

# Muslim Religious Unite

## Proceedings of the Third National Ulama Summit of the Philippines

### Introduction

It was an end and a beginning.

The Third National Summit of the Ulama of the Philippines, held in Davao City from January 25-28, 2010, represented a culmination of a very difficult but successful *Empowering the Ulama of the Philippines* project. The project, started in 2007 by the Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc. (MKFI) and the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID), has succeeded in providing a platform, through the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (NUCP) for the unification of the different Ulama and Ulama organizations in the Philippines. The 3rd Ulama Summit, in fact, saw the participation of 150 organizations from Isabela to Tawi-Tawi making NUCP truly national in scope.

But the Third Ulama Summit also represented the beginning of a challenging road ahead for the NUCP. The end of the three-year project signified a critical stage in the NUCP's young life as an organization. Will it be able to sustain its initial gains? Or will it fall by the wayside just like what happened to previous attempts at establishing a national network? These are questions that the Ulama need to answer.

The 2010 Summit adopted the theme, "A Common Word towards a Common Peace," which is an indication of the commitment of the Ulama to working together and vigorously for peace in their communities and their realization that such efforts requires reaching out to peacemakers of other faiths in a meaningful dialog.

## **Alternative Leadership for the *Ummah***

The summit kicked off with the traditional opening dinner ceremonies held at the Garden Tent of the Waterfront Insular Hotel in Davao City on January 25, 2010. Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc (MKFI) Chair **Dr. Santanina Rasul** welcomed the participants and guests to the Third National Ulama Summit and commended the Ulama for starting the process of unification that began in 2007. She said that there is a need to sustain and consolidate the gains made the past two years. The former Senator also highlighted the significance of the theme of this year's summit: ***A Common Word towards a Common Peace***. She explained that the letter, A Common Word Between Us and You, which was written by 138 Muslim scholars as an invitation to interfaith dialog, has been the subject of a number of conferences and discussions around the world. She congratulated the Ulama for beginning a conversation on the historic letter among Muslim religious scholars in the Philippines.

**Dr. Aboulkhair S. Tarason**, the incumbent Chairman of the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (NUCP), explained how the world, in the face of many conflicts, is in utmost need for tolerance and peaceful coexistence between peoples of different faiths and ethnicity. Dr. Tarason pointed out that Islam should play an important role in this regard. He said that Islam's message to mankind is to "enjoin justice and understanding, forbid oppression and envy, establish the principles of peace and harmony, peaceful coexistence among different people." He exhorted the Ulama to lead in this endeavor by strengthening the NUCP, which is envisioned to be the vehicle for ulama unity and the country and their increasing role in peace and development in Muslim communities.

**Ambassador Stephen Lilie** of the Embassy of the United Kingdom echoed this sentiment as he expressed his belief that Ulama have really an important role to play for the prosperity and happiness of the Muslim community. In particular, he hoped that the Ulama could play an important role in fostering honest election that can encourage Muslim voters to exercise their democratic right for the good of the country. The British embassy has co-funded the 3-year ***Empowering the Ulama of the Philippines Project*** that has led to the birth of the NUCP as the first truly national network of Ulama organizations in the Philippines. Ambassador Lilie, who only recently assumed the top diplomatic post for the UK in the Philippines, also expressed his strong belief that the "Muslim society here will have a strong unified voice which can help you play an increasingly important role in the country in achieving peace and development." And while their funding support to the Ulama project will end by March 2010, he assured the Ulama that the British Embassy would continue to give "moral and political support to the Ulama's journey for peace and prosperity in the country."

**Dr. Steven R. Rood**, the Country Representative of The Asia Foundation, related that TAF has been working with the PCID on activities like forums and lectures that directly affect their communities. In partnership with PCID, the foundation has embarked on presenting the Islamic perspective on democracy, religious sectors' role in promoting peaceful election in Mindanao, and the need to mainstream the Muslim development agenda. It is in these dealings with the Ulama that TAF, Dr. Rood explained, recognized the role of the Muslim religious sector in the community especially in mitigating conflict and building peace. He added that the success of its conflict management and electoral reforms programs have been possible principally because of the participation of the Ulama. He expressed the hope that the Ulama will explore its potential in responding to socio-political issues or development initiatives and that the support of religious leaders from Singapore, Indonesia and Egypt will further strengthen and empower the Ulama and the NUCP to effectively engage in peace and development initiatives in the country.

**Mr. Titon Mitra**, Minister Counsellor for Development Cooperation of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), related how the Australian government is privileged to be associated with the formation of the NUCP and might recommend ways on how it can further support the organization. He also announced that Australia is very much interested in working with the UNCP because it has huge potential to bring peace and prosperity and advance the interest of the Muslims throughout the country. He explained that the notion of a Philippines where people irrespective of faith, ethnicity or clan can live in harmony is very important in Australia. "Like in the Philippines, there is separation of church and state in Australia, but religious groups there play a critical role in being the moral conscience in society and creating harmony." Mr. Mitra also praised the proposed creation of a movement for moral reawakening called Amal (hope) saying, "the Islamic faith has much to offer in the lack of humanity/morality---as what happened in Maguindanao, the challenges of the upcoming elections, rebuilding quality of governance in Mindanao, and delivering sustainable autonomy for the Moros."

**Mohammed Elballushi**, Representative of the World Islamic Call Society (WICS) for his part urged the NUCP to reflect and understand what the Ulama has and has not yet achieved, as well as the obstacles encountered and how to overcome those. He gave importance to the decision of the organizers to hold the 3rd National Ulama Summit in Davao City citing the fact that the city Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, has been very supportive of the welfare of the Muslims and stand by them in achieving their welfare as well as in the aspects of education, culture and humanitarian development. This indicates, he said, that Davao is a model of co-existence among all religions. He concluded by congratulating the efforts of the Ulama and goodhearted people and that he "look forward to witness more development for the sake of everyone."

The final message for the evening came from the lead convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) **Ms. Amina Rasul** who recalled that during the launch of the Empowering the Ulama Project she described it as "a simple launch of a not so simple project." Ms. Rasul posited the efforts to unite the ulama vis-a-vis the impetus that led to the creation of PCID. She said that the PCID saw the need for enlightened individuals to speak with one voice and with authority on issues that are of great interest to the Muslims in the country. Since the Muftis and Ulama are in a unique position to shine light on misconceptions and offer up a portrayal of Muslims and Islam, in general, PCID decided to embark on a project that would strengthen the potential of the Ulama to impact peace and development. Ms. Rasul noted the historic features of the organization of the NUCP:

*"First, the NUCP is the first network of Ulama in the Philippines that is truly national in scope-with membership in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Second, the NUCP opened its doors to the Muslim women religious leaders (Aleemat) when it gave two seats for the Aleemat in the NUCP Board. The NUCP also included the Muslim reverts (Balik-Islam) groups, which has one seat in the Board."*

While she congratulated the Ulama for getting this far after three years, she urged them to work harder to sustain the gains made. Highlighting the role of the Ulama, she argued: *"In this time of spiritual and moral hardship, ordinary members of Muslim Ummah yearn for the Ulama to provide the communities with alternative and moral leadership."*

## **Plenary Lectures: "Plurality in Unity"**

The highlight of previous summits has been the participation of international lecturers from various organizations. This year is no different. Gracing the Third National Summit are leaders of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, PERGAS as well as a distinguished representative of the Grand Mufti of Egypt. The plenary was also participated in by a joint session of the Ulama and the Aleemat (more than 300 of them), who are also joining the Women as Peace Advocates Regional Conference.

The keynote address was delivered by **Dr. H. Imam Addaruqutni**, former General Chairman, Muhammadiyah Youth Movement and currently Chairs the Muhammadiyah Dawah Committee. He began his lecture on the experience of Muhammadiyah with interfaith initiatives by saying that Indonesians have subscribed long before to many beliefs and faiths. Plurality, he explained, is enshrined in the national consciousness of Indonesia--which has hundreds of tribes, cultures and languages that have lived in symbiosis for hundreds of years--through the adage: "Plurality in unity always becomes a common word of the citizens of the nation."

