

INTRODUCTION
JOINT PEACE CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
(GRP) AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES (NDFP)
ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE 27th CORDILLERA DAY
Buneg, Lacub, Abra, April 27,2011

When I decided to come over to this Cordillera Day celebration it was for an obvious reason of expressing the church's solidarity with the Cordillera Indigenous People's struggle for LAND, LIFE and HONOR. A second reason, which is very personal to me, is that to be here and remembering the historic struggles of the Cordillerans, is a deeper and more meaningful way of celebrating Easter (Christ's resurrection). Easter is a movement toward overcoming death.

It is not simply remembering and doing nothing. Easter is a season of hope, of renewed energy. Easter reminds us not to despair when we encounter darkness. For in darkness there is light. Surely, light will overcome darkness.

I was tasked to introduce this revered joint Peace Consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). It was a big surprise. I feel I am not worthy and yet I feel honored. Thank you, friends.

Peace is a longing, a yearning deep in the hearts of every Filipinos. It has been pursued relentlessly for years but it remains so elusive.

What then is peace? Peace is not merely an absence of war, an absence of hostilities. Peace is not only the silencing of guns. Peace is, above all, the well being of every woman, man and child. Peace lies in a just and equitable distribution of the earth's resources.

In concrete, peace begins when the hungry are fed and when the thirst for justice is quenched. Genuine peace is only possible in a society where justice is nurtured by the dignity felt by every human being – free from poverty, cynicism, violations and other evils borne out by greed and the insatiable crave for power. Thus, peace is not solely a term and a concept. It is a process. Like what brought us in this historic and precious activity. We will all partake in the process in addressing the roots of the armed conflict toward a just and lasting peace.

After six years of impasse, we come to know of the resumption of the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GPH formerly the GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) two months ago. Today, representatives from the two panels, specifically from the working committee for the Comprehensive Agreement for Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER), the second substantive agenda of the peace negotiation, join us.

The CASER is considered as the meat of the peace negotiations because it would address the roots of the armed conflict, the rationale behind the long – running revolution in the country. There are four substantive agenda in the peace negotiation between the GPH and the NDFP:

1. The respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, resulting to the signing of a Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHIHL), in 1998;
2. On Social and Economic Reforms, which we look forward to the signing of a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER);
3. On Constitutional and Political Reforms; and
4. On the End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces.

In February 21, 2011, in their closing statements, both parties were positive in the outcome of the resumption of talks from February 15-21 in Oslo, Norway. Specific developments were:

1. The reconvened Joint Monitoring Committee for CARHRIHL;
2. The resumption of work for the Reciprocal Working Committee on Social and Economic Reforms; and
3. The formation of the working group on political and constitutional reform.

Previous bilateral agreements were also upheld and confidence-building measures were discussed. Included in the bilateral agreements is the Hague Joint Declaration. It states that the common goal of the negotiations shall be the attainment of a just and lasting peace and that the holding of such must be in accordance with mutually acceptable principles, including national sovereignty, democracy and social justice and no precondition shall be made to negate the inherent character and purpose of the peace negotiations.

In fact, the February 2011 talks have substantial achievements and we thank the valuable efforts of both parties in advancing the process for peace.

However, the road to peace, like the road we took to reach Buneg, is long, sometimes coiled, narrow, dark and stormy but a road we travel each day to bring a spark of hope for our nation, for our fellow countrymen, for the present and the succeeding generations.

Today, as we participate in the joint consultation for CASER, we remember historic moments for the indigenous peoples in the Cordillera in time for the celebration of Cordillera Day. Ama Macli-ing Dulag fought so hard, even to his last breath for land – the life of the Igorots, the dwelling of precious resources, the home of indigenous culture and the reason for the assertion of self-determination.

The indigenous people's concern must be a major element in this dialogue – the respect for indigenous peoples' rights for ancestral land and self-determination should be fully integrated in the discussion of CASER.

We also remember our farmers, the producer of our food and basic needs, whose hands are dried and calloused, tending to the fields many of them do not own. Still, they tirelessly plow; plant and harvest as we hear their deep sighs that hid an ardent desire to till the land that they can call their own.

