only in the island regions but in central Mindanao so far there is no activity.

**Participant:**

The focus on development is very important to show how life will be after the process so I commend you on that. My question is about the BBL. There may be amendments to take away the economic autonomy of the region so how will development continue?

**MGen. Dato Sheikh Mokhsin:**

I completely agree. The United Nations development plans and the IHH, which is a Turkish led NGO who have helped build a very big beautiful orphanage, have helped in this. The ambassador of Turkey was here last month and they also help towards development in repairing houses and building schools. 75 million pesos was given to the Bangsamoro area to go towards development and we hope the money will be well spent. We cannot monitor this money

as we are more towards the peace process but we can hope that development will continue.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

Thank you very much we are very interested to hear more so we are sorry it is so late. We wish we had more time but thank you again for your hospitality this evening even in the storm!

*End of Session*



*Dinner reception hosted by the International Monitoring Team*

## **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June - Roundtable Meeting with the Government of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao**

**Venue:** The Office of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao  
**With:** **Atty. Rasol Mitmug Jr.**, Chief of Staff of the Office of the  
Regional Director of ARMM

**Don Mustapha Loong**, ARMM Secretary for Public Works



*Roundtable meeting with Atty. Rasol Mitmug, Chief of Staff of the Office of the  
Regional Director of Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao*

**Rasol Mitmug:**

Welcome to the government of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). We are so grateful to have you here and we have prepared a short power point presentation for you but first we can hear from your delegation.

**Kerim Yildiz:**

This delegation consists of cross party politicians and ‘Wise People’ as appointed by the President of Turkey. We are working on the broadening bases issue and so this is part of the DPI Comparative Studies programme where we learn from other conflict experiences around the world. This particular event has been organised by my dear friend Ali Saleem from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines. We are particularly interested to learn from your experience of how you take peace from one point to another how you work with the armed groups. We would like to learn what path you took towards peace. This will be rich and valuable information and we would be grateful to hear how you worked with the armed groups and how were you able to form the government out of both parties.

**Rasol Mitmug:**

Thank you for that message. Let me start by talking to you about the ARMM initiative on transition. When the letter was sent to us informing us of your visit, we were told that you wanted to hear about the transition process from armed group to a political movement and more generally about the peace process. We have prepared lots of material to share with you today. In reference to the current status of the peace process, the government has

signed Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). GPH and the MILF are waiting for the legislature to produce a law to explain to us what will be the new Bangsamoro. It will replace the current autonomous region.

We have had initiatives to help speed up the process. The present Governor Hataman was elected in 2011 and when the regional Governor came into power he gathered all his staff, secretaries and officials to develop a strategic plan for governance. He also discussed the potential to, in one and a half years, produce a new government and progress towards a new body in the region. Even knowing there is a three year limit, there is a peace process and the governor is supportive. In the eventuality of a potential transition we are already prepared for that. We have the transition cluster which is made up of officials monitoring the status of the peace process. We constantly remind cabinet that we need to collate all the information we have in order to produce manuals and documents that we can turn over to the next government. One of the other roles of the transition cluster is to encourage efforts for peace. There are times when the media is very biased against GPH or MILF. There are talks about whether it would even be beneficial for ARMM to be supportive of the process.

One initiative we have is 'I Sign for Peace' in order to raise awareness and make people realise what is happening. It helps explain that the constitution provides two autonomous regions but only one exists (ARMM). The other lacked provinces and cannot function as an autonomous region. The law being amended by Congress would

create the autonomous region the Bangsamoro would replace our organisation. Aside from that we are also doing devolution reviews because many believe ARMM has received all of its powers but not all of our functions are transferred to us. In other words there are still certain responsibilities which are with the national government and s even though they should be with us. Most officials of the ARMM support the BBL because it is important to really clarify what the functions of the autonomous region will be for the Bangsamoro region. We are still not clear if the functions we have here are really devolved and this clarification is important.