Dr. Addaruqutni who is also Dean of Islamic Law at the Institute for Qur'anic Sciences in Jakarta explained that Indonesian Islam is a synergy that is the result of its distance from Mecca, the center of the Islamic world. This distance creates the adulteration between Islam and the local cultures, or a form of accommodative Islam has resulted to the typical Indonesian Islam.

This has also created critics of the so-called accommodative Islam as others say that Islam is without any additional attribution. "Accomodative" Islam, according to this point of view, is no longer Islam as proclaimed by Muhammad the Messenger and needs to be restored to its proper essence.

These two groups--those who view Indonesian Islam as the result of the dynamics of the faith itself and local cultures and those who argue for a return to its fundamental roots--are represented by Nahdlatul Ulama and the reform Islamic proponents that identify themselves as Muhammadiyah. He explained, "Muhammadiyah conceptualizes Islam as a spectrum of synergies emerging from the so-called adulterated Islam which moves on to a purified Islam and results to a transforming Islamic Indonesia. Accommodative Islam is attributed to NU while restorative Islam is link to Muhammadiyah. Although there is friction there forms conformity of brotherhood raised from an atmosphere that is conducive to dialog."

But he clarified that that these two opposing Islamic schools of thought actually share the same theological basis. NU and Muhammadiyah are Sunnite and their

founders are disciples of al-Shikh Ahmad Khatib, one of the ulema in Mecca in the past.

At present both NU and Muhammadiyah exploit the brotherhood trilogy of:

1. *Islamist brotherhood*
2. *Human brotherhood*
3. *National brotherhood*

This concept of brotherhood trilogy plays an effective role in producing religious-based social capital in the light of both the idealized democratic Indonesia and nationalist remaking.

And because it is a large nation with various tribes and cultures, he explained that Muhammadiyah believes that understanding one another is the real key to peace. Egocentrism and ignorance only results to strained relationships and disharmony. In this regard, Muhammadiyah plays a catalytic role in understanding mutuality and especially through harmonious inter-faith communications and relations.

Playing this role means that Muhammadiyah tends to take the middle path. It continuously develops mutual understanding and drive for togetherness to minimize the differences and promote a "stance of commonness."

The representative of the Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheik Ali Gomaa, **Dr. 'Elwi Amin Al-Sayed Khalil**, delivered the plenary lecture. Dr. Khalil, who is also Professor of Islamic Law at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, discussed the imperative of the message of 'A Common Word' by focusing on four key points: (1) The relationship between and among Muslims themselves; (2) The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of brotherhood and humanity; (3) The relationship between Muslims and the people of the revealed religions (the Jews and the Christians); and, (4) The necessary course of action between and among the three divine revealed religions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity).

He stressed the fact that one of the most important truths in Islam is the recognition of all previous civilizations and religions and that Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) is the absolute manifestation of other prophets before him. The Qur'an, he argues, looks at differences among humankind (be it in color of the skin, language, etc.) not as obstacles but as blessings for humanity. What is important is that Muslims, in whatever they do and whomever they deal with, follow what is right as willed by Allah. He stressed that "the fundamental basis of relationship between Muslims and other religions as prescribed by the Islamic Law should be based on complete equality and inclusive justice." The foundation

of the relationship of Muslims and other faiths is also strengthened by strong *aqidah* (faith in God).

Prof. Khalil concluded by urging the Ulama participants to lead in countering "all attempts at fanaticism that can only lead to discord and disunity."

One of the reasons why past summits have invited distinguished scholars from Ulama organizations from all over the world is to allow the new NUCP to learn from their lessons as they attempt to unite the Ulama in the Philippines. This was the focus of the lecture given by **Ustadz Fidaus Bin Yahya**, former Vice President of the very successful Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association (Pergas) and is currently the Director of the Darul Huffaz Learning Centre in Singapore. In his lecture entitled, "Capacitating the Ulama for National Development: The Experience of Pergas" Ustadz Bin Yahya shared Pergas' vision, which is Islamic scholar leadership that is credible and integrated towards community development. Its mission, he explained, is to mold and develop the community's views as well as chart its direction through activities at the strategic and intellectual levels. These are achieved by focusing on its niche that includes: institutional development, current and future ulama, worldview development, social responsiveness and cooperation.

He congratulated the Philippine Ulama for their efforts towards unity noting that "on religious leadership its aim is to influence the community and along it with the Ummah's direction."

He added that in terms of Pergas' strategic and intellectual thrusts, it aims to forge alignments and network between Da'wah organizations, local and international, and influence public opinion through forums and other advocacy works.

He also intimated that Pergas also has religious teachers' development and strategic plans as well as the development of religious teaches accreditation with such programs as part-time Islamic courses for working adults, strategic partnership with local and international Islamic educational institutions and modular courses for *du'ats*.

### **Open Forum: "What is an Alim?"**

The first question from the summit participants focuses on the potential conflict between the essence of Islam and idea of plurality. Dr. Addaruqutni replied "what we want in Indonesia is one understanding towards one nation. For example although a great number still believes in the purity of doctrines, Muhammadiyah believes in utilizing other means such as science especially in the case of the determination of the proper dates for Ramadan or the Ed'l Adha, we

can set the dates up to ten years from now through this." He exclaimed that this issue should not be a big problem since the "common spirit is that differences must be respected in relation to nationalism, religion, and so forth."

By way of responding to the question, Dr. Elwi related the experience of Cairo in terms of pluralism and tolerance. He said that in Cairo the Constitution is based on the Shari'ah. But he stressed, "Its normal for people and cultures to have differences, what is important aside from religion is the spirit of humanity and the respect for each one's religion."

One participant then asked a question that has been grappled with by the Ulama in the Philippines. A question that has never failed to animate a discussion in any of the forums held for the Empowering the Ulama Project: How do you define ulama or what is an alim? In the Philippine context, there is an undefined schism that exist between those who were educated abroad and those who were educated locally.

Dr. Elwi's reply was emphatic: "An alim is anybody who follows Allah, whether you are a graduate of a university or you have no education." He related the story of one doctor who was not really educated but who went to a village to treat a patient. And after treating the patient he told him to follow what Allah says. "That is the real alim or the true meaning of an alim. ***An alim should not be defined through universities and diplomas.***"

One participant asked the Pergas' representative how his organization manages to be successful despite having no support from government. Ustadz Bin Yahya was direct to the point as he stressed the value of self-reliance and autonomy: "We work hard, we have private donations and work with what we have. The important thing is to help ourselves." Dr. Elwi also interjected: "if all Muslims help each other there would be no hungry Muslim in the world. Other Muslims want to be with government, like in Iraq. But we have to depend on ourselves, because if government will help us they can control us."

The last query was regarding the recent controversy regarding the burning of Catholic churches in Malaysia on account of the Christians using the word Allah to refer to God. The speakers' responses were terse but clear. Dr. Elwi said there should be no distinction between religions of how they call God. If a non-Muslim calls God Allah then that is his right. Dr. Addaruqutni said: "we can't force other to be like us."

### **Panel Discussion: "A Common Word between Us and You"**

On October 11, 2007, a group of 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals sent an open letter, entitled *A Common Word Between Us and You*, to Pope Benedict XVI and the leaders of other Christian denominations. This was a letter



precipitated by the speech delivered by the Pope on September 12, 2006 at the University of Regensburg, Germany that contained some comments on Islam that led to widespread protests by Muslims around the world.

A Common Word has since received tremendous responses particularly from the Christians. The most highly publicized positive response was written by a group of four academics---Harold W. Attridge, Miroslav Volf, Joseph Cumming, and Emilie M. Townes---from Yale University, entitled *Loving God and Neighbor Together* and has been endorsed by over 300 Christian leaders from around the world.

In the Philippines, the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) have attempted to address the need to strengthen interfaith as well as intra-faith dialog using *A Common Word* as framework. *A Common Word* must be understood and accepted by leaders of both faiths. But *A Common Word* must first be accepted by members of the same faith - a challenge in today's environment where Muslim groups are divided and are in conflict at times. Hence the panel discussion on *A Common Word* during the 3rd Ulama Summit.