We remember the many sectors crying for humane existence in many workplaces- agricultural or industrial, public or private, the many workers/ employees who badly need attention in terms of working and living conditions. It is my hope that time would come in our country when workers/ employees would work not only to survive but also to fulfill their mission. They would not hold on to machines in order to put something in their pocket but to feel inner achievements, that they are part of what they produce and that they serve others happily.

There are many things to remember when it comes to socio-economic matters – it is what everyone of us feel, the grinding of the stomach especially in depressed communities where the poor are struggling not even on a daily basis but on the basis of every meal, every food that they can put to relieve hunger albeit temporarily.

I hope that this joint consultation would address the root cause of the armed conflict – poverty and injustice. Let this timely undertaking take us into another step of the process for a just and lasting peace. Let us listen with the ear of our hearts to the people’s cry. Let us act with selfless conscience as we continue to be of service to the millions of hungry and thirsty Filipinos. Then we can truly hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Godspeed and may God’s blessings remain with all of us.

Thank you.

Sr. Alice M. Sobrevinas, OSB
Member, Presidium for the GRP-NDFP Joint Consultation

Armed Conflict towards a
Just and Lasting Peace....

GPH-NDFP Joint Peace Consultation



April 27, 2011

Buneg, Lacub, Abra

Organized by Cordillera Peoples Alliance and Katribu Partylist

SUMMARY REPORT

**Government of the Philippines (GPH) - National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP)
JOINT PEACE CONSULTATION WITH CORDILLERA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IPs)**

**April 27, 2011
Buneg, Lacub, Abra**

The Joint Consultation on Social-Economic-Cultural Reforms of the GRP and NDFP with the IPs of the Cordillera was successfully concluded. This was a major part of the 3-day Cordillera Day 2011 celebration attended by at least 5000 delegates and guests hosted by Barangay Buneg, Municipality of Lacub, Province of Abra on April 25 – 27, 2011. The Joint Consultation held the theme: ***“Addressing the Roots of the Armed Conflict Towards a Just and Lasting Peace.”***

The Joint Consultation was the first of its kind in the country, consulting the IPs, conducted jointly and in plenary by the official representatives of the GRP and the NDFP, held at the grassroots in a far flung village simultaneous with the significant event and well attended Cordillera Day celebration. This was a great effort on the part of the organizers – the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) and KATRIBU Partylist who made the consultation multi-sectoral and regional in scope with a significant number of national and international observers.

The program was facilitated by a presidium of great probity and track record of advocating for the recognition and promotion of IPs rights: Rev. Leon Mateo Jr., official representative of Bishop Elorde Sambat, Northern Luzon Jurisdiction-United Church of Christ in the Philippines (NLJ-UCCP); Erlinda Palaganas, R.N., PhD, Professor of Management in the University of the Philippines - Baguio City; Sr. Alice Sobrevinas, OSB, Sta. Escolastica Convent; Ms. Geraldine Fiag-oy, anthropologist and researcher; and Rev. Denver Marerero, official representative of the Rt. Rev. Renato Abibico, Episcopal Diocese of Northern Luzon.

The said Joint Consultation was also endorsed by the Rt. Rev. Alexander Wandag, Episcopal Diocese of Isabela and Bishop Reuel Marigza, UCCP National Secretary-General; and in their respective messages to Cordillera Day, commended and supported the said joint consultation, were none other than the GRP Vice-President Jejomar Binay, Gov. Leonard Mayaen of Mtn. Province, Rep. Teddy Brawner Baguilat of Ifugao and head of the Congressional Committee on National Cultural Communities and Hon. Eddy Couckyut, Deputy, Province of East Flanders, Belgium.

The GRP panel was headed by Mr. Ednar Gempesaw Dayanghirang, a Lumad (indigenous peoples of Mindanao), belonging to the Mandaya tribe of Davao Oriental. He is a member of the 5-person GPH panel for peace negotiations with the NDFP. He is also the chairman of the Reciprocal Working Committee (RWC) for the drafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social Economic Reforms (CASER). Mr. Dayanghirang was accompanied by Fr. Albert Alejo Jr. and Mr. Jimmid Mansayagan.

