

# GMA to skip Geneva summit on violence, development

President Arroyo is skipping a summit of world leaders on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in Switzerland this week and would instead send Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita to report on the Philippine peace process.

In a telephone interview, Ermita said Mrs. Arroyo has many pressing matters to attend to so he will be carrying a letter from her to Swiss President Pascal Couchepin, who co-organized the summit with the United Nations Development Program, to explain her absence.

He admitted the situation in Mindanao was also one of the reasons the President would not want to leave the country. Mrs. Arroyo earlier also cancelled her trip to New York City later this month

where she was supposed to address the UN General Assembly and meet with business leaders.

Ermita said the summit aims to finalize action plans and resolutions that would be submitted to the UN General Assembly later this year on "reducing armed violence and implementing development as a tool for peace and progress."

The implementation of the Declaration is led by a core group of 12 countries - Brazil, Guatemala, Finland, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

The group came up with The Framework for the Implementation of the Geneva Declaration, which seeks to achieve a measurable reduction of armed violence in the world by 2015.

Ermita said over 70 countries would be represented in the summit.

As representative of Mrs. Arroyo, he said he would report on the country's peace initiatives with various armed groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the security situation in Mindanao.

He said he would also report on the country's status in meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

Ermita said he would have separate meetings with various international agencies for development projects in the country.

One of the meetings would be with the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue of the UNDP that is active in Sulu, he said. - Paolo Ramirez