**Ustadz Abdulmuhmin Mujahid** discussed the issues by focusing on inter-cultural experiences during his trip to the United States in 2008 with fellow ulama- Alim Bajunaid Ibrahim, Alim Abdulaziz Kamal and Aleema Jubaira Said. Ustadz Mujahid, who is also vice chair of the Basilan Ulama Supreme Council, said that the experienced introduced their group and their American counterparts to the fundamental and basic principles of Christianity as well as the practice of Islam in one another's countries. He said that the key to interfaith dialog is to understand the unknown, i.e., the other religion. This program which allowed them to visit different religious centers including a Lutheran, Evangelical church, mosques and even synagogues in different cities and states in the US showed them that it is possible for both Muslims and non-Muslims to live harmoniously together and practice their religion freely in a pluralistic society. The professionally motivating exchange program introduced him to how religious tolerance fosters friendship and mutual understanding by acquainting delegates with people of their own and other faiths.

He strongly encouraged the Ulama and Aleemat to vigorously promote the universality of Islam because Islam does not only belong to Muslims but to the whole mankind. He emphasized the need to "strengthen our relation, cooperation and partnership with our Christian neighbors by opening our hands, our hearts and our minds."

Another discussant, **Mr. Ahmad Vicente**, President of the *Jamiatu Imoalafate Kolobohon for Da'wah and Guidance* in Iloilo City laid emphasis on Allah's gift of free will to mankind. He also stressed that everyone is gifted with wisdom as

weapon for establishing better relationship and mutual understanding among tribes, nations and religion.

He also raised the following points: (1) Compulsion is incompatible with religion because religion depends on faith and the free will of people, and these would be meaningless if induced by force; (2) truth and error have been clearly shown up by the mercy of Allah that there should be no doubt in the mind of any persons of goodwill who has great faith; (3) Allah's protection is continuous and will always lead them to light.

Mr. Vicente underscored that the Ulama plays a significant role in guiding their communities. They should lead by example in all aspects—both in speech and action conveying the message of Allah. He presented the Qur'anic basis of the dialogue as well as some prophetic examples, which shows the good relationship of the prophet with other religion.

He recognized the need for unity through interfaith dialogues. He also shared that, as president of his organization, together with other Muslim religious leaders in Iloilo, he has been engaging in dialogue with Christian pastors and priests since 2005, which broadened the scope of mutual understanding and cooperation between Muslims and Christians in their communities.

The last speaker for the panel was **Mr. Jamil Almarez**, Operations Manager of Islamic Studies Call and Guidance of the Philippines (ISCAG-Philippines), who shared his organization's activities, which aims to spread Islamic messages to Filipinos towards peace, understanding and development in the country. He mentioned that many Christians in the country are now turning to Islam as they see the beauty of the Islamic way of life.

He mentioned that harmonious relations between and among religions could be achieved through the continuous sharing of various perspectives, partnership with other religious and interreligious organizations and engaging in interfaith dialogues. He further disclosed that a lot of misconceptions about Islam are being rectified such as Muslims' association with terrorism and war. He emphasized that true Muslims advocate for justice, orderliness and peace. To eliminate stereotypes and arguments, he encouraged the Ulama to promote respect and mutual understanding among all faiths and the best way to show this is to live the true Islamic way of life. He emphasized that understanding one's own religion first is a prerequisite to any meaningful dialog with people of other faiths.

## **Panel Discussion: Islamic Peace Education**

**Dr. Aida Macadaag**, faculty and former dean of the College of Education of the Mindanao State University-Marawi City and a member of the team in DepEd-ARMM and DepEd National that pioneers the mainstreaming of Islamic peace education in the educational system, provided the participants with the background of the Islamic Peace Education project of PCID.

Dr. Macadaag explained that vision of peace education supports the Ulama summit's theme of "A Common Word towards A Common Peace". She shared the rigorous steps undertaken during the development phase of the Islamic peace education manual. First, there was consultation and brainstorming held with the ulama, aleemat and non-Muslim educators regarding the contents of the manual. The modules are designed to serve as lesson plan to aid the teachers. A consultation with the writers was held afterwards to discuss the format of the book that should be friendly to young learners. The initial module design was finalized by a core group of aleemat after the conduct by aleemat of the module critiquing and enrichment. The finalized modules were pilot tested in three secondary schools in Marawi City with fourth year high school students as participants. Insights gathered from the pilot testing served as input to the ulama who polished the book by selecting verses from the Qur'an and the Sunna appropriate to the practical lessons or topics of the module. After polishing, the book was printed and then presented in a series of workshops particularly in Muslim Mindanao.

Dr. Macadaag also shared the five main features of the manual, Islamic Model for Peace Education. These are as follows: 1) an instructional material that teaches children learners how to become true believers in Islam; 2) teaches the learners about the practical application of Islam; 3) engages the learners through the interactive design of the module; 4) inspires learners to revisit and revive their knowledge of Islam 5) addresses social, moral, cognitive, and spiritual development of the learners; and 6) foster sense of responsibility towards God, country, community, and neighbors thereby developing learners to God-fearing Muslims.

**Ustadza Albaya Badrodin**, supervisor of DepEd Region XII and a member of the board of trustees of the NUCP, shared some of the efforts by her school division pertaining to the implementation of Islamic Peace Education. She explained that under the Philippine education system there are two important policy frameworks supportive of the Islamic Peace Education efforts. These are the following: 1) DepEd Order No. 51 series of 2004, which is the *Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris*. This refers to the inclusion of *Islamic values education* in the enriched elementary curriculum; 2) Executive Order 570 dated September 26, 2006 otherwise known as the *Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education*.

Ustadza Badrodin emphasized that Muslim educators need to take advantage of and maximize existing efforts to advance the peace and development cause. She shared that last Ramadan; their group held symposiums every Friday participated in by some 300 Muslim teachers, non-teaching personnel, and non-Muslim school administrators in their school division. The topics of the symposiums, one of which discussed peace, were taken from the PCID manual, Islamic Model for Peace Education. Using the module, students were able to identify issues and enumerate solutions pertaining to relating and living with non-Muslims.

Ustadza Badrodin shared that her division has already requested for the conduct of trainers' training on the use of the book from DepEd-National. She also strengthened the call for lobbying with DepEd to support the use of the book Islamic Model for Peace Education pursuant to the DepEd and Executive Orders.

**Ustadza Maimona Didatu**, a teacher from Cotabato City, shared her experience as a classroom teacher on the use of the Islamic Model for Peace Education manual. The book, she stressed, serves as a very good reference material to peace education with strong basis in the Qur'an and the *Hadith*. One very noteworthy success of the book, she shared, is its ability to educate and enlighten non-Muslims regarding the tenets of the Islamic faith. The learners, specially in a multicultural setting like her school in Cotabato City, learned about their commonalities and began to appreciate their classmates and neighbors as fellow Filipinos, studying in the same school, and living in the same community.

Ustadza Didatu also shared that one of the plans of the Noorus Salam-Cotabato Chapter is to translate the book into Maguindanaon so it could be better understood by the local community members.

### **Keynote Dinner Speech: "Islam, Democracy and Pluralism"**

The dinner session of January 26 featured the keynote speech of Dr. Abu Hapsin. In his speech, **Dr. Abu Hapsin**, shared the Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) experience in Indonesia wherein the largest Muslim organization in the world (claiming a membership of over 40 million) was able to directly engage government and can now significantly influence legislation and delivery of services. Hapsin is the Vice Chairman of the Executive Council of Nahdlatul Ulama and Chairman of the Forum for Religious Harmony in Central Java Indonesia.

The strategy, he said, is to combine Islam and democracy to face the challenge of pluralism. "Pluralism and democracy are like two sides of a coin. Democracy is meaningless if it cannot give opportunities to people of different religious backgrounds... Both should run parallel with each other."

Hapsin narrated that the key contribution of NU in Indonesia is developing the concept of nationalism. It was able to seamlessly connect the state ideology with a theological grounding. And as Muslims, public service and governance “should be considered sacred, as a religious conviction... The most appropriate question that should be asked is, ‘How can religious conviction solve the problem of humanity?’”

## **NUCP: The Ulama Unite**

The first session of the summit's third day was devoted to organizational matters as the key personalities involved in the PCID and the NUCP delivered their reports to the members of the NUCP.

**Ms. Amina Rasul**, on behalf of the PCID, gave the first report. She began by recounting how in its initial year, the PCID was requested to bring the Muftis together. They then invited the Muftis and the Darul Ifta Assembly of the Philippines to two strategic planning seminars in 2003 and in 2005. The Ulama then gathered for an Islam and democracy forum in 2006. The consensus in all these meetings is for PCID to help establish a national forum for the Ulama and the Muftis.