Fr. Albert Alejo Sr. belongs to the Society of Jesus and a doctor of Philosophy on Social Anthropology. He is a member of the RWC for the drafting of CASER appointed in 2011. Mr. Jimmid Mansayagan is also a Lumad, belonging to the Aromanen Manobo of North Cotabato Province, Region 12 in Central Mindanao. He is one of the consultants for indigenous peoples of the RWC for the drafting of CASER. The panel was assisted by their secretariat from the OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process).

The NDFP panel was officially represented by Mr. Rafael De Guzman Baylisis, one of the NDFP consultants on the Peace Process and a member of the NDFP RWC-CASER. Also present was Ms. Beverly L. Longid, President of the KATRIBU Partylist. She is a resource person on IPs of the NDFP upon the invitation of the NDFP Peace Panel and her acceptance of such. Together with other resource persons on IPs shall compose a Working Group on IPs to assist the NDFP-RWC for the drafting of CASER specifically on provisions on IPs. KATRIBU Partylist is the broadest and progressive party of indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

The rationale of the consultation was explained by Sr. Alice Sobrevinas from the Order of St. Benedict of Sta. Escolastica Convent. Sr. Alice emphasized that indigenous peoples have to be consulted and their issues and demands must be included in the CASER for the realization of the theme: ***“Addressing the Root Causes of the Armed Conflict Towards a Just and Lasting Peace”***.

The mechanics of the consultation guided the smooth flow of the program as explained by Dr. Erlinda Palaganas. With the principle of fairness and just treatment, both panels presented their programs on the CASER. Then it was followed by the presentation of issues, demands and aspirations for peace of the six provinces, Baguio City, and five sectors of the urban poor, women, youth, workers and peasants of the Cordillera region.

Panel Presentations

The opening statements of both panels drew encouragement from the crowd to present their aspirations of peace. The GRP came first with panel member Ednar Dayanghirang who emphasized the following points that:

1. Pres. Benigno “Noy” Aquino III in several times issued policy statements for the resumption of the peace negotiations with the NDFP and to conduct this in a participatory manner through consultations with all stakeholders;

2. The GRP and NDFP are contending forces but they are also partners and in equal footing in the quest for a just and lasting peace, and development;
3. Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo unilaterally suspended the peace negotiation with the NDFP for seven years and instead waged a war to eradicate the NDFP. The new regime under Pres. Benigno Aquino III knows very well that he will not be able to eradicate the NPA through war and thus, to resolve the armed conflict through negotiation, he formed the fifth GRP negotiation panel. The said panel is tasked to address the root causes of the 42 years of insurgency in the country by continuing the 40 rounds of talks in the past 24 years. They are also mandated to resolve the remaining three (3) substantive agenda including the observance of the ten (10) agreements signed by both parties.

The negotiation is now on the second agenda of social and economic reforms, followed by political and constitutional reforms, and finally on the cessation of hostilities and disposition of forces. Dayanghirang was optimistic that the fifth panel will accomplish all these under the present regime;

4. The GRP draft CASER shall address and contain the following: poverty, poor delivery of social services, marginalization and exploitation of indigenous peoples, inequitable distribution of wealth, unemployment and underemployment, and destruction of the environment. He encouraged his fellow IPs not to be too focus on their particular issues but consider also the wider and national issues; and
5. Finally, he shared the sentiments of the local people against the entry of large scale mining and advised them that even if the government allows mining, the final say rests upon the people.