As for the transition, the regional government used to not include many elements that would make this easy. For example, there was a lack of database and we have required all departments to provide records and monitor what happens in their area. This will help the next administration understand what needs to be done. When we transfer ARMM to the Bangsamoro they will have a clear picture of our operations and can set up government in a better way. We have initiatives with other agencies such as the coordination committee for the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) which is made up of members from both sides of the negotiating table.

There are key concerns for the transition because the clause in the draft BBL says that the ARMM will be abolished and all the employees will be abolished with it. This creates concerns for our employees here but we have spoke to OPAPP and MILF and we are reassured that there will be no mass unemployment. We are assuring them that we are creating separation packages for them and trying to get them new jobs in the new administration. The

second concern is about that the implementation of programmes and projects because we are not sure exactly when the transition will happen. It could be in one and a half years but we are not sure whether to speed up our projects or slow them down. ARMM is also composed of local government units and in the BBL there are some provisions for the changing of local governments.

**Participant:**

Thank you very much. The transition from ARMM to the Bangsamoro will see you go from one autonomous region to another. What will be the fundamental differences and what will stay the same? Can you identify differences?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

There would be basic structural changes. Right now the ARMM works on a Presidential system where the Governor is head of the office and a legislative assembly. The Bangsamoro will have a parliamentary system. The BBL wants to strengthen the political system in the Bangsamoro. They intend to have more systems to strengthen political parties because the idea is that currently our politics is mostly personality and clan based and we want to move away from that. The Bangsamoro want to have a more sectorial way of voting. Right now the ARMM have to go to the national government to raise our funds. Some say this is not working because we do not have fiscal autonomy. The Bangsamoro budgeting will happen at the local level and so they will have the resources needed to programme its own funds. Analysts say that maybe stronger autonomy can happen in the Bangsamoro region. Also currently we split the natural resources 50-50 but the Bangsamoro will hopefully

be able to get a 70-30 split. Another thing that will be different, unless it is declared unconstitutional in the Bangsamoro, is that they have requested for a civil service commission on elections and audit to provide more for the region. This will help to make the local governments follow the guidelines of the BBL. Why are these provisions in the Bangsamoro? The MILF want a new structural set up so they can be self reliant.

**Participant:**

I am a professor of law in a Turkish university and my question has something to do with the political connections regarding the administration structure of the ARMM. It is clearly an autonomous region with connections to the centre but the Bangsamoro autonomous region will also become a political establishment. You have spoke of political and social diversity and in the last few days and we have gone into discussion about this and have made various observations. One of our observations is democracy is not well developed in the Philippines and alongside there is a lot of diversity. So, how is it going to be reflected in the autonomous region? Could there be dangerous results?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

The idea of an autonomous region in the Philippines was developed in the 70s and at that time there was a wide spread secessionist movement in the south under President Marcos. The administration of the President agreed that there should be an autonomous region in the southern Philippines but the constitution did not provide for it. Under the revolutionary government, the constitutionalists realised the Philippines was not unitary in nationality and ethnicity.

There are areas where Catholicism is not a unifying factor like in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras in the North. So the indigenous people of the north and the Muslims of the south could make their own regions.

It is correct to make the observations that democratic principles here are not developed. Most of our politics is clan based and the BBL wants to have a different system. There can be potential partisan politics but what I see on the draft BBL is that the parties will be sectorial in nature and they will provide seats for women and for other groups in the community that wish to be represented. It will also include for a diverse mix of ethnicities in the parliament. This is important because currently most of the politics goes down family lines. This is a huge problem with ARMM and something they are trying to resolve.

ARMM are financially reliant on the national government as every year we must go to them to defend our budget. Our department funds also come from the government. We already have exclusive powers which come from the constitution but a real benefits for the Bangsamoro will be that each of these powers will be with the autonomous region. They will not have to report back to the central government (though this is still to be discussed in the Senate).

**Ali Saleem:**

Do you think it would be a good idea to set up an international, independent body much like there is for the negotiations but this time to oversee the implementation of the Bangsamoro government and its powers?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

I think these will be very useful in the ARMM because there was supposed to be an oversight committee to look after the powers that would be conferred to the ARMM but they were not able to finish their job and now we have no specific powers. Now we must go to the courts to defend our powers and this often takes time and sometimes it must go to the national government and they are not inclined to relinquish powers. Sometimes there is contradiction with national laws and every time we create laws we have to check it with laws being created with national government. An oversight committee can be a very facilitative institution for both parties to have an international independent body.