Ms. Rasul said they developed a proposal that was submitted to the embassies of Netherlands and the United Kingdom. There was an affirmative response from the two embassies and they committed a three-year support to the initiative that will end on March 2010.

She reported that PCID and its mother organization, the Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc (MKFI) provided full administrative and secretariat support to the project including the countless man-hours of its personnel and staff.

PCID also provided the Ulama with a vast network of organizations globally that can help them as they attempt to establish and sustain the first ever truly national Ulama organization in the Philippines. Among them, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, MUIS and PERGAS of Singapore, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the World Islamic Call Society (WICS).

As far as national agencies are concerned, Rasul divulged that they have linked with the Senate, House of Representatives, the Commission on Human Rights, and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

She told the participants that the "Empowering the Ulama" project ends this March and urged them to think of the sustainability of the organization. If the negotiations with AUSAID will turn out positive, Rasul revealed, there will be continuous support to the NUCP.

**Dr. Hamid Barra** was the next to present his report. Dr. Barra is the project director of the Empowering the Ulama Project and was recently appointed as Secretary of the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)

He related that in the initial stages of organizing the Ulama, there was a question asked, "Who are the Ulama?" Barra said for him an Ulama is not only a person

who is well-versed in religion but a person who is knowledgeable in the world and practices his faith.

The project director reiterated that an Alim should have fear of Allah, has knowledge and practices his faith. He added how important the Ulama are to the life of the Muslims in the community "from cradle to grave." He explained that when a child is born, an Alim is called to recite Azhan in the newborn's ear and thereafter, it is the Alim who facilitates his *Aqeeka* and naming. Barra said that as the child grows and goes to Madrasa, an Alim educates him about Islam. "By the time he gets married," the project director continued, "an Alim again officiates the wedding ceremonies and when he dies, still an Alim bathes and lays him to rest."

He stressed that the Ulama is the Manah (trust) of the people, thus when the Ulama say so, the people will obey. The project director related that the MKFI and PCID planned for the Ulama Project and held regional consultations supported by the British and the Netherlands embassies.

The project director then gave the summary of his report as follows:

The project is a network of unified Ulama intended to bring about positive change and progress for the Muslims. An intriguing question: *Despite tribal and political differences can the Ulama—Muslim religious leaders—go beyond what divides them and harness their collective influence for the good of the Ummah (the community of Muslims)?*

The birth of the NUCP, a national network of Islamic organizations and Ulama was formally realized during the Second Summit of the Ulama of the Philippines held in January 2009 that was attended by more than 200 of the leading Ulama from 120 organizations.

Its principal aim is to strengthen the unity, cooperation and coordination among Muslim religious scholars and to allow them to more actively promote peace and harmony in society through dialogue among peoples of different religions and cultures as well as become effective instruments in the attainment of peace and development in Muslim communities.

Barra said that as they moved on, the Ulama work for the betterment of Muslim communities. He also noted the linkage of the NUCP with the biggest Ulama organization in Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which indicates that the project does stride in successful ways.

The project director concluded by expressing his hope that the seed they planted will grow and its fruits will benefit every Muslim in the country.

The Chair of the NUCP, **Dr Aboulkhair Tarason** then took the floor for his report to the general membership of the NUCP. The chairperson narrated that in 2009, an interim BOT of the NUCP was elected. After the second summit in January 28-30, 2009, the board gathered at the University of the Philippines where they crafted their mission, vision and goals that provides direction to the organization.

Tarason pointed out that NUCP envisions to become the principal moral force and source of Islamic guidance, a highly credible and internationally recognized Ulama organization in the service of the Ummah, and lead in exemplifying Islamic values towards a just and balanced society.

He enumerated the missions of the organization as follows:

Mission#1---To foster unity, cooperation and understanding among Ulama organizations in the Philippines

Mission#2---To achieve high standards in good governance within the organization in the service of the Muslim Ummah.

Mission#3---To strengthen linkages with international institutions and Ulama organizations.

Mission#4---To strengthen and sustain the organization by opening its door for membership and making it an umbrella organization for the Ulama in the Philippines.

Mission#5---To promote peace and harmony in society through dialog among peoples of different religions and cultures.

Mission#6---To provide opinions on Islamic issues through the issuance of fatwa.

Mission #7---To stop the degradation of our natural resources by working as stewards of the environment and help facilitate in the promotion of ecological balance.

Mission #8---To institutionalize the concept of "one Message, One Ummah"

Mission #9---To strengthen the institution of family and safeguard the welfare and rights of women and children.

Mission #10---To generate sufficient funds to assure the sustainability of the organization.



Tarason reported further that the NUCP has issued statements and resolutions, as follows:

- Statement of Support for the active participation of Muslims in environment protection and sustainable development.
- Statement against the demolition and transfer of the Rajah Sulayman Lumba-a-Ranao Grand Mosque in Baclaran.
- Call for the Immediate and Unconditional Release of Fr. Michael Sinnott
- Statement of Support for the Agreement on Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) between the GRP and the MILF
- Statement of Condemnation for the Maguindanao Massacre
- Statement against the Banning of Minarets in Switzerland

The chairperson urged the body to think of how the Ulama can help the Muslim communities institute good governance. He divulged that they have established contacts with Indonesian Ulama organizations and has attended the gathering of around ten thousand Muslims in Australia in a conference of world religions. While in Australia, he disclosed that they were interviewed on air and asked of their opinion on the Maguindanao massacre incident. Tarason also said they had a dialogue with officials of the University of Melbourne in Australia and even asked the Australian embassy to support youth scholarship for the Moro. He said that the embassy welcomed their idea. He stressed the importance of commitment to achieve the organization's goal and the need to have fund to sustain the operations of the organization. He added that the NUCP is already registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The NUCP Secretary General Prof. Moner Bajunaid gave the concluding report. Bajunaid said the Empowering the Ulama Project took off with the goodwill and with the help of the PCID and MKFI with support from the embassies of Netherland and the UK. The three-year project was able to realize the formation of the Ulama into one national body.

Bajunaid said the Ulama employed Islamic means of consultation-based in *Shura* and *Ijma* where everyone was given chance to take part in crafting the mission, vision and goal of the NUCP.

There was also a project for the Aleemat that pushed for the women's agenda and called themselves *Noorus-Salaam*. The *Noorus-Salaam* aims to be the women's arm of the NUCP and also had their own strategic plans.

He disclosed that members of the NUCP are also members of the Darul Ifta in the different regions and they can sit in an assembly to constitute a consulting

body or Ifta. Bajunaid said the NUCP is present to provide support to the Darul Ifta for them to perform the mandate of the community.

As the project ends in March 2010, he warned the Ulama that the issue they are facing is sustainability.

The Sec-Gen said the challenge of sustainability can somehow be eased with the payment of membership fees. He urged members to pay before the summit ends. As an initiative to sustain its operation in the regions, Bajunaid said the NUCP has regional offices at the King Faisal Institute in Marawi City, in Zamboanga courtesy of former Senator Santanina Rasul and one in Cotabato City.

The Sec-Gen also announced that the election for the new BOT of the NUCP would be facilitated by Atty. Suharto Ambolodto. He reminded them that only the chairman, vice-chairman or the secretary-general of the member organization could be nominated.

### **Panel Discussion: "Cheating Capital No More?"**

The session on electoral reforms on January 27 was a leveling off of expectations for the Muslim religious leaders and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). In the process for unification undertaken by the NUCP in the previous years, the ulama acknowledged that they should play a more active role in electoral reform and in ensuring the sanctity of the votes of the Muslims.

**Mr. Ky Johnson** from The Asia Foundation expressed support to the initiative for electoral reforms, as part of its commitment for sustained economic growth, access to justice, and peace and development in Mindanao. He says, "Our strategy is to start by coming together and listening to what partners say in the community...then programs are mapped depending on the issues identified." He cites that The Asia Foundation has been working with reputable partners such as MKFI and PCID on these issues since 2007.

Johnson urges the ulama to be involved in programs for electoral reforms, as he observes that the success of local and national projects on peace in Mindanao depend on the participation from the on-the-ground partners. The Asia Foundation has been contributing to electoral reform programs through monitoring and voters education, especially during the 2008 automated elections in ARMM.