The NDFP opening statement delivered by the consultant Rafael Baylasis focused on the following points:

1. The NDFP is in solidarity with people who stand against and call for a moratorium on large scale commercial mining. The government in power i.e. the GRP should respond to this demand. The NDFP cannot act on it because they are not the government in power. He further encouraged the people to bring out their true issues before the two panels and for the government-in-power to address;
2. The peace process, to be true partnership as stated by the GRP panel, must be based on the analysis of the basic problems of Philippine society and their corresponding solutions. An effective partnership is based on agreement by both parties to obey or fulfil in good faith;
3. The peace negotiations bogged down was due to insincerity of the GRP. One, was the January 1987 Mendiola Massacre where state security forces open fired at peasant demonstrators, killing many, who were demanding for land reform. Two, the unilateral suspension of the GRP in 2004 of the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees) and issuance of warrants of arrest against NDFP consultants and officials. At present, there are 17 NDFP consultants in detention, adding to the more than 300 political prisoners;
4. The NDFP agreed to resume the negotiations with the Aquino regime because of two points: First, the GRP restored the JASIG and suspended the warrant of arrests against the said 17 NDFP

consultants. Second, the head of the GRP negotiation panel earlier declared to the press that the CPP-NPA-NDFP is not a terrorist organization because the GRP has a policy not to negotiate with terrorists. However, the GRP refused to sign such declaration in a joint statement concluding the first round of talks last February;

5. The NDFP stated that armed conflict might stop anytime, if the GRP and NDFP through their negotiation panels sincerely agree on a concise and meaningful agreement addressing the root causes of armed conflict. In the absence of CASER, it is hoped that the GRP provide immediate economic relief for the people to cope with the worsening poverty; and
6. On IP, the NDFP announced that in response to the various IPs Agenda and the Consensus IPs Policy Agenda last year and the National IP Summit Declaration last March, its Peace Panel has created a sub-committee (Working Group) on IPs under its RWC-CASER. This sub-committee (Working Group) shall be composed of IPs resource persons who shall be consulted and assist the RWC-CASER in formulating provisions on IPs rights and concerns. The NDFP has the following initial proposals, which should be enriched through this joint consultation and other future consultations:
 - a. Recognition and respect of ancestral land rights to ownership, utilization, development and management; against plunder of natural resources and displacement from ancestral lands. This would allow IPs to primarily benefit from the resources found within their ancestral lands or territories, promotion of sustainable development, uphold the IPs right to free-prior-informed-consent or decision (FPIC) over any development projects and programs affecting them; revoke all oppressive and discriminatory laws and programs such as repeal the Philippine Mining Act, moratorium on destructive mining and stop processing of existing mining applications; regulate small scale mining; and return, just compensation and/or rehabilitation of ancestral lands forcibly taken from IPs and undertake programs that protect, nurture and develop the environment for the general peoples' welfare.
 - b. Recognition and respect of indigenous socio-political systems; against political misrepresentation and undermining of indigenous systems. This includes a review and revision of the IPRA and of the NCIP and reversal of it anomalous decisions; investigate the performance of the NCIP officials and personnel, and holding those found to be violating IPs rights accountable; ensure genuine participation of IPs in the setting-up of any structure meant for IPs to establish a commission truly dedicated in upholding the rights of IPs; and transparent and participatory selection and appointment process in such structure, and in its monitoring, assessment and evaluation.
 - c. Adequate social and basic services; against historical denial of services. Assert self-determined, self-reliant and sustainable development towards the eradication of poverty among IPs. Free health services and development of indigenous health care systems. Recognizing, reviving and strengthening indigenous institutions, knowledge and practices that promote and enhance food security and agricultural biodiversity.
 - d. Recognition and development as distinct peoples; against cultural discrimination and ethnocide. Include IPs rights, history and situation in the academic curricula;

showcase exemplary indigenous knowledge systems/traditional knowledge. Review of textbooks. Provide training for teachers. Foster unity and understanding between IPs and non-IPs.