**Esra Elmas:**

I have a primitive question. If all these changes happen and the Bangsamoro is established what will happen in the lives of regular, ordinary people? What will be the impact of these changes?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

We believe with these changes development programmes will be much more easily put in place. Currently these are dealt with by the national government and our realities do not match. Even though the national government think of good things such as climate change and gender rights ARMM needs basic development programmes and these big programmes are not appropriate to make ARMM better. With the shift towards autonomy we can get programmes targeted at our needs. Also if more minorities come into the legislative assembly we can provide more for their rights. These are the most basic things but so important. For example,

we have only just got a budget for roads and it is the first time our people had access to roads. Before we received 1 million pesos and now we are gaining 10 million pesos for the road system and it is making us better off. We were able to do this because we have the confidence of the President and he trusted the ARMM so we were able to benefit the people. Prior to this we were only able to fill the targets of the government which was not helpful here for the real people in Mindanao.

**Participant:**

I would like to find out about the current economic situation here in Muslim Mindanao. For example, numbers of unemployment, the size of economy and what are the prospects for change if the BBL is implemented?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

Poverty is an issue in the ARMM. The unemployment rate, I am not sure on exact figures, but what I can say is that we are an agricultural centre and most of our livelihood comes from agriculture and fishing. There are only two industrial sites here and right now because of the peace people are coming in to invest. There are investors on land with banana pineapples, coconut and rubber being our main natural resources. One of the key issues in the region is that because of the culture here. There are local arrangements and formal land ownership is not put down into writing. This is obviously a huge problem for land holders in Mindanao. I believe that if the BBL is successful it must discuss labour standards with the national government to implement good practice. There has recently been a decrease in unemployment

numbers because of the increase in infrastructure and hopefully more jobs will become available with more investment.

**Participant:**

Thanks very much for your insight. You said you were sharing the resources 50-50 now and it will be 70-30 after the passage of the BBL. I believe the lack of development could easily be overcome by taking control of this 50 per cent. As far as I know you have a very rich region of resources so why can this not be utilised for the sake of the people. Why is there this huge backwardness?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

One of the key issues is that there are currently so many conflict areas in Muslim Mindanao, the platforms of the revolutionary movements and small secessionist groups from Sulu. This makes some areas of the province difficult to govern. You are right that the 50-50 ratio is already enough but the people in the areas rich with resources during the early 50s to the 70s could not take hold of these resources due to conflict. The franchise was granted to the people from China or the North of the country. Most of the people of the ARMM were not able to utilise the resources for their benefits. In the BBL, the idea of transitional justice will hopefully give the rights back to the people. The reason it did not work is because the areas which provide resources such as the Sulu area, where they believe there are oil or gas deposits, were not accessed in their maximum capacity because of the conflict. Currently, the big driver for the economy is the government because a lot of private individuals find it difficult to invest in a conflict area. In the past three years the government has been able to establish development

projects. These were able to provide the ARMM with government assistance due to the cessation of hostilities.

**Participant:**

I have two questions. First people always gain their identity through language. We know there are many different languages being spoken in the region so are there any programmes to promote one language? Secondly on the first day we visited the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and yesterday we spoke with the Chairman of the MILF. You are in between the two so what kind of dialogue are you carrying out with them and do you have an official arrangement with the central government?

**Rasol Mitmug:**

To the question of languages, the autonomous region was created under the constitution to provide a region of people with the same historical ties, cultural practices and identity. The ARMM has so many languages. For example Sulu and Maguindanao which they speak right here. There are five in total but where we find our commonalities is in our history and our families. For example, most of our similarities are in local traditions and there are key personalities which we all have in common. Aside from differences in languages there are these family ties between the areas. Even if there are linguistic differences there are still commonalities in culture and one of the major ones is Islam and how they practice their religion. We handle the education in the region. There was no imposition of language but most schools chose the national language to help improve communication or others choose English for the same reasons. The language is not really the issue but the issue is

culture. We do not know if the BBL wants a common language for the region. I have not heard if they are trying to develop this either.