Meanwhile, **COMELEC Commissioner Elias Yusoph**, who had earlier served as prosecutor in Marawi City, discussed the challenges for electoral reforms for

Mindanao. Yusoph connected the commitment to pursuing electoral reforms with the obligation to fulfill the given authority from God and the people.

Yusoph says that the massive cases of election problems cast doubts on the mandate of election officials, and resources have been wasted to address these doubts. Aside from the protests and counter-protests that reach as far as the Supreme Court, some resort to extra-legal means to show that they have been cheated and their disgust. In turn, the public suffers; basic services are not properly delivered.

He also discusses the benefits of automated elections for ARMM. The most obvious he says is lessening human intervention in the delivery of fast and reliable election results. "People are not enjoying democracy and not getting the leaders they deserve and choose... If we cannot assure people that they are governed by the leaders they choose, we cannot push for democracy."

However, there are other factors to consider in election automation such as the reliability of the voter's list, the expected difficulties of first-time automation at a national level, and the capacity and commitment of election stakeholders. He notes that COMELEC has taken preliminary measures to address the concerns.

On this Yusoph says, "Technology is only as good as the people who use them."

During the **open forum**, the summit participants raised the following concerns:

First, that automation covers only the accounting procedure in the elections. There are other issues on credibility, for instance, on the end of policemen and provincial election officers, especially that corruption has been rampant in the past elections. Yusoph concedes this, and points out that there are factors external to the automation process, such as vote buying. But the success of the automated elections is "non-negotiable" for the COMELEC, he says.

Second, that there is very little time for every voter to learn the new system. Yusoph replies that the COMELEC is trying to assure that ARMM will have credible elections despite the short time, and has requested the Congress to approve early elections in ARMM. They have also partnered with the Armed Forces of the Philippines for election monitoring.

Third, that corruption should be systematically addressed, such as in the case of candidates' overspending for the campaigns. Yusoph says if there is proof that candidates are violating regulations about campaigning and spending, the case should be officially files. As the case is, he says, nobody is formally filing complaints.

Fourth, that in the case of Zamboanga for the past election, the peoples' votes were neutralized because only half of the total number of ballots was counted. Yusoph says that the problem has persisted because leaders in municipalities and barangays (villages) give only a small number of ballots from their respective areas. This is to be addressed by the delegation of a municipal treasurer who would receive and account for the ballots turned over. "It will work if everybody is vigilant enough to guard your vote," he adds.

Another question raised the possibility of abolishing barangay elections because it has always been a source of conflict. Yusoph replies that this cannot be implemented because law mandates the holding of barangay elections. He cites instead that a better way to change the system is to abolish the internal revenue allotment (IRA) for barangays.

### **The Human Rights Situation in Muslim Communities**

Atty. Leila de Lima, Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, presented her Commentary on the Human Rights Situation in Muslim Communities in the Context of "A Common Word Towards a Common Peace,". On behalf of the CHR, she expressed her great appreciation for the efforts of the individuals and organizations as well as the international institutions and the work involved in their various initiatives aimed at developing a unified and empowered Muslim community in the Philippines. While she admitted that human rights protection in the country is in a dismal state, CHR draw encouragement from the existence and initiative of thriving and active civil society groups in finding lasting and meaningful solutions to the country's internal armed conflicts. She attached importance to the role of the ulama, aleemat and various leaders today who bear much of the burden and whose actions will affect the outcome and the concrete actions to be taken afterwards. She believes these religious leaders have the power and the opportunity to turn on its head the state of human rights of Muslims in the Philippines.

Chair de Lima admitted that issues on poverty and concerns for human rights in Muslim communities are not altogether that promising and cited the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) study in 2006 which shows that almost half of the ten poorest provinces in the country which include Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and to a very large extent, Zamboanga del Norte have sizeable Muslim populations with special attention paid to the economic and developmental progress of the province of Maguindanao, especially in the wake of the Maguindanao Massacre. She observed that despite the hundreds of millions in IRA and aid development that have been pumped into the Muslim areas, deplorable poverty and existence of only the most primitive of agricultural economy stood in contrast to the wealth and opulence of the ruling political elite. She added that, "*Maguindanaoenos* are poor just as many other Filipinos are...Yet it stands out now, only to highlight the conditions that a majority-

Muslim population has to endure. "She raised the following issues to give a clearer picture of poverty and its impact on Muslim communities:

**1. Poor Muslims are a Significant Demographic** –\_she cited that Maguindanao and other Muslim-denominated provinces do not have the monopoly over poverty, however, of the 10 million or so Muslims in the Philippines, 2 million are found in the most impoverished provinces. Following national averages, where a third of Filipinos are poor including those several Muslim communities scattered throughout the country living in poverty as well, easily, the number of impoverished Muslims pushes into the millions including the ones in Metro Manila, including Taguig, Bgy. Culiat and Roxas Blvd.

**2. Poverty Places Impoverished Muslims at Risk** – In 2009, the informal settlement in Roxas Blvd was subjected to demolition operations, resulting in violence and a still unconfirmed fatality. Though forced evictions and demolitions are not necessarily violative of human rights, informal settlers are placed in a very precarious predicament, having neither no right to tenure over the land they occupy nor many options for resettlement that are reasonably close to employment and basic services.

Chairperson de Lima remarked that the theme, common word, impacts a future common solution to address poverty, informal settlements, access to employment and services for Muslims throughout the country. The challenge ahead for the Muslim leaders is to devise a proactive and sustainable long-term plan for the improvement of the living conditions for Muslims everywhere. She pointed out that the challenge is to push for resettlement on a smaller scale particularly for Muslim communities if the program cannot be done effectively on a national scale. She further discussed that despite having a predominantly Muslim vote in provinces like Maguindanao, Muslims cannot deliver the votes required to install elective officials that will prioritize their needs. Having a common vote generated by a common word can shape national policy and priorities that benefit the Muslim population. She stressed that voter education and community participation are only some of the ways that a Muslim vote can be consolidated to exert pressure on the government agenda to include the progress and development of the Muslim demographic.

She also underscored that part of uplifting the Muslims is to seriously engage them in devising measure to protect the outsiders who come to help their communities given the many stories of humanitarian aid workers, social workers, priests and teachers abducted and some murdered in Mindanao. She pointed out that condemnation is not enough and while the peace process comes to fruition, communities serviced by human rights workers and teachers must vigilantly find a way to ensure their safety.

As Muslims advocate for genuine and meaningful change, she offered the following key points as component of government responses to human rights

violations concerning Muslim communities: 1) the importance of a united voice and a common message among the Ummah and by bringing this type of public pressure to bear on our leaders, they can be convinced to do the right thing, and to carry out their obligations to their people 2) the importance of cooperation with groups outside the Muslim community- expansion of the idea of a Common Word, beyond the confines of the Ummah, to include people of other faiths and other beliefs. Atty. De Lima strongly believes that peace, development and human rights, encompass ideals and aspirations, which belong to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Furthermore, Atty. De Lima stated the CHR has and will continue to strongly advocate for the rights of women and children who suffer immensely when human rights violations take place. She seeks to partner with Muslim institutions to achieve this common goal in the protection of these two groups including the issue of child soldiers. She enumerated some of the work being carried out by the CHR for the improvement of Muslim communities as follows: 1) With respect to their investigatory power, the CHR looks into allegations of human rights violations, gathers evidence and testimony, and attempts to uncover the truth 2) With respect to their visitorial power, the CHR regularly conducts surprise inspections of the detention facilities, of the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police along with their advocacy and monitoring functions, the foregoing are the core mandates of the CHR.

She also shared the recent example of a Memorandum of Agreement concluded between the CHR and the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC) that embodies certain areas of cooperation which they can build on among the CHR, the Ulama, and the Aleemat. She admitted that though CHR is an institution with offices throughout the many regions of the Philippines, they can only go so far and to help them monitor the reality on the ground, she sought the participants' cooperation in terms of monitoring, education and awareness raising in their communities, working together with respect to issuing statements, further building up mutual capacities, developing networks at the local and international level, creating opportunities for interaction between civil society, the government and non-State actors, and many more.

