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ASIA/PHILIPPINES - An "inclusive agreement" for peace in the southern Philippines: religious leaders meet with the government

Zamboanga City (Agenzia Fides) – To explore all possible ways and solutions to achieve peace; to promote an "inclusive" agreement, which takes into account all the components of religious, ethnic and cultural needs of society in the Southern Philippines are the key points which emerged in the meeting between the Islamic and Christian religious leaders in Mindanao, gathered in the "Interfaith Council of Leaders" (IFCL) and representatives of the Government Office in charge of negotiations in the Southern Philippines. As Fides learns, the meeting, held on 4 November, was a-three-hour "informal session of dialogue". The delegation of the Philippine government was led by Miriam Coronel Ferrer, "Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process", OPAPP.

In a confrontation which was "valuable and fruitful", note sources of Fides, those present shared information and observations on the Peace agreement signed by the government in 1996 with the rebel group "Moro National Liberation Front" (MNLF) and also on the most recent agreement signed in October 2012 with the "Islamc Moro Liberation Front" (MILF) guerrillas, which establishes the new Muslim autonomous region called "Bangsamoro". Religious leaders expressed the desire for an "inclusive agreement" that does not omit the needs of different ethnic and religious groups present in Mindanao. They also emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue between different communities, like a tool that can strengthen social and political pact, expressing concern that, after the raid of the MNLF rebels in Zamboanga, a city on the island of Mindanao, about a month ago, it seems that these relationships have deteriorated.

On the topic of "how to achieve a truly inclusive agreement" and the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, even the movement for dialogue "Sisilah" focused on this point, animated by the PIME missionary in Zamboanga Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra. The movement "Silsilah" is working strongly in raising awareness for a better understanding of the framework agreement that establishes the "Bangsamoro" region. The movement is convinced, in fact, that dialogue is more effective and constructive if it is preceded and supported by information on the different implications, meaning and impact of the peace agreement on the real life of local populations.

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