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Situation in the Philippines

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

Tabled by ***Frithjof Schmidt, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Hélène Flautre***

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the appeal of the ambassadors of the European Union, the United States and the Australian embassy's deputy head of mission on 29 January 2009 for the resumption of peace talks in Mindanao, on the grounds that there could be no development for the Philippines unless the southern island also agrees to resume talks,

- having regard to President Arroyo's plan to make the peace process in Mindanao to settle nearly four decades of separatist insurgency her "personnel commitment" for 2009,

- having regard to the ongoing Tripartite Review of the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine Government,

- having regard to the Hague Joint Declaration between the GRP and the national Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) of 1992 and the first and Second Oslo Joint Statement of 2004,

- having regard to the ongoing negotiations on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Philippines,

- hMNU[CITATIONYES][CITATIONNO]@CHOICE@aving regard to its previous resolutions and notably its resolution of April 2007

- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas development for the Philippines will be seriously hampered unless the southern island of Mindanao is included in the process,

B. whereas hostilities between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) resumed in August 2008 after the Supreme Court stopped the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the MILF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) on the Ancestral Domain, which the tribunal eventually declared unconstitutional,

C. whereas renewed fighting has resulted in the death of over one hundred people and displaced

approximately 300 000 more, many of whom are still in evacuation centres,

D. whereas Malaysia, the peace facilitator, withdrew its ceasefire monitors from Mindanao in April 2008 due to the lack of progress in the peace process, whereas, however, it is willing to reconsider its role if the Philippine government clarifies its negotiating position,

E. whereas Badroddin Abbas, a radio broadcaster and Muslim activist, was shot dead by gunmen in Cotabato City, Mindanao on 22 January 2009 and this is the latest case of frequent killings of political and human rights activists and media workers,

F. whereas the Philippines is considered by human rights organisations as one of the most dangerous countries for working journalists, with at least 63 journalists, 22 lawyers, 41 human rights activists and 15 judges murdered since 2001,

1. Welcomes the recent talks between the GRP and the NDFP under Norwegian facilitation in Utrecht in November 2008 and hopes that formal negotiations could resume rapidly without preconditions and on the basis of the existing agreements;

2. Expresses the hope that, with the recent appointment of Avelino Razon as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, the stalling negotiations on the peace process might regain momentum;

3. In this context, expresses reservations on the fact that the RECITALMSGNew People's Army (NPA) is included on the EU terrorist list, which is not helpful for any future peace negotiations;

4. Welcomes President Gloria Madapagol-Arroyo's intentions to revive the peace process with the MILF and urges the government to clarify the status and the future of the Memorandum of Agreement after the Supreme Court Ruling;

5. Calls on the government and the MILF to do everything in their power to stop the displacement and to allow the hundreds of thousands to return home;

6. Calls on the European Council and Commission to support the Philippine Government in its efforts to advance the peace negotiations, including facilitation if requested, as well as support for the International Monitoring Team, which has been entrusted with the task of overseeing the ceasefire between the military and the MILF;

7. Suggests that the role of the International Monitoring Team could be enhanced through a stronger mandate for investigations and through an agreed policy on making its findings public;

8. Takes note of the reconstitution of the peace negotiation panel, the "National Preparatory Committee" under the new leadership of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis, which has been enlarged to include further stakeholders and should present amendments to the Law on the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which had been rejected by the Supreme Court last year;

9. Notes positively that, since President Gloria Madapagol-Arroyo's 2007 declaration "no tolerance for human rights violations", politically motivated killings have declined considerably but believes that nevertheless the number of recorded human rights violations remains unacceptably high;

10. Is concerned that the failure to hold perpetrators accountable has a corrosive impact on public confidence in the rule of law and that the killings create a climate in which the people in the Philippines cannot feel free to exercise their rights of political expression and association;

11. Is concerned by reports that "Task Force 211", the government body entrusted with the task of investigating murders of journalists is not functioning efficiently and calls on the government to urgently improve protection measures for witnesses;

12. Calls on the Government of the Philippines to increase development aid to Mindanao in order to improve the desperate living conditions of the local population;

13.Welcomes the financial support amounting to more than EUR 13 million in food and non-food aid which the EU has given to Mindanao since the fighting resumed in August 2008;

14. Strongly condemns the abduction of at least eight people, among them 3 members of the ICRC, in Basilan and Sulu; calls on the local authorities to do everything in their power to secure the release of the victims;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the ASEAN Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Philippines.

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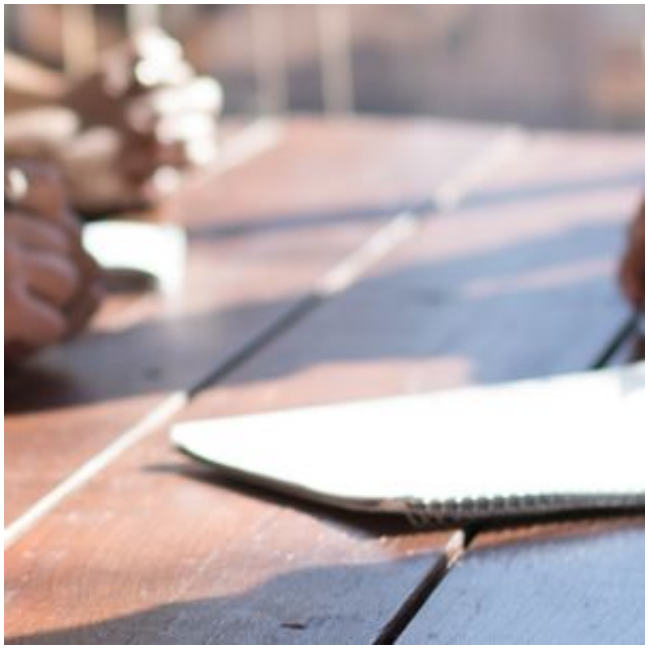

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Heads of national delegations in the GREENS/EFA Group

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