

**[ EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 371, October 02, 1996 ]**

**PROCLAIMING A SPECIAL ZONE OF PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AND ESTABLISHING THEREFOR  
THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND  
DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY**

WHEREAS, the economic and social development of the country, especially the improvement of the living conditions of the underprivileged, is a primary task of Government:

WHEREAS, recent improvements in the standards of living and greater opportunities for economic development arising from our economic and social reform program have not fully benefited our brothers and sisters in some areas of the Southern Philippines;

WHEREAS, peace and development in the Southern Philippines will enable our people to enjoy their just share in the fruits of progress;

WHEREAS, the Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) embarked on a peace process to attain a just, comprehensive, peaceful and lasting resolution of the internal armed conflict in the Southern Philippines;

WHEREAS, the peace process culminated in the signing of the Final Peace Agreement in Manila 2 September 1996 between the Government and the MNLF thereby ending the decades-old conflict in Mindanao;

WHEREAS, there is a new window of opportunity to focus, promote and accelerate development efforts in the Southern Philippines arising from the signing of the Final Peace Agreement between the Government; and the MNLF;

WHEREAS, the Final Peace Agreement calls for the establishment of a Special Zone of Peace and Development (ZOPAD) in the Southern Philippines wherein peace and development efforts shall be intensified;

WHEREAS, the Final Peace Agreement further calls for the establishment of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) and a Consultative Assembly (CA) that will coordinate, promote and accelerate the peace and development efforts in the ZOPAD; and

WHEREAS, Section 14 Article X of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that: "The President shall provide for regional development councils or other similar bodies composed of local government officials, regional heads of departments and other government offices, and representatives from non-governmental organizations within the regions for purposes of administrative decentralization to strengthen the

autonomy of units therein and to accelerate the economic and social growth and development of the units in the region."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FIDEL V. RAMOS, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law and the Constitution, do hereby order the following:

SECTION 1. Proclamation of a Special Zone of Peace and Development (ZOPAD) in the Southern Philippines. — There is hereby proclaimed a Special Zone of Peace and Development (ZOPAD) in the Southern Philippines which shall be the focus of intensive peace and development efforts in the next three years. Investments shall be channeled to this area to spur economic activities and uplift the conditions of the people therein. The ZOPAD shall consist of the following:

(a) The provinces of Basilan, Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Palawan, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, South Cotabato, Tawi-Tawi Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur; and

(b) The cities of Cotabato, Dapitan, Dipolog, General Santos, Iligan, Marawi, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, and Zamboanga.

SECTION 2. Development Efforts in the ZOPAD. — Within the next three years, the abovementioned areas covered by the ZOPAD shall be provided with the following development efforts:

(a) Provision for basic services in the depressed areas of the ZOPAD, such as water, electricity, educational facilities, socialized housing, and health and sanitation, among others;

(b) Provision for adequate infrastructure facilities to support the development requirements within the ZOPAD and enhance linkages with areas outside of it;

(c) Promotion of investments and trade, both domestic and international, to generate employment and create opportunities for economic development;

(d) Provision for entrepreneurial development support, livelihood assistance, and credit facilities so that those in the ZOPAD, especially the vulnerable sectors such as women, farmers and fisherfolk, unemployed, urban and rural poor, among others, shall have greater control over their economic destinies; and

(e) Provision for capability-building assistance for local communities and organizations, especially women's groups, to take full advantage of development programs and projects in the ZOPAD.

SECTION 3. Medium for Development Efforts in the ZOPAD. Development efforts in the ZOPAD. — Development efforts in the ZOPAD shall be carried out through the following:

(a) Institutional mechanisms, such as the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) to be hereby established, the Cabinet Officer for Regional Development (CORD) system, area-specific development task forces, regional development councils system, Southern Philippines Development Authority, and

other institutional mechanisms which may be established; and

(b) Existing development programs, such as but not limited to the BIMP-East ASEAN Growth Area, Social Reform Agenda localization programs, flagship projects, and Presidential Council for Countryside Development (PCCD) programs for priority provinces.

SECTION 4. Priority Areas and Projects. — Development efforts in the ZOPAD shall give priority to the following areas:

(a) Provinces in the area belonging to the 20 poorest provinces in the country (namely Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi);

(b) All 5th and 6th class municipalities in the provinces in the ZOPAD; and

(c) Depressed communities within the towns and cities covered by the ZOPAD.

Projects to be implemented in the ZOPAD shall include the following:

(a) Human development projects, including but not limited to health and sanitation services, educational development, and welfare services, to promote the well-being of families in depressed communities and enhance their capabilities to participate in economic programs;

(b) Socialized housing projects to address housing backlogs in priority areas;

(c) Water supply development to provide potable water especially to depressed communities in the ZOPAD;

(d) Roads and bridges to connect depressed communities to centers of economic activities and improve mobility of goods and service within the ZOPAD and between the ZOPAD and other growth centers;

(e) Airports and seaports to address the needs of commuters and facilitate transport of products in the priority areas;

(f) Telecommunications and power/electrification programs to support the increase in economic activities in the ZOPAD;

(g) Development and promotion of tourism to harness the tourism potential and enhance appreciation and awareness of history and culture in the ZOPAD;

(h) Environmental and marine resources improvement program to protect and conserve natural resources in the ZOPAD;

(i) Enhancement of agricultural production through irrigation and post-harvest and marketing facilities;

(j) Establishment of food processing facilities to generate employment and create forward and backward economic linkages;

(k) Establishment of Provincial Industrial Centers and People's Industrial Enterprises