



## Exploring Peace building efforts with BARMM

Cotabato City, Philippines. BARMM Officials warmly welcomed Rev. Yoshinori Shinohara, ACRP Secretary-General in a courtesy meeting to explore peace building programs at the residence of Hadja Lourdes Mastura in Cotabato City.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was formed with the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2019. BARMM was the culmination of the peace talks between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“Peace building efforts should now focus on post-conflict and post-agreement issues and challenges,” according to Datu Michael O. Mastura. Datu Mastura is a Philippine lawyer, author, and lecturer. He is a descendant of the 16th-century monarch Muhammad Kudarat, also known as Sultan Kudarat of Maguindanao. He served as Representative of the First District of Maguindanao and Cotabato City from 1987 to 1995.

ACRP plans to hold a peace forum to culminate the Executive Council Meeting in May 2023, which will be held in Davao City, Philippines. ACRP has decided to hold its first in-person annual executive council meeting in Davao City. The previous three EC meetings have been conducted online due to the pandemic.

The Peace Forum aims to foster dialogue with BARMM officials and explore common action, especially programs that would benefit the youth and children.

In attendance to the exploratory meeting in Cotabato were: Datu Michael O. Mastura; Hadja Lourdes Mastura; BGen. Francis D. Alaurin (Ret.); Bai Shajida B. Mastura, former mayor of Sultan Kudarat; Atty. Mary Ann Arnado, member of the BARMM Parliament and President of the Mindanao People’s Caucus; Ms. Helen Piol, Regional Program Coordinator of the BARMM-Department of Education; Atty. Ishak V. Mastura, Member of the BARMM Parliament; and, Cotabato Prosecutor Mariam Mastura-Linsangan.

BARMM representatives committed to support the holding of the Peace Forum. All parties agreed to continue the conversation online regarding the dynamics of the forum and the peace action plan.

Hadja Lourdes Mastura, the former president, and now an honorary president of Religions for Peace Philippines, has coordinated the meeting emphasizing that the “ACRP becomes an action-oriented movement only if the EC meeting in May 2023 can produce tangible and practical action that would directly address peace issues in Mindanao.”

ACRP is the largest regional body of religiously inspired people working for peace and interreligious harmony, with national interfaith bodies in 22 countries in Asia. (bb 03/20/2023)

