

## PHILIPPINES

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Activity Venue:

Conference Room

Institute of Autonomy and  
Governance

Notre Dame University

Cotabato City

## IP Leaders Consultation on the Bangsamoro Basic Law and Tran- sition Commission

**On June 19, 2013, several leaders and representatives of the non-Islamized indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao gathered at the Conference Room of the Institute of Autonomy and Governance inside the Notre Dame University Complex, Cotabato City for a consultation on the possibilities of participating in the governance of the future Bangsamoro political entity.**

The discussion was organized by the office of Hon. Froilyn Mendoza, Commissioner of the Transition Commission, the Institute of Autonomy and Governance and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Dr. Peter Köppinger, the Resident Country Representative welcomed the participants and asked them two crucial questions. First, he asked if they are willing to be part of the power structure. If the answer is in the affirmative, the discussion will center on the options of participating in the power structures of the future Bangsamoro new political entity.

Hon. Mendoza then provided the participants with the updates on the action points of the GPH-MILF Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro (FAB). She assured the indigenous peoples groups that the traditional rights are stipulated in the FAB however for these rights to be respected and enforced, the core areas and profile of the IPs need to be defined. She also elaborated on the hesitation and wariness of the IPs to participate in the electoral system due to their horrible experiences with the current power structures.

**During the discussion, Dr. Köppinger presented four options for IP participation and representation in the future Bangsamoro.**

**The first option for IP representation** in the future Bangsamoro is through legal provision. The IPs can be represented by their own member of Parliament. Important questions to be decided for this option include considerations on the processes of appointing or electing the IP representative. Questions on the legitimacy of the IP representative also need to be answered. The participants shared that based on previous experiences, the legal provisions will only work if both sides will recognize the rights of the IPs.

**The second option for representation** is through participation in the general elections under the current electoral system. However, the current political structures are clan-dominated and patron-oriented. Under the current system, the IPs do not have a real chance of representation. This option can be viable if the present Congressional district boundaries be redrafted in favor of IP-dominated areas and in these areas, the IPs may have a chance of winning a congressional seat.

**The third option for IP representation** is through participation in the general elections under a proportional representation electoral system with region-wide party lists.

**The fourth option** is also through participation in the general elections under a proportional representation electoral system with province wide party-lists. The third and fourth options are only viable provided that

two conditions are met. First, the current electoral system must be transformed into an electoral system with strong proportional representation elements. Secondly, under a proportional representative system, the role of "genuinely principled political parties" is important. The IP leaders can be members of these parties provided that these organizations recognize their rights. Active engagement in real political parties will enable IP leaders to be part of the party-list of major political parties. Their position in the party-list may serve as an incentive to get the IP to vote for the party. Coalitions with other parties can be built but these alliances must be built on values and principles.

Concluding the presentation, Dr. Köppinger stressed that the rights approach can be undertaken but for these rights to be protected, the IPs must be part of the power structure. He told them that the focus should not just be on rights but in influencing the decision towards an electoral system where the IP has a greater chance of participation. He cautioned the IPs against stepping out of the political game too early.

The consultation is the first event in the series of discussions on the work of the Transition Commission and the updates on the progress of the GPH-MILF Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro.