



Hans Koechler Political and Philosophical Society (HKPPS)

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Manila, Philippines, 15 December 2008

Innsbruck University Professor and former UN Observer, Dr. Hans Koechler, Calls for Full Implementation by Government of the Republic of the Philippines of National and International Rules on Indigenous Peoples

“PRINCIPLE OF ANCESTRAL TERRITORIALITY” ADVANCED

On the occasion of the Fifth Founding Anniversary of the Political and Philosophical Society named after him, Dr. Koechler of the International Progress Organization in Austria called attention to the human rights situation of the indigenous peoples (IPs) of the Philippines. He referred to reports of repeated violations in terms of dispossession of land and resources, violations of civil rights, not to speak of extrajudicial killings of IP leaders.

Speaking before the HKPPS at the Sulo Hotel in Metro Manila, Prof. Koechler noted the impact of the aborted Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), saying "it could have addressed some of the problems which continue to confront the Southern Philippines today." Specifically, Dr. Koechler said the right of self-determination of the Bangsa Moro people revolves around the concept of "ancestral territoriality" which could not be denied the Bangsa Moro People. He thus advanced the concept of ancestral territoriality for the first time.

The assembly drafted and approved a resolution addressed to the United Nations Organization, through its Human Rights Council, voicing the assembly's concerns, requesting and authorizing Dr. Koechler to represent the HKPPS in its advocacy before that international body.

The Fifth Anniversary Celebration ended with the induction of Dr. Abdulhusin M. Kashim as the new President of the Hans Koechler Political and Philosophical Society, to succeed Dr. Fatemah Remedios C. Balbin. Dr. Koechler administered the oath of office to Dr. Kashim.

The 2008 Anniversary Celebration also marked the “HKPPS Year of the IPs” which began on September 8, 2007, coinciding with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The HKPPS concentrated on the formulation of the “Agenda for Action on IP Concerns,” identifying immediate solutions even as it prepared for the long-term. Taking the cue from Dr. Hans Koechler, the HKPPS sought to relate and strengthen the ties among the cultural communities, giving full support to their existing Inter-tribal System of Justice and Governance based on customary law.

The one-year celebration of the IP Year of 2007 saw the combined efforts of the HKPPS and the Foundation for Social Justice (FSJ), supporting and assisting the IPs in the technical and legal identification of their ancestral lands, and providing legal assistance in criminal, civil , and labor cases – areas where the IPs are invariably at a disadvantage due to inadequate education, professional training, and broad “outside” interaction.

The HKPPS has gradually become involved in the peace negotiations in the Southern Philippines, as the term “Bangsa Moro” in the discussions was redefined to include not only the Muslims but the IPs of Mindanao as well. In this manner, the community concerns and interests of the IPs are formally recognized and protected.

As it entered its Sixth Year this 2009, the HKPPS general membership gave its unanimous approval to the greater participation of the Society in terms of consultation, mediation, and conciliation in the resolution of the ongoing conflicts in Southern Philippines.

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