- e. Recognition and development of indigenous culture; against commercialization of culture.
- f. Respect to life, liberty and security; against militarization. Work for the attainment of peace based on social justice by supporting peace initiatives that address militarization of indigenous communities and initiatives for the peaceful resolution of tribal/inter-community conflicts. Prohibit the use of State security forces in the implementation and operation of destructive projects such as mining, energy plants.
- g. Implementation and faithful compliance with international standards particularly the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Peoples' Response

After the panels' opening statements, responses from the people were drawn. Speakers from the 6 provinces, Baguio City, and sectors in the Cordillera delivered their issues, demands, and aspirations for a just and lasting peace. The common issues among the six provinces of the Cordillera and Baguio City are summarized in the following points:

1. As IPs, their right to self determination must be recognized and central to this is the recognition of ancestral land rights including resources found therein. An elder from Mountain Province said, there are two governments in the Cordillera – the local government units and the traditional government through the elders – that indicates the persistence of IPs self-governance. Thus, the government must respect and support the development of traditional systems of governance;
2. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is deficient to fully recognize IP rights. In fact, it is used by scrupulous individuals in cahoots with the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and private financiers to facilitate entry of destructive commercial projects into IPs ancestral lands, and/or appropriate ancestral lands for themselves. In the case of fraudulent Certificate of Ancestral Domain/Land Titles (CADT/CALT) in Baguio City, the consultation called for the cancellation of said CADTs or CALTs, and award such to genuine ancestral land claimants;
3. The cancellation of all approved mining applications and the repeal of Mining Act of 1995. A moratorium on hydro-dams and geothermal plants, and implement programs on alternative and sustainable energy production. A stop to logging operations specifically in Apayao and allow the regeneration of logged-out forests;
4. A stop to militarization and violation of human rights and justice must be served to all victims. End the government's new counter insurgency program Oplan Bayanihan that violates individual and collective as seen in the bombing of mountains, burning of forests, encampment in civilian facilities and houses, extra-judicial killings and enforce disappearances with impunity, and harassment and threats against Cordillera health and development workers such as the case of CHESTCORE, an NGO providing health services in the region that the military tagged as NPAs;

5. An end to the commercialization and perversion of indigenous culture such as during tourist-oriented festivals. Indigenous culture, traditions and practices must be respected and enhanced;
6. The destruction of the environment must be stopped. Culprit mining firms such as the Lepanto Consolidate Mining Corporation should indemnify and rehabilitate the communities for damages due to its operations specifically the destruction of the Abra river and agricultural lands along its banks, and the Cellophil Resources Corporation for the denudation of the Abra forests. The government should also be made accountable in the same manner for allowing such destructive operations;
7. Corruption in the government that severely affects the delivery of basic social services must be stopped and the culprits must be brought to justice. Investigate and prosecute former Pres. Arroyo and other officials for their heavy corruption, human rights violations and other crimes against the peoples of the Cordillera;
8. Prioritize IPs in the delivery of basic social services like health, education, livelihood, infrastructure, communications, water, transportation and the like;
9. 9) Government to provide proper attention to raise the agricultural production in the region based on people's need and promote food security and self-reliance instead of relying on agricultural importation and agro-chemical food production;
10. 10) Legislate policies and implement programs that would end the unequal distribution of wealth manifested in the disparity of income and budget allocations; and
11. 11) Immediately investigate and prosecute the scattering of spikes on the roads to Lacub that caused flat tires of several vehicles of participants attending Cordillera Day. The consultation believes that this is a desperate act of the military to prevent participation and sabotage the said celebration.

Summary of sectoral issues and concerns

1. The high cost of commercialized education makes it inaccessible to many. Institute educational reforms such as a policy for higher State subsidy and budget for education and for the immediate a declaration of at least three years moratorium on increase of school fees. Respect student's and teachers' democratic rights in schools such as to peaceably assemble, investigate and prosecute violators. Develop a nationalist, scientific and relevant education curriculum and the enjoyment of academic freedom and freedom of expressions.
2. Respect women's rights. A stop, investigation, and prosecution of military abuses including sexual abuses and seductions that led to breaking of some families of married women. Provide adequate jobs and rural development to prevent the number of women forced to go the urban centres and abroad to look for odd jobs, their desperation making them vulnerable to exploitation. Institute protection for migrant workers against illegal recruiters and abusive employees. Government support on livelihood and services that will enable the families to meet their daily basic needs.

