

# GMA unveils formula for lasting peace in Mindanao

By PAOLO ROMERO

ILIGAN CITY – President Arroyo unveiled yesterday her formula for “lasting peace” in Mindanao.

Speaking at her first Cabinet meeting this year at the Macaraeg-Macapagal ancestral home, Mrs. Arroyo said she hopes to attain peace in Mindanao through “peace talks for all” and “projects for peace.”

Mrs. Arroyo said 2009 should mark the renewal of efforts to ensure the fulfillment of the government’s Mindanao agenda anchored on peace talks and projects for peace.

“Peace talks for all, we should put in place lasting peace – stilling the guns of war, drawing from the biblical theme of turning swords into plowshares,” she said.

All stakeholders in Mindanao are welcome to join the peace process to attain “peace for all,” she added.

“Projects for peace” mean a surge in government investments in Mindanao and the accelerated pace of implementation for its development programs, she added.

Mrs. Arroyo said the projects for peace would include creation of agribusiness processing zones that shall exploit the assets of Mindanao.

“The worth of this asset is incalculable,” she said.

Mrs. Arroyo said her administration would undertake a crash program against

illiteracy and poverty in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and other provinces in Mindanao.

“Our objective is to realize the century-old quest for lasting peace,” she said.

“From the wreckage of war, we will fashion implements for progress and lasting peace.”

Wearing a pink off-the-shoulder knitted top, Mrs. Arroyo arrived in Iligan City from Ozamis City in Misamis Occidental, where she inaugurated a new shopping mall.

She started touring Mindanao this week, inspecting and inaugurating projects. She is expected to stay in Mind-

anao until tomorrow.

## Peace talks to resume this month

The government hopes to resume peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) this month.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis, peace panel chairman, said the MILF is willing to resume peace talks, although its leaders have publicly announced preconditions for returning to the negotiating table.

“The good news is that we are ready to resume talks with the MILF and the better news is that the composition of the peace panel has been completed,” he said.