In relation to the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the MILF, many of us before joining this government were with civil society or human rights groups. Therefore, many of the actors were speaking on Moro rights in their previous positions because they are the ones being illegally arrested and being victimised. In turn, we knew many of the MILF personalities before coming to governance. The relationship is not that different now but in government there are certain protocols. We go through international organisations like the CHD before outlining our positions in order to make sure we are not biased. Many of us have family members that have died for the MILF struggle and sometimes at the other end of the table are our friend or family members but we know that any protocols and we must remain official.

**Ali Saleem:**

I am so sorry to rush this rich discussion but we have a flight to catch. I would like to thank you so much for having us here today and being so generous with providing us security and free passing in Muslim Mindanao.

*End of Session*



*Roundtable meeting with the government of the  
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao*



*Roundtable meeting with the government of the  
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao*



*The delegation visit a Cotabato orphanage built by Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) based in Turkey*

## Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June - Farewell Dinner

**Venue:** Ilustrado Restaurant, Intramuros, Manila

**With:** Participants

**Kerim Yildiz,** DPI Director



*The delegation enjoying a cultural show at the farewell dinner*

### **Kerim Yildiz:**

Hello everybody, before we leave I would like to thank you for joining us on the trip and thank you for such a wonderful evening. I hope that you can take some things away from this trip to apply to the solution process in Turkey. I realise it is such a long way and you all have very busy schedules particularly at the moment with all the happenings in Turkey so I am very grateful that you all came and showed a real willingness to commit to the process. These past few days are small in comparison to the big picture as this event has taken a year to prepare and so I would especially like to thank

Ali Saleem and Mary-Louise Castillo for all their hard work and patience in organizing this. They have worked so hard and have spent so much time on this and so I cannot find the words to thank them. It is very important to mention that Ali Saleem was the first person to help start the process over here and he was the person in the frozen period that pushed us forward. He has put in an enormous energy to do it. He has established communication with all the groups and he did all the preparation to get us the exclusive meetings so his labour cannot be underestimated. He made everything possible so we as DPI have been working under their guidance and I would like to thank them both.

I would also like to thank Eleanor Johnson who really is the pin of DPI. She was working together with Mary-Louise and Ali to make this visit a reality without any complaints. She is not just working on the Turkey programme but the Africa and Syria programmes and she does so much all at the same time. We cannot forget Esra Elmas who does exceptional work from our Turkey office. It is important for all the DPI staff to meet together like this even though we are busy. In short we can say that at DPI there is team work and the members of the team are so important including the Council of Experts.

While we are doing this team work, we were careful to be engaged with the political agenda of Turkey and since our aim is to contribute for the Turkish solution process we must find solutions to their problems. We see that there is a lack of information in Turkey and we hope to impart some knowledge using these comparative studies visits.

**Ali Saleem:**

A year ago Kerim sent me an email about wanting to work on the Philippines and 10 days later he was in the Philippines to sort everything out. He has really been the driver who wanted this to be a reality from the beginning. Thank you so much to DPI because I know the time difference has made it so difficult but we are finally here!

I have worked in eight or nine different peace processes and it is such a fulfilling career. The peace agreement in Nepal was between three people right up until the signing and the process here is really between Chairman Murad and President Aquino so our job is to help them and make them look good. Everyone here is fully capable of changing your country because if we can you definitely can with all your knowledge and expertise. I landed in Bosnia in 1994 and I was there as part of the war tribunal and someone said to me, 'you must leave the country in a better state than it is in now'.

I hope that when you return you will make your country better than when you left for Manila. You can make a difference in your country. It has been an honour to have you here and to meet you all. You are great people and we have a great relationship and I believe in it and the relationship is important.

