

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the Peace Talks with the MNLF**

The European Union wishes to declare its support for the next round of peace talks to be held in Indonesia between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front. The European Union hopes that these talks will continue to make progress towards a comprehensive, durable and mutually accepted solution to the long-standing problem in the Southern Philippines.

The European Union has been impressed by the determination of both the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front to achieve a peaceful solution, and praises the statesmanship, restraint and moderation shown by both sides in the face of challenging circumstances. In particular, the European Union supports the efforts of President Fidel V. Ramos and his government to find a peaceful, lasting and just solution for his country. It also commends Nur Misauri of the MNLF for his statesman-like stand for peace.

The European Union applauds the ways in which the international community has supported the peace process. In particular, it commends the Indonesian cease-fire monitoring and observer team for its successful organisation of the peace talks, the OIC, which has consistently played a constructive role, and the contribution of the Indonesian Government as chair of the OIC Ministerial Committee of the Six and the host of the formal talks.

The only alternative to peace talks is a return to conflict, which will damage the prospects and international image of all in Mindanao.

The European Union welcomes international support for the talks and will continue to monitor the peace process. It calls upon all parties to reject violence and to pursue national reconciliation with patience, imagination and understanding to create the economic and social development that will enable the Filipino people to create the prosperity and stability to which they aspire.

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