

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

THE THIRD GRP-MILF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING WAS HELD ON FEBRUARY 4-6, 1998 AT SAMPORNA HALL, MARAWI RESORT HOTEL, MARAWI CITY TO RESUME THE PEACE NEGOTIATION PURSUANT TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES SIGNED BY THE GRP AND MILF PEACE PANELS ON JULY 18, 1997.

DURING THE EN BANC SESSION OF THE GRP-MILF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE, BOTH PARTIES AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE BY THE GRP AND MILF, AND TO DEFUSE THE TENSION CREATED BY UNFORTUNATE INCIDENTS IN THE RECENT PAST, IT IS AGREED THAT THE GRP SHALL IMMEDIATELY COMMENCE TO REPOSITION ITS FORCES IN BULDON, MAGUINDANAO, AT LEAST FIVE KILOMETERS AWAY FROM BANGANAN RIVER TO BE COMPLETED NOT LATER THAN FEBRUARY 20, 1998; PROVIDED THAT THE MILF SHALL NOT OCCUPY VACATED AREAS. TO THIS END, THE GRP AND THE MILF HEREBY REAFFIRM TO STRICTLY ADHERE TO THE IMPLEMENTING OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES OF THE GRP AND MILF AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES SIGNED ON 14 NOVEMBER 1997.
2. THE GRP SHALL IMMEDIATELY EXERT ITS UTMOST EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE WATERSHED ISSUE INVOLVING UPPER MINABAY-BAGANGAN-AMBAL RIVERS IN BULDON, MAGUINDANAO. IN CONSULTATION WITH CONCERNED PARTIES AND COORDINATION WITH APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, THE GRP SHALL CAUSE THE PROPOSED IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF LOGGING OPERATIONS OF THE COTABATO TIMBER COMPANY, INC., AND OTHER LOGGING CONCESSIONAIRES IN THE AREA UNTIL FINAL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN THE BAGANGAN-AMBAL AREA.
3. IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY OBSERVE AND IMPLEMENT THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, THE GRP AND MILF TECHNICAL COMMITTEES AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING:
 - A. OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE MONITORING OFFICE OF THE GRP-MILF COORDINATING COMMITTEES ON CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, IN COTABATO CITY AND SUB-OFFICES IN MARAWI CITY AND OTHER AREAS TO BE DETERMINED LATER;


B. EXPANSION OF THE INDEPENDENT FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP, CHAIRED BY FR. ELISEO R. MERCADO JR., OMI; AND,

C. FORMATION OF A QUICK-RESPONSE TEAM (QRT) COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE GRP, MILF, AND THE INDEPENDENT FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE TO IMMEDIATELY ADDRESS ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES; PROVIDED, THAT THE QRT IS CHAIRED BY THE IFFC.

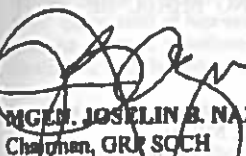
THIS AGREEMENT SHALL TAKE EFFECT ON THE 7th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 1998.


BOTH PARTIES AGREED TO HOLD THE FOURTH GRP-MILF TECHNICAL MEETING ON A DATE AND VENUE TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER TO START THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE FORMAL PEACE TALKS.

DONE ON FEBRUARY 7, 1998 AT SAMPORNA HALL, MARAWI RESORT HOTEL, MARAWI CITY.


ASENCIO JOVENAL F. LAZAGA
Chairman, GRP SCAS


SHEIKH MONER BAJUNAID
Chairman, MILF SCAS


MGEN. JOSELIN B. NAZARENO
Chairman, GRP SCCH


ATTY. OMAR B. UMPAR
Chairman, MILF SCCH