



STATEMENT OF THE MILF PEACE IMPLEMENTING PANEL

July 31, 2023

As the parties prepare for the resumption of the decommissioning of 1,301 combatants and firearms under Phase 3 on August 3, 2023, the MILF Peace Implementing Panel would like to make the following declarations:

1. The decommissioning of MILF combatants and their weapons is the responsibility of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB) with active participation from the GPH and MILF. Under the roadmap, the MILF combatants will undergo a graduated and gradual decommissioning in four phases. The decommissioning of combatants and their weapons signifies the transition of their communities to progressive societies.
2. The “decommissioning” of the remaining 1,301 combatants under Phase 3 on August 3, 2023 is merely the profiling of the combatants and possibly their receipt of the cash assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development. But looking closely, decommissioning is the whole process of transforming lives of combatants so that they become productive civilians. We look forward to other interventions that would make this possible. Same is true for those who have been decommissioned since 2015.
3. In addition, decommissioning, however, is just one of the components of normalization. The other components include the disbandment of private armed groups, transitional justice, amnesty, the transformation of six acknowledge MILF camps into productive communities, and socio-economic programs, among others. The parties, especially GPH, must also fulfill these other components of normalization for lasting peace and stability. Without implementing these different aspects, MILF combatants will not be able to move forward and rebuild their lives as their situation has not changed.
4. Thus, the successful completion of decommissioning in the future hinges and depends on the parallel and commensurate implementation of the other aspects of normalization. Normalization is not a buffet where parties can choose what they want and disregard others.
5. To dream of the complete decommissioning of MILF combatants and weapons while leaving the other aspects of normalization unfulfilled and unimplemented will not result in peace. Such premature decommissioning weakens the capacity of the MILF to deliver its commitments. Peace partners should not undermine but instead strengthen each other.
6. In the end, the speed and progress of decommissioning in the future lie in the hands of the National Government and whether they can implement with the same enthusiasm and speed as they implement decommissioning the other aspects of normalization, i.e., transitional justice, amnesty, the transformation of six acknowledge MILF camps into productive communities, socio-economic development, and disbandment of private armed groups, among others.