

DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION: THE MINDANAO EXPERIENCE

I. INTRODUCTION

After twenty years of negotiations that spanned three political administrations, the peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was finally signed on September 2, 1996.¹

Implemented in two phases, Phase I is a three-year transition period while Phase II intends to build peace and confidence. Phase I has established the implementing mechanisms and institutions to the peace agreement: the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD),² the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), and a Consultative Assembly (CA) through Executive Order 371.³ Likewise, development task forces have been established under the SPCPD. Key MNLF personalities were appointed to development institutions, such as the Amanah Bank, the Southern Philippine Philippines Development Authority, and the President's Education for Peace Program.⁴ Phase 2 involves the Congressional amendment or repeal of Republic Act 6734 or Organic Act of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)⁵, after which a plebiscite (September 2000) will determine the shape of the new autonomous government and its specific areas of jurisdiction.⁶

¹ Signed by Ambassador Manuel T. Yan for the Philippine Government and Professor Nur Misuari for the MNLF and participated by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Mr. Ali Alatas, Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Ministerial Committee of the Six and H.E. Dr. Hamid Al-Gabid, the Secretary General of the OIC.

² The SZOPAD is composed of the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, Sarangani, and Palawan and the cities of Cotabato, Dapitan, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan, Marawi, Pagadian, Zamboanga, and Puerto Princesa.

³ *The Philippines Today: Pole Vaulting into the 21st Century (Citius, Fortius, Altius): A Technical Report on the Five Year Accomplishments of the Ramos Administration.* Prepared by the Presidential Management Staff in coordination with concerned agencies, June 1997, p. 22.

⁴ *A Triumph for Peace and Development: The Implementation of the GRP -MNLF Peace Agreement 1996-1999.* Prepared by the National Security Council, March 1999, p.1.

⁵ The Act covered 13 provinces (now 14) but only Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao voted in a plebiscite. None of the component cities voted for inclusion. In addition to the 4 aforementioned ARMM provinces, the other provinces are: Basilan, Palawan, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Sur, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga del Norte. The component cities are: Dapitan, Cotabato, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan, Marawi, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, Zamboanga and the newly created Kidapawan.

⁶ The amendment to Republic Act 6734 will expand the autonomous region to include all 14 provinces and their component cities but only those who will vote "yes" in the September 2000 plebiscite will become part of the expanded ARMM.