**Participant:**

I have been thinking a lot about what we can do to change our country and I think if you still have time and energy to do something you should be a good person and do something. I am an actor and in our business you get scenes sent to you and sometimes when you receive it you like it and want to be part of it. I really

like the “DPI scene” and I want to continue to be a part of it and help with your work. I am sure that since I am connected with you I will be criticised but some will thank god that I am doing this and thank god that I exist and am doing good work. That is what is important.

**Participant:**

First I would like to say thank you for this evening. There is such a nice atmosphere and I should say that I am very happy to be with DPI as well. I am happy to share all the experiences with them and the information. My real passion is that I want to help solve the problem with the brothers and sisters in Turkey. I hope that in the Ramadan period they will see the reports and want to engage in the process. I am impressed at the people here and I hope that everyone among us can leave a legacy that lasts for centuries. We can help in encouraging peace although we know it is not a very easy process. We cannot give up the hope for peace and we must spend more energy each day to succeed. I am so thankful for Democratic Progress Institute for bringing us together. The magical part of this kind of trip is that we are all very politically diverse but we have a common ground, peace. We may have different approaches but peace is what we all aim for.

*End of Session*



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz and DPI Head of Programmes and Research Eleanor Johnson with Mary-Louise Castillo and Ali Saleem from the Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines*



*Farewell Dinner at the Ilustrado Restaurant, Intramuros, Manila*

# Appendix

## Conflict Resolution: The Philippines Experience

### A Comparative Study Visit

20<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> June 2015

#### Participant List

- **Jerome S. Aba** - Representative from civil society organisation Suara Bangsamoro
- **Ayla Akat** - Member of Parliament, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)
- **Mahdie Amella** - Representative from Mindanao Action for Peace and Development (MAPAD)
- **Col Mohd Hakimi bin Mohd Anuar (Royal Malaysian Air Force)** - International Monitoring Team Head of Mission's Chief of Staff
- **Aizuddin bin Ariffin** - Head of Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team
- **Senen Bacani** - Member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel
- **Atty Anna Tarhata s. Basman** - Legal counsel for GPNP-MILF
- **Ali Bayramoğlu** - Columnist and political commentator at Yeni Şafak daily newspaper
- **Feliciano Belmonte** - Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives
- **Hon Abdulhamid Benito** - Commissioner of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission

- **Eren Buğalılar** - Interpreter
- **Her Excellency Ambassador Esra Cankorur** - Turkish Ambassador to the Philippines
- **Angela Casauay** - Journalist for Rappler News
- **Mary Louise “Con” Castillo** - Representative from Centre of Humanitarian Dialogue in the Philippines
- **General Catapang** - Chief of Staff of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Philippine Army)
- **Ces Orena Drilon** - Renowned Filipino broadcaster for ANS-CNN News
- **Esra Elmas** - Senior Advisor, Democratic Progress Institute
- **Yılmaz Ensaroğlu** - Director of Law and Human Rights at SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights and İHGD, Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue
- **Brigadier General Carlito G Galvez** - Government of the Philippines Chairman of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities
- **Johnathon Christian Garcia** - Representative from Kanagib
- **Nazmi Gür** - Member of Parliament, Van, Member of EU Harmonisation Commission of the Turkish Grand National Assembly; Member of the Commission for Foreign Affairs; Member of The Turkey-EU Mixed Parliament Commission; Vice-President of Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)
- **Muhammad Habibie** - International Monitoring Team SO 2 Media Officer, Indonesia
- **Colonel Mohd Hakimi** - International Monitoring Team Head of Mission’s Chief of Staff, Indonesia

- **Maj Gen Dato' Sheikh Mokhsin bin Sheikh Hassan** - International Monitoring Team Head of Mission, Malaysia
- **Kezban Hatemi** - Respected lawyer and member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission established by President Erdoğan
- **Colonel Dickson Hermoso** - 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Inspector General of the Philippine Army
- **Kadir İnanır** - Popular film actor and Director, Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission established by President Erdoğan
- **William J. Hovland** - International Monitoring Team Chief Operations Office, Norway
- **Hon. Chairman Mohagher Iqbal** - Chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Chief Negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front
- **Eleanor Johnson** - Head of Programmes and Research, Democratic Progress Institute
- **Erol Katırcıoğlu** - Member of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) and columnist at Daily Özgür Gündem. TV programmer at IMC
- **Hon. Yasmin Busran-Lao** - member of the Government Peace Negotiating Panel and women's rights activist
- **Don Mustapha Loong** - Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Secretary for Public Works
- **Tusoph Lumamba** - Representative from United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)
- **Joey Macalunas** - Representative from Sustainable Health Improvements through Empowerment and Local Development (SHIELD)
- **Datuan Magon** - Representative from United Youth for Peace

and Development (UNYPAD)

