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SULTAN KUDARAT, MAGUINDANAO, APRIL 29, 2013? The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), United Nations, and the World Bank signed today a new technical assistance program to support the peace process and the establishment of the Bangsamoro in Southern Philippines. Bangsamoro refers to the new political entity that will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), as provided for by the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB). The Philippine government and the MILF signed the framework last year to promote peace and development in southern Philippines. The new technical assistance program - the Facility for Advisory Support for Transition Capacities (FASTRAC) - will assist the MILF and the Government of the Philippines in building capacity to address key issues for the Bangsamoro such as governance, justice, combatant transition and security. Priority areas of support will be determined by the Transition Commission, MILF, and the Philippine government. FASTRAC will provide on-demand access to a pool of experts, training, policy advice, research and international exchanges. Speaking at the launch of the new program in Camp Darapanan, United Nations Resident Coordinator Luiza Carvalho said, "FASTRAC will provide the Transition Commission and related institutions access to the best possible national and international expertise in moving forward with the peace process, especially in the drafting of the Basic Law that will reflect the Bangsamoro peoples aspirations for genuine autonomy while establishing the basis for efficient and accountable government. On December 17, 2012, President Benigno S. Aquino III created the Transition Commission tasked to draft the proposed Basic Law that will govern the Bangsamoro. In addition to technical advice, FASTRAC will support community outreach and consultations to ensure that the new Basic Law reflects the views of communities across the Bangsamoro. Mr. Al Haj Murad, Chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, welcomed the launch of FASTRAC saying that the MILF is committed to an inclusive peace process to bring security and prosperity to all in the Bangsamoro. "Technical support of the UN and World Bank will give us access to ideas and practices that have been found successful in other parts of the world, said Mr. Murad. "It will help us reach out to communities and facilitate local dialogue and consultation to secure broader ownership and help us draft the best possible Basic Law. Ensuring that the process of drafting the law is inclusive will be as important as the substance of the law itself, Mr. Murad added. FASTRAC and its activities will be initially financed through the UN Peace-Building Fund and the World Bank State and Peace Building Fund. Development partners will also be invited to contribute funds and expertise. The estimated budget for FASTRAC over three years is approximately US\$7 million. A Project Fund for FASTRAC will be established. The UN will assume full fiduciary responsibility of any funding from development partners for the operations of FASTRAC. As fiduciary responsibility and accountability to contributing donors rests with the UN, the UN Resident Coordinator or his/her delegate will have ultimate responsibility for the release of funding for mobilization of expertise and small scale activities. World Bank Country Director Motoo Konishi said the World Bank places the highest importance on supporting peace and security in Mindanao. "This new program is very much linked to the World Banks goal of helping the poor in the country. We are all aware that there is a strong link between conflict and poverty, said Mr. Konishi. "Ultimately, we want to see more job opportunities, more children going to school, and more people accessing basic social services without any disruption due to conflict. The UN will draw on its roster and networks of national and international experts to provide support on issues like wealth sharing, normalization, security sector reform, public administration, and governance. The World Bank will also make available experts on matters like development planning, justice sector reform, macroeconomic management in post-conflict situations, natural resource management, and fiscal and tax policies. Closing the launching ceremony, Mr. Mohager Iqbal, Chair of the MILF Peace Panel and Chair of the Transition Commission, said: "The ongoing assistance of the international community is crucial as we move into the next phase of the transition process. We thank the UN, World Bank and all our international partners for their support. FASTRAC facility experts will be based in Cotabato City. The program is expected to run until 2016. In Manila Dave Llorito : (632) 4652512 dllorito@worldbank.org In Washington Carl Hanlon : tel : (202) 473-8087 chanlon@worldbank.org United Nations Manila Anthony dela Cruz : tel : (63) 9175415330 anthony.delacruz@undp.org

Pressekontakt

The World Bank

DC 20433 Washington

Firmenkontakt

The World Bank

DC 20433 Washington

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