

Tri-People Peace Summit call for referendum in Mindanao

Thursday 18 December 2008, by [CARUMBA Amabella L.](#), [MPPM](#), [SENTURIAS AI](#) (Date first published: 16 December 2008).

In a peace summit, some 400 representatives of people's and nongovernment organizations affirmed their call for the conduct of a United Nations-supervised/managed/facilitated referendum on four political options: free association, autonomy, federalism, and independence.

"The conduct of a referendum is the most peaceful and democratic way to resolve how the right of self-determination of Mindanao's Tri-Peoples can be served," said Alvaro Senturias, chairperson of the Mindanao People's Peace Movement (MPPM) that convened the summit on December 12-16 at the Mindanao State University in Marawi City.

In their 5th Mindanao Peoples' Peace Summit Declaration (or Marawi Declaration 2008), the participants called on all concerned parties to "assert the right to self-determination of the Tri-Peoples, build just and lasting peace, and work for genuine development in Mindanao."

The Tri-Peoples refer to the Katawhang Lumad (indigenous peoples), Bangsamoro (Muslims), and Mindanao's Migrants and Descendants (settlers) from Mainland Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan.

They conducted their 5th Mindanao People's Peace Summit to discuss ways to "advance democratic political options for peace in Mindanao", where the four options proposed to be presented in a UN-managed referendum were explained by different resource persons and discussed in workshops.

In their Marawi Declaration 2008, the participants asserted their "collective fundamental right to self-determination and commitment to just and lasting peace and sustainable development in our Homeland, with full recognition of our socioeconomic, political, cultural and religious diversity."

They also said that "the government's total war policy threatens the achievement of just and lasting peace and creates a spiral of violence detrimental to our people and environment."

"The way to peace and development requires the systematic resolution of political, economic, and socio-cultural problems, including long-held biases and prejudices that have prevented our genuine appreciation of each other's actual and potential contributions," said the participants in their Declaration.

They also committed themselves "to continue exploring ways to correct historical mistakes and misunderstandings that have led to the persistence of violence and destruction."

They also "called for an openness from the different peoples, as well as the various armed groups operating in our Homeland, to build communities of peace, to find their path to harmony and tolerance, and to resolve the fundamental causes of conflict."

They also appealed to the Philippine government "to resume peace talks with the armed rebel groups operating in Mindanao, to refrain from insisting on the disarmament, demobilization, and

reintegration (DDR) framework; to stay the hand of war that has scuttled many initiatives from civil society groups; and, to address the valid concerns these armed groups raise.”

“The different armed rebel groups (should) go back to negotiations, with an openness and flexibility needed to facilitate a genuine dialogue and resolution of issues,” urged the participants.

They also emphasized the need for continuing consultations with all affected parties and communities and civil society groups, especially the Katawhang Lumad (indigenous peoples), in the conduct of all peace- and development-related processes in Mindanao.

The government was represented by Undersecretary Dimasangkaya Pundato of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

Representatives of revolutionary groups spoke at the Summit were Bobby Alonto, member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Negotiating Panel and Dr. Alepekre Basher Secretary General of the Moro National Liberation Front-Bangsamoro National Parliament.

Rey Claro Casambre, executive director of the Manila-based nongovernment organization Philippine Peace Center gave his insights on the peace process between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front.

Representatives of another organization, Cagayan de Oro-based Balay Mindanao, Inc., the Independent Secretariat, spoke on the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Rebolusyonaryong Partidong Manggagawa-Mindanao.

Aside from ending the cycle of violence, the government and Mindanao Tri-Peoples are challenged to address other development concerns.

These include the “lack of social services; lack of food sovereignty; continuing export of contract labor; threats to youth, women and children, environmental degradation and climate change; and, the chronic economic crisis brought about by globalization.”

The participants come from Moro groups, indigenous people’s groups, interfaith groups, students and academe, and nongovernment organizations working on different development concerns such as peace, human rights, disaster relief and rehabilitation, and environmental concerns.

Aside from the MPPM, the Peace Summit was organized by the Southern Christian College-Community Education Research and Extension Administration (CEREA), and nongovernment organizations Sumpay Mindanao, Inc and the Tri-People’s Organization against Disasters Foundation (TRIPOD), Inc.

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See the declaration: [5th Mindanao Peoples' Peace Summit Declaration](#)

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