She concluded the speech by saying that, "In the end, many of the concerns of Muslims and Muslim communities are the same concerns faced by all Filipinos, and all people. Peace, security, prosperity, a decent standard of living, respect and dignity, these are the interests, which we hold in common, and the aspirations that we share, as members of the same human race. A strong and robust Muslim sector, fully devoted to human rights and to peace, only makes the whole nation of Filipinos stronger as well. Ultimately, the cause of uplifting Muslims is a cause for uplifting every Filipino."

## **Open Forum**

A delegate from Sulu asked what has been the actions taken by the CHR after then Secretary of Defense Gilbert Teodoro and the President ordered the bombardment of a mosque in Jolo.

De Lima said incidents like those are regrettable and they are still validating the veracity of the reports submitted. She added that such happening calls for accountability that must go as high as possible.

The CHR Chair was also asked for the update of the case of 10 marines beheaded in Basilan in 2007 wherein two members of the Bishop-Ulama Conference were among the 135 suspects. De Lima said when the incident happened, she was not yet the chairperson of the CHR and at present she was not given updates about the case. She explained that the CHR is the premier watchdog of the country and it denounces any violence that happens.

Ustadz Bajunaid from Cotabato City commented on the Maguindanao Massacre publicity and said that such should be called Ampatuan Massacre since it happened in Ampatuan town only that is just part of Maguindanao Province. The CHR chairperson was amenable and pointed out that it is unfair to the other constituents of the province outside Ampatuan town.

She added that there is a bill in Congress giving the CHR the residual prosecutorial power wherein if the DOJ or the Ombudsman failed to act on some cases, such will be referred to them. However, she commented that they are having hard time to monitor cases then comes another task for the Commission.

## **Panel Discussion: AMAL (Hope) and Moral Reawakening**

In the aftermath of the so-called Ampatuan Massacre that resulted in the death of at least 57 people, many civil society leaders have been calling for what they call a "moral reawakening" to enable Muslim communities to exorcise the evils spawned by political violence and warlordism. This was the major output of a roundtable discussion organized by the PCID that included some Muslim religious leaders. If the strategy is anchored on moral reawakening, then the Ulama should be at the forefront of this movement called Amal or hope.

UP Institute of Islamic Studies Professor Abdulhadi Daguit began the session by pointing out that **good morals** are one of the foundations of the Islamic Teachings. Daguit noted the deteriorating image of the ARMM being branded as the "cheating capital of the country" during elections. Moreover, he said that drug trading, kidnap for ransom and killings are almost found in every Muslim area and recently, the Maguindanao massacre where 57 people composed of women, media reporters were killed.

He lamented that such incident makes Maguindanao famous in every corner of the world and again destroys the images of the Muslims.

In a round table discussion organized by the PCID and MKFI entitled "VIOLENCE IN POLITICS AND POLITICS OF VIOLENCE: Understanding the Culture of Politics in ARMM, Daguit quoted former Santanina Rasul who said "Political killings in Mindanao were unheard of, but existed in other areas in the Philippines before martial law days". Rasul further asked: "*Bakit tayo (mga Muslim) nagkaganito?*"

Daguit stressed that to effectively implement peace and development programs and better governance in Mindanao, the role and capacities of the Muslim religious must be taken into account. Thus, the Ulama and the imams having a wide network on the ground through the *masaajid* and the *Madaaris*, can contribute to the people's better understanding of democratic reforms viewed through the Islamic perspectives.

He related that the RTD participants noted that civic and Islamic values education play an important role. The citizenry, especially the youth, can transform the culture of violence and impunity in their communities through education.

In the battle for moral reawakening, Prof. Daguit hinted the Ulama to employ J.I.H.A.D. that stands for:

- J** – Justice
- I**-integrity
- H**- Human Rights, Humble, Harmony, Honest
- A**- Accountability
- D**- Dignity, Development, Democracy

He stressed that Ulama should take the lead in reviving the morality in Muslim communities. ended his lecture by asking the Ulama what could be their roles to achieve J.I.H.A.D.

**Ustadza Anisah Taha Arab**, Program Coordinator of the Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, who also participated in the RTD, said it is high time for the Ulama and Aleemat to strive and partake in efforts towards moral reawakening. She believed that many are wondering that there are people who could afford to commit the horrendous Ampatuan massacre. "Why did such incident happened?" she asked.

She said that the massacre simply shows that efforts of the Ulama in teaching society of good values are not enough. She added that the Ulama and Aleemat



are critical actors in achieving reforms for the Muslim communities. She noted that the image of ARMM as the “cheating capital of the country” persists partly because the Moro people are not doing enough to erase such image.

Anisah related that their group, who joined in the round table discussion, decided to come up with action points geared to minimize election violence related incidents in the ARMM which they called “AMAL”. This Arabic word means “hope” or “action.”

She said that she had been a member of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) thrice and despite being risky especially for a female to perform the said job, she does so because of her passion for an honest conduct of election.

After the summit, Ustadza Anisah said it is ideal for the NUCP together with the Noorus Salam to spearhead Islamic leadership seminars to newly elected officials prior to their assumption of office. This will ensure that they will put into place a kind of leadership that is not only in consonance with the ideals of good governance but also with the Islamic virtue of leadership.

Another Alim who participated in the RTD was **Prof. Sandiman Lomala**, a professor at MSU-Marawi City King Faisal Center, stressed that Muslims should adhere to the teachings of Islam according to the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith* and all problems in the world can be mitigated or solved. He noted that sometimes, man-made laws go against the law made by Allah *Subhana ta Ala*.

The resource person hinted at the participants that “if you are planning for a month, plant rice, if you are planning for a decade, plant trees, and if you are planning for a millennium, plant men.” He likened the Ulama of today as millennium plants.

He noted how important leadership is in instituting social reforms and related a saying that “when three persons are traveling, one must be a leader.” He expected that the Ulama are indeed leaders in their own communities.

## Regional Caucuses

The third day of the summit was focused on caucuses by region for the purpose of discussing the programs and agenda for the NUCP in the short, medium and long term. The caucuses--based on geographical and sectoral representations--were asked to discuss some organizational issues as well as suggest a 10-point program for the NUCP board and to elect their own representative to the first regular board of trustees.

The table below shows the identified priority programs by the different regional caucuses. These outputs will be discussed, rationalized, and approved by the NUCP board for adoption and implementation.

