

PRIVILEGE SPEECH

15th Council Session
November 25, 2008
Davao City

MINDANAO WEEK OF PEACE
By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

Last Tuesday, Madam President, I commended Mr. Butch Ramirez, the head of the Philippine Sports Commission for initiating the Sports for Peace for our children.

Today, as part of the week-long celebration of Mindanao Week of Peace, from November 27 to December 3, 2008, we salute the young people of Mindanao for crafting the Peace Agenda as seen from the perspective of our youth.

The Mindanao Youth Peace Conference on November 23-25 at the Grand men Seng Hotel here will craft a peace agenda from among the series of brainstorming and workshops that began last year among leaders of organizations of Christians, Moro and Indigenous Peoples, according to the Mindanao Sulu Pastoral Conference-Youth Secretariat (MSPC-YS), conference organizer.

The young Mindanaowons will discuss interreligious dialogue, the youth situation amid the recurring conflict and changing peace and security and sustaining the past gains of peace efforts and initiatives.

“In the workshops, the youth participants were able to map out the causes of conflicts in their respective areas in particular and in Mindanao in general,” and at the end of these first series of workshops “strategies in moving from conflict to peace were identified”.

As the end of the conference, the Mindanao Youth Peace Conference would like these youth leaders “to speak about their Peace Agenda notwithstanding their differences, reflect, drawing from the calls of their respective faiths, discern and articulate the imperatives, and decide to act together.

The youth leaders represent the three major groupings in Mindanao – the Moro, Christians and Indigenous Peoples. Their conference carries the theme “Reconciliation and Peace in Mindanao: Realities and Imperatives” and the sub-theme “The Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous Peoples Youth Leaders: Looking Back, Looking Inwards, and Looking Ahead”. The MSPC-YS is being supported by the Bishops-Ulama Conference-Mindanao Tripartite Youth Core, United Tribal Youth in Mindanao and United Youth for Peace and Development.

And so may I inform my colleagues and everyone to join us in the many peace efforts and peace activities lined-up for this week and next week, especially on its opening day where a program at Rizal Park and a motorcade will be held on November 27, 2008 at 3:00 P.M.

And lastly, allow me to reiterate here the joint statement of the Bishops-Ulama Conference:

“During our dialogue with the local communities of Christians and Muslims, certain concerns have been brought to our attention. In response we wish to state the following:

1. We renew our call for the cessation of all hostilities in order to create a climate of peace where diverse voices can confidently be expressed and sincerely heard. And on the recent violence committed by rebel groups in some parts of Mindanao, let the force of the law be applied with justice that leads to peace. We appeal to let the peace talks between the GRP and the MILF continue, in whatever level or means, and let peace panels be convened as soon as the situation allows it.

2. We urge the national and the local government to intensify efforts to stop kidnapping, especially in Mindanao. Kidnapping hurts families, wastes precious lives and so much resources, endangers peace and development advocates and humanitarian workers. Kidnapping does not serve the Bangsamoro struggle for independence for self-determination. We speak to the families of the kidnapers – please touch the hearts of your kin to consider the pains inflicted on the families of the victims. We call on all concerned sectors of society to organize and devise more effective ways to curb this menace.

3. We would like to make special request to various healing professionals and practitioners. Please devote extra time and expertise for the care of so many victims, witnesses, and even perpetrators of violence, past and present. Their wound and scars, both as individuals and as communities, are still waiting for that kind of treatment that can bring back forgiveness, reconciliation and wholeness.”

Peace be with you...

PILAR C. BRAGA, PhD
City Councilor