



# PRESS RELEASE

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Date Released: 3 March 2017

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## Lorenzana: Mindanaw traditional leaders important in fight against extremism

**Davao City** – SECRETARY of National Defense Delfin N. Lorenzana underscored the importance of Muslim Mindanaw traditional leaders in the government’s efforts to combat extremism in the region.

Speaking before the assembled members and representatives of the different royal houses and sultanates in the opening of the First Mindanaw Sultanate Summit on Peace and Security on 2 March 2017 in Royal Mandaya Hotel, Davao City, the Defense Chief said it was high time that government and traditional leaders sit down and talk about the “real issues” that confront Mindanao.

According to Secretary Lorenzana, foremost among the problems that Mindaoans face, is the prevalence of violent extremism that leads to underdevelopment and poverty. He called on the assembly to use their influence to help government address these problems.

*“Nakikita namin na ang violence dito sa Mindanao ay hindi kaya lang ng sundalo. Kailangan makialam tayo,”* Secretary Lorenzana said. He added that in conflict-affected areas, it is the children who suffer the most. Their exposure to a cycle of violence makes it easier for extremist groups to recruit them from the local populace.

“So, what we are going to do is bring in development,” the Secretary said.

Secretary Lorenzana also recognized that there has been little dialogue between the national government and traditional Mindanaw leaders in the past, especially on the issue of violent extremism in the region.

“We want to get your inputs. *Papakinggan namin kayo, kasi mukhang hindi kayo napapakinggan noon.* Now, we will have this dialogue. *Makikipag-usap kami sa inyo, makikinig kami sa inyo,* and we will mesh our ideas together to improve our area,” Secretary Lorenzana said.

The First Mindanaw Sultanate Summit on Peace and Security is jointly hosted by the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) with the theme “Engaging Traditional Institutions and Leadership to Promote Harmony towards Sustainable Peace”.

Over the next two days, senior government officials are expected talk about different issues and topics on peace and security, followed by reactions coming from the different traditional leaders.

For his part, Secretary Lorenzana expressed his optimism that the Sultans, Datus, and *Bais* present in the summit can greatly help advance the government’s peace and order agenda under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

“The reason why we would like to talk to the leaders is that we believe that *napakalaki ng* influence *ninyo.* You have a very strong influence on the people in your area. *Kayo pa rin ang tinitingala diyan at kinikilala,*” he said. “I believe we can still make Mindanao as progressive as it can be,” Lorenzana added.

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