Regional Caucuses	Identified Priority Programs
<b>SOCKSARGEN- DAVAO- MAGUINDANAO</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Islamization through symposia, training, technical education, training of Imams, etc.</li> <li>2. Organizational development training for the NUCP members.</li> <li>3. Cooperatives for Ulama and other livelihood projects</li> <li>4. Scholarship (request for sponsors from abroad as well as local sponsors)</li> <li>5. Creation of body that facilitate in the resolution of conflict (e.g rido)</li> <li>6. Creation of body that will look after research on issues and concerns that needs to be addressed</li> <li>7. Addressing issues related to Muslim cemetery</li> <li>8. Halal advocacy and engagement</li> <li>9. Environmental protection advocacy</li> <li>10. Establishment of regional office</li> </ol>
<b>ZAM-BA-SUL-TA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Computer Education (English and Arabic) for the Ulama</li> <li>2. English proficiency programs for the Ulama and Arabic proficiency programs for professionals</li> <li>3. Tri-media programs for Da'wah and other advocacies</li> <li>4. Regional <i>majusushura</i> (consultative assembly) to be conducted monthly</li> <li>5. Networking/linkages with different national and international organizations</li> <li>6. Expansion of Madrasa education to remote areas</li> <li>7. Unification of the Khutbah topics and distribution of khutba</li> <li>8. Islamic leadership and management training</li> <li>9. Livelihood programs</li> <li>10. Health programs</li> </ol>
<b>LANAO AREAS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity Building Programs for the Ulama</li> <li>2. Establishment/Creation of a Regional Office</li> <li>3. Quarterly Assembly for members</li> <li>4. Research and Publication</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Creation of Database – directory of every member organizations</li> <li>6. Cooperatives</li> <li>7. Qur’an Literacy</li> <li>8. Radio and TV Program on Da’awah</li> <li>9. Public Library</li> <li>10. Livelihood</li> </ol>
<b>VISAYAS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Legal or security assistance for all members of NUCP</li> <li>2. Publications, radio programs, reading materials</li> <li>3. Scholarship and educational programs</li> <li>4. Resource-generation programs</li> <li>5. Putting up of Islamic cemeteries in Visayas</li> <li>6. Business program, livelihood micro-finance</li> <li>7. Islamic center in different parts of the country</li> <li>8. NUCP branch office in the Visayas</li> <li>9. House of Treasury (<i>Baytul Mal</i>)</li> <li>10. Mobile Da’awah</li> </ol>
<b>BALIK ISLAM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creation of regional structure throughout the country comprising of the different Balik Islam organizations in the provinces.</li> <li>2. The regional structure will be called National Ulama Conference of the Philippines Balik Islam Coordinating Council.</li> <li>3. Conduct a Balik Islam national convention, or summit.</li> <li>4. Invite other Balik Islam organizations to join NUCP.</li> <li>5. Creation of Dawah modules (simple modules for the common Muslim, nor for those who had high Islamic education.</li> <li>6. Fundraising for the Dawah modules.</li> <li>7. Request the NUCP to petition or lobby the OMA/Commission to urged the NSO to conducte better census of Muslims, or include religion in their census, especially in their next population census.</li> </ol>
<b>Luzon</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotion of peace education in schools and madaris (Deped, CHED, TESDA; pilot in QC)</li> <li>2. Info drive on Islamic aspect on elections (trimedia, mosque, imam council, khutbah)</li> <li>3. Amal--Zakat/waqf system institutionalization (Baitul Mal)</li> <li>4. Seminars on Islamic morality (enhancement; even to non-Muslims)</li> <li>5. Coordination (MOA) with CHR, PNP, AFP, PDEA, DOJ, and other agencies</li> <li>6. Khutbah on human rights</li> <li>7. Information drive on human rights (with hotlines); i.e., anti-terrorism, police procedures</li> <li>8. Micro-enterprise (halal food outlet)</li> <li>9. Intra and interfaith dialogue</li> <li>10. Coordination with other religions on programs</li> </ol>

## **PLENARY SESSION**

Atty. Suharto Ambolodto, who chaired the Election Committee, announced the new members of the NUCP BOT based on the results of the caucuses:

1. Ustadza Khadija Mutilan
2. Ustadza Arbaya Badroddin
3. Abdullah Borres
4. Professor Abdulhadi Daguit
5. Dr. Aboulkhair Tarason
6. Mufti Jul Asiri Abirin
7. Alim Abdulwakil Tanjilil
8. Alim Abdulmajid Said
9. Dr. Hamid Barra
10. Dr. Abdussalam Disomimba
11. Judge Aboali Cali
12. Alim Jaafar Ali
13. Alim Ahmad Nooh Darping
14. Prof Moner Bajunaid
15. Dr. Santanina Rasul (nominated to fill in the PCID seat)

Atty. Ambolodto then asked the plenary membership to ratify the result of the regional caucus election. His motion was approved with no objection.

The new members of the Board were then sworn in by Dr. Elwi Amin Al-Sayed Khalil, representative of the Grand Mufti of Egypt.

# The Ulama Confront the Issues of Muslim Communities

The Ulama have long recognized that their function and acts should not be limited to the religious. An Alim remarked during a workshop organized by PCID that "...I did not study for 10 years just to deliver *khutba* or officiate in *kanduris*. The Ulama must be able to engage society." The Ulama, being knowledgeable in Islam, is perfectly situated to lead based on the injunction of the Qur'an that leaders should have sufficient Islamic knowledge.

For this reason, the Third National Summit convened workshop sessions intended to provide the Ulama with the opportunity to discuss the important issues of Muslims in the Philippines.

The workshops focused on the following themes: electoral reforms, human rights, peace education, interfaith dialog (A Common Word) and moral reawakening.

What follows are summaries of each of the workshop outputs.

## **I. Electoral Reforms**

The Petri dish of social ills that is Muslim Mindanao wouldn't be complete without the region's brand of electoral fraud and political violence. The issue of electoral reforms has in fact been a key agenda for the Ulama. Having acquired the unfortunate label as the "cheating capital of the Philippines" the Ulama have a lot of stake in not only in providing the doctrinal injunctions for honest elections but also in ensuring that the will of the people of Muslim Mindanao is respected.

In the national elections of 2007 and the ARMM regional elections the following year, the Ulama have signed memorandums of agreements with the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) to join forces in ensuring clean, honest, accurate, meaningful and peaceful elections.

Thus it was only fitting that electoral reform would be high on the list of issues tackled during the 3rd National Ulama Summit, one of the largest gatherings of ulama, or Muslim religious leaders, ever held in the country.

Electoral reform was a marquee workshop agenda, not only due to the forthcoming 2010 national elections, but also because Muslim Mindanao has been used in the past as a "savings account" of votes for national candidates needing to win an electoral contest.

According to one alim in the workshop, it was about time that the moral leaders of the Muslims take the cue from their Christian counterparts who have taken a more pro-active position in the advocacy to initiate reforms in the country's fraud-ridden electoral system.

Ali Al-Raschid, the workshop facilitator said, who better to help in addressing the concern problem of electoral reforms than the ulama, the historical adjudicators of both temporal and spiritual concerns of the Muslim brethren.

Although most of the ulama in the workshop group were initially tentative, others brimmed with suggestions on how the ulama, whether individually or collectively, can help in instituting reforms in spite of the obstacles and risks attendant to such a cause.

In fact only one, an old alim, made known his fear of retribution from politicians. These people are dangerous he said. They are armed.

But we should not be afraid of politicians. We should only fear Allah, a participant strongly retorted to the old alim's trepidation.

The brief exchange revealed the extent of how the moral authority of the alim has been subsumed, through time, by the traditional leaders and today's politicians. The old alim's fear for his safety resonates among many ulama especially in areas where the dominant political clan does not tolerate criticism either from a rival or a man of God.

Notwithstanding his relationship to a local politician, the alim has a potent power that he can wield if he so chooses. It seems that that power is potent enough for politicians to result to extreme tactics. Like all prelates, the alim's power is the power of the pulpit. Specifically the khutba, or the Friday sermon.

The power of the khutba, was what the group invoked as they tackled the three issues thrown to them by the workshop facilitator, which were:

- 1. What role can the ulama play in ensuring clean, honest fair and meaningful elections?*
- 2. In your individual capacity, what specific actions can you undertake to help ensure that elections are clean, honest, fair, and meaningful?*
- 3. What specific actions can the NUCP undertake to help ensure that elections are clean, honest, fair and meaningful?*

Let's use the *khutba* to advocate for clean, honest, orderly and peaceful elections, the suggestion resounded throughout the whole workshop time.

Then they decided to expand the khutba not only through the traditional Friday mosque sermons but to increase its coverage and its message of the clean and honest elections. The group decided that they would do this by writing and reproducing primers, or pamphlets, that will be distributed to Muslims even outside the Friday prayers.

Still to attain greater impact an alim suggested that copies of the khutba be distributed to local radio stations and newspapers.

The group agreed that the primer be made in the mold of the Islamic leadership model with highlights on such caveats as: invoking the electorate not to accept election money or gifts from candidates, that Muslims should be reminded of the teachings in the Holy Qur'an that frowns upon stealing and cheating, and that committing fraud was a sin, etc.

We should also engage those who are in charge of the elections, another ulama suggested, because they are the ones running the elections including the military, he said. To do this the group planned to organize forums and invite representatives from the Comelec including those from the PNP and the military.

Dialoguing with the military is important a young alim said, because they are the ones who turn us away from the polling precincts. They turn you away because you have no accredited identification cards, the facilitator said. But now the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines (NUCP) is making arrangements with the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) on voter's education and poll watching accreditation, he said.

The group also called for stronger partnership with the PPCRV such groups as the Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reforms, a local electoral reform advocate.

They agreed that networking with like-minded groups was important, one that could also help them in the conduct of forums wherein they could invite candidates to present their platforms to the electorate.

But throughout the discussion one ulama dropped something from left field. He said one of the problems of the ulama is that many of us have preferential candidates and many alim receive a form of allowance from certain politicians.

Even if somebody receives an allowance, the only side that we should choose is Allah's the facilitator said.

