

PGMA names Abaya as new Peace Adviser

Contributed by BEN CAL
Thursday, 22 October 2009
Last Updated Monday, 02 November 2009

PROF. Abaya, new Peace Adviser

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has named Prof. Annabelle T. Abaya, a member of the government peace panel negotiating with the communist rebels, as acting secretary of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

Abaya replaced OPAPP chief Avelino I. Razon Jr. who resigned to run for mayor in Manila in next year's election. Prior to the appointment of Abaya, Undersecretary Nabil A. Tan was officer-in-charge of OPAPP.

Abaya's appointment was announced by Press Secretary Cerge Remonde during a press briefing in Malacañang on the afternoon of October 23. As the new presidential peace adviser on the peace process, Abaya holds a cabinet rank position.

During a press conference with Palace reporters, Abaya said her job "is to hold the fort during the political fever," apparently referring to the upcoming presidential elections in May next year.

Abaya said her marching order from the President is to "do what we can in the next eight months and prepare the transition program for the new President ... resumption of government talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and National Democratic Front (NDF)."

At the same time, Abaya said the government will also look at reviewing the 1996 peace pact with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) "to strengthen it."

She made it clear that the government wants peace, saying "we will work on it and let us surprise you when there are developments ... the important thing is we are talking."

Commenting on the statement of former President Joseph Estrada that he would wage an all-out war with the rebels, Abaya said: "We have to get out of this macho thing ... you are not just killing one another, but affecting a lot of people ... creating animosity and unpeace hurts a generation. Hindi pwedeng ubusan ... our history is all about talking things over and I hope thru it we will find peace."

"I would like to take the former president aside and remind him of history that there is no durable peace that was won thru war," Abaya added.

Before assuming her new post, Abaya was a member of the government peace panel tasked to negotiate with the Communist Party of the Philippines—New People's Army—National Democratic Front (NDF) headed by former Labor Secretary Nieves R. Confesor.

Other members of the panel are Atty. Sedfrey M. Candelaria, Ms. Paulynn P. Sicam, and Deputy Director General Margarita R. Songco.

Abaya holds Masters degrees in Public Administration from Harvard University in the United States and in Dispute Resolution from the University of Massachusetts in Boston, and is pursuing her doctorate degree in Conflict Resolution from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

She is also the president of the Conflict Resolution Group Foundation Inc. and a conflict resolution consultant of World Bank, Asia Development Bank, and Asia Foundation.