



LEAGUE OF CITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

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LINA O. MONTILLA
Focal Mayor for Gender and Development

PEACE TALKS

by

Atty. Edgardo D. Pamintuan

GRP Panel Adviser Representing the Local Government Units
President, League of Cities of the Philippines
Mayor, City of Angeles

I am humbled by the opportunity to represent the local government units in the coming peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines in Oslo, Norway.

As president of the League of Cities of the Philippines and Angeles City Mayor, I believe that my role as adviser involves not only offering insights and the LGU perspective but also to help consolidate the GRP peace panel and achieve unity with the NDF panel even on contentious issues laid on the negotiation table.

The “protracted war” being waged for more than 46 years has resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of rural folks specifically the Indigenous Peoples, fisher-folks, farmers and farm workers, and the rural poor, in general. It has resulted in death of tens of thousands and the disappearance of hundreds. The best and the brightest of the country's youth have offered their very lives for the cause they believed in – both as revolutionaries and as young officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). It has affected the growth of the country, in general, and the development of local government units, in particular.

History would prove that the LGUs are among the most affected in this war. We bear the brunt of the ill-effects of armed encounters between the AFP/PNP and the NPA. Agricultural production, livelihood and economic activities are negatively affected. Towns and barangays stagnate. Our families and children are caught in the crossfire.



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The coming peace negotiations could use the positive experiences in Guatemala and El Salvador as models particularly the signings of the Chapultepec Peace Accords on January 16, 1992 in Mexico City and the Guatemalan Peace Agreement on December 29, 1996 in Guatemala City.

President Duterte is determined to end the armed conflict by addressing its root causes of poverty, injustice, lack of social and economic opportunities for the poor, and the exploitation of the basic sectors perpetuated by the elite/oligarchs.

Once peace is realized, we could begin the comprehensive development of our country-sides. More budgets could be allocated for agriculture modernization and inputs. Economic activity will benefit the rural poor. The urban poor families will have the opportunity to return to their provinces as better livelihood and employment will be present.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has already walked the extra mile for the peace talks to resume. As a proof of sincerity, the Duterte administration has agreed to the release on bail of jailed NDF consultants for them to be able to participate in the peace negotiations.

We resume the road to peace with a long and back-breaking journey of 9,681 kilometers to Oslo, Norway. The process will be difficult but it is worth traversing for our country and the Filipino people.