## ***II. Human Rights***

The ARMM is poorest region of the Philippines with all of its provinces ranking as among the lowest in terms of human development: lowest literacy rate and worst education performance levels, lowest per capita income and highest poverty level. Worse, Muslims in the Philippines face problems in terms of the human rights violations due to the continuing situation of armed conflict. Thousands of Muslims have been victims of human rights violations including warrantless arrests, illegal detention, harassment, disappearances, and killings.

The Commission on Human Rights and the Women Lawyer's Circle (WILOCI), for instance, has documented rampant abuse of human rights among law enforcement agencies as evidenced by reports of torture, illegal arrests, and violation of the right to due processed by the accused. The 2005 Report also documented the cases of Muslim women and children detained in Metro Manila jails. Two hundred three Muslim women and 14 children detainees as of June 2005 were documented. The study indicates that 212 of detained Muslim women and minors were arrested without warrants of arrest. Moreover, 89 of those arrested without warrants did not know the identity of the arresting officers or the law enforcement agency they were from. Worse, documented cases of abuse include women detainees forced to strip naked for the police authorities to search for hidden drugs.

Muslims, especially women, have become easy targets of abuses, especially due to the government's actions to defend itself from "destabilizers" and "terrorists". One of these actions is the passage of Republic Act 9372, also called "Human Security Act (HSA)," which came into effect on July 15, 2007. This law defines new crimes such as terrorism and conspiracy to commit terrorism. The UN Human Rights Committee had expressed its concerns about the possible "negative impact on the rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" because of the law's "broad and vague definition of acts of terrorism." The new Anti-Terrorism law, for instance, further expanded the powers of arrest and detention and allows for expanded powers of surveillance and investigation particularly on searches and seizures.

This situation has been exacerbated by the recent conflagration of conflict between the Philippine military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Data gathered by Amnesty International in August 2008, together with media reports and assessments from the Philippine Human Rights Commission, indicate that the renewal of violence has been, and continues to be, accompanied by human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by both sides. While the armed conflict in the Philippines' south is not new, the number of civilians directly affected by this most recent escalation of hostilities has increased dramatically. Between August and September 2008, a total of 700,000 people have been uprooted from their communities. The Norwegian Refugee



Council 2009 Report declared, "The Philippines was the most neglected displacement situation in 2008."

Realizing that the human rights situation in Muslim communities is dismal, the workshop group led by **Yusuf Ledesma** emphasized the potential of the Ulama to address key human rights concerns. They were unanimous in saying that the Ulama should play a more active role in terms of human rights education and advocacy as well as in the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations.

The specific action plans recommended by the group includes:

1. **Organize the Ulama Human Rights Task Force within the NUCP.** The task force will be composed of three (3) committees:
  - a) **EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE.** This committee will provide HR education, which is based on the Islamic perspective of human rights. Islam is a complete way of life with corresponding human rights, obligations and duties including human rights within the family, rights to education, and other human rights such as freedom from arbitrary detention, etc. This committee will produce human rights modules, trainings, *khutba*, and will disseminate this through seminars and tri-media.
  - b) **MONITORING AND REPORTING COMMITTEE.** This committee will monitor and report human rights violations. The Ulama who are often the first consulted by human rights victims and their families will be the eyes and ears on the ground. They will closely coordinate with the Commission on Human Rights, police, traditional leaders and institutions in the community, the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education.
  - c) **ACTION COMMITTEE.** This committee will help ensure that authorities will act on reports of human rights violations and will assist victims of human rights violations and their families. It will be composed of human rights advocates, human rights lawyers, and other allies.

### ***III. Islamic Model for Peace Education***

In 2007, the PCID came out with the Islamic Model for Peace Education. The manual is the product of PCID's desire to develop an indigenous peace education curriculum deriving from authentic Islamic values and Bangsamoro cultural traditions. The leading Muslim scholars in the country helped craft this manual and is intended for use in the various madrasahs in the country. The ulama and aleemat (Muslim women religious leaders) have strongly recommended the use of the manual to the Department of Education to supplement its present curriculum. In a handwritten letter, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla also endorsed the manual as an effective tool for promoting peace values not just in Muslim communities but in non-Muslim settings as well. Being at the forefront of education, the Muslim religious leaders have a lot of stake in using the platform of peace education to propagate a culture of peace.

At the onset, the workshop group discussed the questionnaire provided for the workshop, which includes the following:

1. In general, what role can the Ulama play in cultivating a culture of peace through peace education?
2. What specific grassroots actions can the NUCP undertake to propagate peace education as an effective tool to peace building?

For the first question, the participants identified specific roles the Ulama can play in enhancing the effectiveness of peace education as follows:

The Role of Ulama in cultivating a culture of peace through peace education:

1. Reviewer of Peace Education materials
2. Peace Watchdogs
3. Leader of community peace program provided that a program is put into place in order to strengthen the local ulama to spearhead peace programs.
4. Overseer of peace and security related situations in every Muslim community. This requires the organization of a network of ulama that will watch over peace related situations in their own community.
5. Trainers – the Ulama can take the lead in educating the military, PNP, judges and lawyers on Islamic concepts of peace.
6. Translator - The Ulama can help translate peace education materials into local languages.

For the second question, the participants recommended specific activities for the NUCP which they think are effective in promoting peace education in communities.

Specific Grassroots Activities:

1. Development of Information Education Campaign materials for Da'awah
2. Training for Regional and Provincial Peace Advocates
3. Establishment of a Peace Center for the Ulama
4. *Mobile Da'awah* – a group of Ulama handling peace education may visit barangays to advocate for peace (akin to mobile clinic).

#### ***IV. AMAL-Moral Reawakening***

The Ulama noted the weakening of the moral fiber of society for the past years. They attributed this situation to the kind of leaders they have in their localities. Communities, whose leaders have weak faith, tend to employ guns and goons and are interested only on how they can enrich themselves. Various concerns like poor education, weak economy, unstable security, and lack of transparency in governance remain unresolved. Unpaved roads and poor infrastructure facilities have kept many towns in the ARMM underdeveloped.

Participants also noted that corruption in the ARMM could hardly be eradicated because exposing such crimes could mean one's life. When law enforcement is pathetic, the influential rules while the weak choose to remain silent.

A number of workshop participants lamented the fact that many inmates involved in drug trafficking in cities like General Santos and in Metro Manila are Moros, both male and female. When asked why they engage to it, they blame it on poverty. Some even twist the interpretation of their faith by arguing that selling drug is not *haram* since it was not mentioned in Qur'an or the Hadith.

They also claimed that Muslim youth sent to predominantly non-Muslim cities to study tend to be westernized if they are not equipped with strong *Aqeeda*.

They wonder how other areas like Davao, Cebu, and Quezon City, whose elected officials are Christian, have comprehensive program for the Muslims particularly in Madaris education. *Asatidz* (Madrasah teachers) of these places receive a reasonable amount of honoraria from the local government units for teaching Muslim youth with Arabic language and Islamic values on Saturdays and Sundays. Many are wondering why Muslim mayors and governors are not supportive of Madaris education in their localities.

Others noted the lack of regular consultations between the Muslim constituents, the traditional leaders and the Ulama, have left the common problems in the communities remain unsolved. Some Ulama, in fact, remain complacent to the issues that arise in their communities.

Recommendations

1. The Ulama must come up with an effective approach to get local officials attend Islamic Da'wah sessions.
2. NUCP regional officers should initiate the signing of a covenant between candidates and the community prior to elections not only to ensure peaceful elections but also to ensure that the Bangsamoro agenda will be realized.
3. The Ulama and the community leaders should be wary of what is happening in their communities, should sit down with their people to discuss issues (ills of society, environmental problems, leadership, etc.) affecting the community and plan for appropriate actions in order to address those concerns.
4. The Ulama should engage in the crafting of Da'wah materials (modules) according to the needs of the community (*Ibadah*, evils of drugs, teenage pregnancy, for the youth; women's rights in Islam for women; environmental protection, responsible parenthood for adults and members of the community, etc)
5. The Ulama should "do what they preach" and be a model of a "true Muslim" as portrayed by the Holy Prophet.
6. The NUCP should employ its resources to ensure that standard *khutbah* topics in mosques are agreed upon by Ulama and shall be delivered simultaneously.