



# P R E S S R E L E A S E

08 October 2009

## **EU and Philippines will work together to address issue of Extra-Legal Killings**

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Ambassador Alistair MacDonald, Head of Delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines, today signed the Financing Agreement for the EU-Philippine Justice Support Programme (EPJUST). Also present at the ceremony were Ambassador Luis Arias Romero of Spain (representing the Presidency of the European Union), Ambassador Cristina Ortega (Philippine Ambassador to the EC), and Mr James Moran, Director for Asia in the Directorate-General of External Relations, European Commission, Brussels.

Ambassador MacDonald said “The EU has been happy to respond positively to the Government’s request to provide technical assistance to help the Philippines address the question of extra-legal or extra-judicial killings. The EPJUST programme now agreed will help all stakeholders in the Philippines – both from government and from civil society, as well as the relevant constitutional bodies – to work together to bring an end to extra-legal killings and enforced disappearances, of political activists, journalists, trades unionists or farmers’ representatives, and to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators.” The Ambassador added that “while the incidence of these killings has declined significantly since 2007, it is regrettable that there has as yet been so few convictions in relation to the killings of political activists.”

The EC has allocated an amount of €3.9 million (approx. PhP 270 million) to cover the cost of the EPJUST programme, which over a period of eighteen months will provide support, advice, technical assistance and training in areas such as strengthening the criminal justice system (investigation, prosecution, judiciary), providing support for the Commission on Human Rights and for civil society groups working in this area, and including human rights awareness training for the police and military. In addition, the programme will include support for the establishment of a credible and effective national monitoring system, which will bring together all Philippine stakeholders to help track the nation’s progress in addressing this issue. It is foreseen that the initial activities under the programme will start before the end of this year, and that the programme will be completed by March 2011.

Ambassador MacDonald noted also that “today’s signature of the Financing Agreement confirms the willingness of the EU and of the Republic of the Philippines to work together even in sensitive areas such as governance, reflecting the spirit of partnership which we have built up over the years”.



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