3. Adequate support for the urban poor such as land and housing, livelihood and employment opportunities, and adequate social services.
4. Stop of repression in the work places. Eliminate contractual and other forms of flexible work. Stop privatization of social services and repeal the oil deregulation law. Legislated, across the board and nationwide wage increase. Implement a national industrialization program to resolve unemployment and under employment.
5. Stop the destruction of land and resources due to destructive projects like mining operations. Genuine agrarian reform not only on the distribution of farm lands to the tenants but also on the construction and improvement of irrigation facilities, fair costing of agricultural products, and adequate social services in the countryside.



Copies and documents of these issues and demands were submitted to the presidium for proper documentation and filing.

Panels' Rejoinder

The NDFP stated that these demands are the root causes of the armed conflict. The ongoing armed struggle being waged by the CPP-NPA-NDFP is dedicated to address these issues and demands of the people. As early as 1970s, the NPA formed defence units to protect human rights, ancestral lands and village life of indigenous peoples. Until now, the armed revolution is continuing but the NDFP is willing to enter into qualitative and substantial agreements to address the root causes of armed conflicts and ready to stop the armed conflict if said agreements are forged and genuinely implemented. The NDFP assured the people that all the issues and demands raised in the consultation shall be included in the agreements.

The response of GRP panel was promising. Panel member Mr. Dayanghirang acknowledged all the points raised and ensured the people that he will bring all these issues and demands to the government and to the negotiating table for proper consideration and action. He assured the consultation that even without the CASER, the President can act on certain issues such as on the IPRA CADT/CALT, agriculture and others that fall under the prerogative of the executive. However, on issues pertaining to defense of ancestral lands and resources, he insisted that the existing legal framework provided by the UNDRIP, IPRA and the GRP constitution ensures protection of such. On the matter of military encampment in civilian houses such as in Buneg, Lacub, he relayed the military's response that their presence in Buneg is part of their work in the implementation of Oplan Bayanihan; and that he shall report such to the GRP peace panel and concerned government agencies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion of the consultation was made through the closing statements of both parties, their consultants and resource persons; a presentation of the summary of high demands by Ms. Fiag-oy from the presidium; Lakay Banag, an elder from Kalinga, delivered a challenge for both Parties and to the consultation; an indigenous closing ritual by elders of Abra; and acknowledgement from the Chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance.

The challenge from the elder-leader emphasized that agreements are good and binding only if the contending parties observe them in good faith. Agreements and negotiations are useless if parties do not comply to such. It is regretful that experiences show that the GRP is always the party in bad faith as seen in their violations and non-compliance to the first substantive agreement on human rights and international humanitarian laws and other resolutions. The elder challenged both panel, especially the GRP who is in power, that the result of this consultation should be included in the CASER and it must be complied in good faith. If the GRP fails to comply, it is but logical that the armed revolution shall remain. will be getting stronger and the glorious experiences of the anti Chico dam and anti-Celophil logging armed struggles will flourish.

The closing ritual by Abra elders sealed the integrity and result of the consultation. The ritual added that all men and women participants of the consultation must continuously do their part and for that they shall remain good men and women. However, those who chose to disobey the results of the consultation shall naturally be unhappy, suffer bad luck and distortion of physical shape.

The main sponsors acknowledged the efforts of both panel, members of the presidium, the participants and their speakers, and the presence of numerous observers of the fruitful and victorious consultation. Without any of them, the consultation would be possible. They also reiterated the recommendations from the consultation as follows:

1. For the participants to support the peace negotiations between the GRP and NDFP, and actively engage both Parties to address the roots of the armed conflict specifically the exploitation and oppression of IPs, for a just and lasting peace;
2. For both Parties to conduct continuing consultations and dialogues with IPs particularly at the grassroots level, and institute responsive mechanisms and reforms especially the GRP – being the Party in power; and
3. For all to gather broader support towards the realization of the proposals and monitoring the response and/or commitment of both Parties to address the issues that the participants raised during the consultation.

The peace consultation was worthy but exhaustive. It started past 8:00 am and ended at about 1:00 pm.