- **Atty Anwar Malang** - Representative from Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
- **Sammy al Mansoor** - Chief of Staff of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF)
- **Duma Mascud** - Mindanao Human Rights Action Centre (MinHRAC)
- **Bejan Matur** - Columnist, poet and writer
- **Nursuna Memecan** - Member of Parliament, Sivas, Chairperson of the Turkish Group of the Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Member of the Turkey-EU, Mixed Parliament Commission, Justice and Development Party (AK Party)
- **Atty. Rasol Mitmug Jr.** - Chief of Staff of the Office of the Regional Director of Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)
- **Major General Dato Sheikh Mokhsin** - International Monitoring Team Head of Mission, Malaysia
- **Luisito Montalbo** - Undersecretary of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP)
- **Charlotte Mulhearn** - Assistant, Democratic Progress Institute
- **Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim** - Leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front
- **Wendell P. Orbeso** - Peace Programme Director in the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP)
- **Davut Ocak** - Representative of the Turkish Embassy
- **Melda Onur** - Former Member of Parliament for the Republican People's Party (CHP) and has previously worked as a journalist, Turkey
- **Brigadier General Manolito Orense** - Chair of the GPH Ad

Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG)

- **Fadime Özkan** - Journalist, political commentator and media personality. Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission established by President Erdoğan
- **General Edmundo R Pangilinan** - Commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Philippine Army
- **Captain Jo-ann Petinglay** - 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Public Affairs Officer, Philippine Army
- **Thomas Phipps** - British Embassy Manila - Second Secretary Political and Security
- **Lt Cdr Mohd Yusri bin Md Sah (Royal Malaysian Navy)** - International Monitoring Team SO Admin/Log
- **Ali Saleem** - Senior Programme Manager in the Asia Regional Office of Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- **Supt Azhar bin Sepawi (Royal Malaysia Police)** - International Monitoring Team SO1 Info/Sec
- **Maj Mohd Azmi bin Mohd Taib** - International Monitoring Team SO 2 Operational, Brunei
- **Yudai Ueno** - Representative of the Japanese Embassy
- **Cynthia Veliko** - United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Representative in the Philippines
- **Marites Vitug** - Editor-at-Large for the Rappler News
- **Hon. Johaira Wahab** - Commissioner and Floor Leader of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission
- **Kerim Yildiz** - Director of Democratic Progress Institute. Expert in conflict resolution, international human rights law, peace building and minority rights. Formerly co-founder and Chief Executive of the Kurdish Human Rights Project
- **Prof. Sevtap Yokuş** - Professor of Law at the University of

Kocaeli, Turkey. Widely published expert in the areas of constitutional law and human rights law and practitioner in the European Court of Human Rights

- **Sgt. Kamaruddin bin Yusof (Royal Malaysia Army)** - International Monitoring Team Close Escort
- **Alaatin Yüksel** - Former Member of Parliament for the Republican People's Party (CHP), Izmir and entrepreneur, Turkey

## DPI Board Members

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**Kerim Yildiz (Director)**, Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in International Human Rights Law and minority rights, and has written extensively on international Human Rights mechanisms and International Humanitarian Law. Kerim is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011.



**Nick Stewart QC (Chair)**, Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom. Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.



**Prof. Penny Green (Secretary)**, Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).



**Priscilla Hayner:** Co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organizations.



**Arild Humlen,** Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee, Norway. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.



