

Written by Josie Matol

Saturday, 06 February 2010 10:29 -

Lawyer Gwen Pimentel today urged the government to enlist the active participation of women in the peace process to ensure that their views and interests are heard and considered. She is a Nacionalista Party senatorial candidate.

During the recent Mindanao Women's Summit in Davao City, Ms. Pimentel said that women, along with members of their families and most-especially the children, have a huge stake in the peace process. She stressed that women and children bear the brunt of the hardship and sacrifices whenever armed hostilities between government and insurgent forces break out in their communities.

{xtypo_quote} Women have plenty of ideas to contribute to the efforts of both sides to settle the root causes of the political conflicts, as guided by a comprehensive or holistic approach in the long-and-difficult quest for peace. – Gwen Pimentel {/xtypo_quote}

She is a daughter of Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. She said it is a must for the government not only to designate women as members of the government panels conducting the peace negotiations but also to regularly consult with them before making commitments with either the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or the National Democratic Front.

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“As an aspiring legislator from Mindanao, I believe that women have plenty of ideas to contribute in the efforts of both sides to settle the root causes of the political conflicts, as guided by a comprehensive or holistic approach in the long-and-difficult quest for peace,” she said.

Ms. Pimentel echoes the frustration of the people, especially those whose lives have been disrupted or ruined by the persistent fighting, over the setbacks and delays in the peace process.

“But in the heat of the election campaign, I share the sentiment of many that regardless of our partisan affiliations and beliefs, we should rally behind the peace process, because it is an issue where national interest is at stake and, therefore, transcends political differences,” she said.

Believing that even Muslim and communist insurgents are tired of war, Gwen Pimentel emphasized that the government should be transparent and decisive in hammering out the correct-and-workable peace formula and should be open to the views of all stakeholders, including leaders of Congress and local-government officials.

“Unless the government learns from the mistakes of the past, it is courting the risk of not fulfilling its objective to forge a peace agreement, especially with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front within the soonest possible time,” she said.

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“Lasting peace in Mindanao will be achieved only if we address the root causes of the conflict there,” Gwen Pimentel said. “We need to empower Mindanaonons through a framework of good governance, equal economic opportunities and delivery of basic services.” # # #

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