**PRESS RELEASE**

FBO PH

**Christian groups unite for greater peace-building efforts in Marawi and across the country, launch Philippine FBO Forum**

Around 40 faith-based organizations in the Philippines from the Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches, in a historic convergence on November 28, 2017 pledged for greater peace-building efforts in the country, especially now in Marawi.

“Nine years ago, the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) was the first instance CBCP (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines), NCCP (National Council of Churches in the Philippines) and PCEC (Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches) were able to work together. Today we launch the Philippine FBO Forum (FBO PH) to strengthen our partnership in humanitarian service and advocacy. We do this because we do not want to leave a legacy that is bloody and uncertain,” Rev. Rex RB Reyes, General Secretary of NCCP said during the event.

“Isn’t it beautiful to note that this time in Marawi, despite prejudices, we hear Muslims saying “Christians are helping us. This is what we are called to do. Instead of hate and indifference, we are called to be charitable, to love and to sincerely offer peace,” added Bishop Genesis Udang, President of Mindanao Evangelical Leaders’ Council, a regional network of PCEC.

“When faith-based organizations unite, the multitudes of our lay faithful will be in better position to be resilient, empowered and collectively work for sustainable development. We will be in better position to work for peace and reconciliation,” stated Archbishop Rolando Tria Tirona, National Director of CBCP-National Secretariat for Social Action/Caritas Philippines during the event.

The launching of the Philippine Faith-based Organization Forum (FBO PH) was the Christian churches’ response to the need to institutionalize coordination efforts in humanitarian and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) works among FBOs. It will also be the venue to push the common advocacy agenda of the FBOs, one of which is peace-building and conflict resolution.

Mark Bidder, country head of United Nations-Office of Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs lauds such efforts. “Faith actors are vital in reducing humanitarian need and suffering. When we talk about human rights… it is not a happy situation in the Philippines. To call for your inclusion in decision and policy-making at all levels would be a big step towards making our governments and other actors more responsive to these needs and concerns.”

Despite set-backs, many stakeholders from public and private sectors still believe that peace-building is possible in the Philippines. In Marawi, these activities are supported by Christian groups.

“What we are doing in Mindanao is a testament to our commitment to greater peace-building. But there is more to just being the mouth-piece of peace. We need to make it happen, to make it real. It’s like putting end to hunger. When we stop being greedy, we end poverty. We attain peace when we stop giving hateful remarks, when we stop the killings,” concluded Fr. Edwin A. Gariguez, NASSA/Caritas Philippines’ Executive Secretary.

FBO PH will also be pushing strongly for its humanitarian advocacies, amplifying the stories of the communities it serve. The 83 representatives coming from different regions in the country pledged to work together at the local level in focusing on DRRM efforts and humanitarian advocacy as an initial step forward. The FBOs pledged to continue journeying in solidarity with the most vulnerable communities who are being left behind.

NCCP is the ecumenical fellowship of Protestant and non-Roman Catholic denominations in the Philippines, working on humanitarian, development and advocacy as part of its programs.

Philippine Relief and Development Services (PHILRADS) is the relief and development arm of PCEC, working hand-in-hand with the local churches doing its holistic ministries.

NASSA/Caritas Philippines is the humanitarian, development and advocacy arm of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines.

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