**Prof. David Petrsek:** Associate Professor, Graduate School of Public and International affairs, formerly Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, he has worked extensively on human rights, humanitarian and conflict resolution issues, including for Amnesty International (1990-96), for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-98), for the International Council on Human Rights Policy (1998-02), and as Director of Policy at the HD Centre (2003-07).



**Antonia Potter**, Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, MediatEUr, and Terre des Hommes.



**Jacki Muirhead**, Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## DPI Council of Experts

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### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.



### **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. Areas of focus include Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format.



**Prof. Christine Bell:** Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.



**Cengiz Çandar:** Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.



**Yılmaz Ensaroğlu:** SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.



**Prof. Mervyn Frost:** Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.



**Dr. Edel Hughes:** Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.



**Dr Salomón Lerner Febres:** Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.



**Martin Griffiths:** Former Deputy Head, Kofi Annan's UN Mission to Syria. Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.



**Avila Kilmurray:** A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.



**Prof. Ram Manikkalingam:** Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.



**Bejan Matur:** Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).



**Monica McWilliams:** Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.



**Jonathan Powell:** Jonathan Powell is founder and CEO of Inter Mediate, an NGO devoted to conflict resolution working in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Jonathan was Chief of Staff to Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and from 1997 was also Chief British Negotiator on Northern Ireland. From 1978-79 he was a broadcast journalist with the BBC and Granada TV and from 1979 to 1994 a British Diplomat.



**Sir Kieran Prendergast:** Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.



**Rajesh Rai:** Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He is Founding Director of HIC, a Community Centred NGO based in Cameroon, and of Human Energy (Uganda) Ltd, and was previously a Director of The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Rajesh also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Council and internationally, in India, Africa, Asia, and the USA.



**Prof. Naomi Roht-Arriaza:** Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.



**Prof. Dr. Mithat Sancar:** Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on constitutional citizenship and transitional justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



**Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokuş:** Professor of Law at the University of Kocaeli. She is a widely published expert in the areas of constitutional law and human rights law, and is a practitioner in the European Court of Human Rights.



**David Reddaway:** He now works as an adviser, board member and consultant in the private and university sectors. He was previously British Ambassador to Turkey and to Ireland; High Commissioner to Canada; UK Special Representative for Afghanistan; and Charge d’Affaires in Iran, where he had first worked during the Iranian Revolution. He also served in Argentina; India; and Spain. He was a Fellow at Harvard University and a volunteer teacher in Ethiopia. He read History at Cambridge, and Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.



**Mark Muller QC:** Senior advocate at Doughty Street Chambers (London) and the Scottish Faculty of Advocates (Edinburgh) specialised in public international law and human rights. He has many years' experience of advising on conflict resolution, mediation, ceasefire and power-sharing and first-hand experience of a number of conflict zones, including Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria. Since 2005 he is Senior Advisor to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Beyond Conflict and Inter-Mediate. He is also a Harvard Law School Fellow and former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee and Head of Rule of Law for the Bar Council. He is the founder of Beyond Borders – a Scottish initiative dedicated to fostering peace and international understanding through cultural dialogue. He currently acts as Senior Mediation Expert for the Standby Team of Mediators of the UN Department of Political Affairs.



**Joost Lagendijk:** Columnist for the Turkish dailies 'Zaman' and 'Today's Zaman', and a lecturer on EU Institutions and Policies at the Suleyman Shah University, Istanbul. He is also the author and editor of a number of books on European border issues, US and EU foreign policy strategies, and modern Turkey. From 1998 – 2009 Mr Lagendijk was a Dutch Green Left Party Member of European Parliament, where he focused on foreign policy and EU enlargement. He has also served as Chair of the Parliament's Turkey Delegation and the rapporteur for the Parliament on the Balkans and Kosovo. From 2009 to 2012, Mr Lagendijk worked as a senior adviser at the Istanbul Policy Center in Istanbul.



**Prof. Dr Ahmet Insel:** A managing editor of Turkey editing house Iletisim and Head of the Department of Economics in Galatasaray University, Istanbul. Also a Professor at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. Author and columnist.



**Ali Bayramoğlu:** Writer and political commentator. He is a columnist for the Turkish daily newspaper Yeni Safak. Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission Established by Prime Minister Erdoğan.



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