

## **2nd International Conference on Decentralization " Federalism: The Future of Decentralizing States?"**

**Manila, Philippines  
July 25 to 27, 2002**

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### **Report**

About 200 participants, including 45 from overseas, attended the 2nd International Conference on Decentralization which was held in the capital of the Philippines. The conference was organized by Dr. Alex Brillantes, Jr., Director of the Centre for Local and Regional Governance of the National College of Public Administration and Governance of the University of the Philippines and Senator Aquilino Pimentel, who has been spearheading the Philippines drive towards federalism. The conference was well attended by Filipino academics and practitioners, Senators, Members of Parliament, provincial, municipal and local officials. One question debated by the participants was "Does decentralization and/or federalism reduce or encourage secessionism and terrorism from and in a country?" A panel of experts from Canada, Spain and Sri Lanka compared experiences in in three very different countries.

The Forum's mission included a member of the Forum's Board of Directors, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, who shared Nigeria's experiences with decentralization and federalism. The Filipino audience was interested in listening to Nigeria's experiences in managing the sharia - a Muslim religious court - in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state.

The Forum's Interim President, Céline Auclair, delivered a keynote presentation on the status of federalism worldwide. The Head of International Liaison, David Mac Donald, greeted participants at workshops spoke informally about the work of the Forum. The Forum also sponsored a Spanish academic, Dr. Juan Fernando Aguilar, a constitutional law professor and Member of Parliament from Las Palmas, who spoke about his country's experiences with respect to decentralization, the creation of the Autonomous Communities and the Basque situation.

During a previous conference, the Second Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy, held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2001, the Forum sponsored a workshop that had inspired the organizers of the Manila conference. That workshop debated the proposition that "A federal system, through its pyramid structure, provides for decentralization to sub-national units as it provides a greater opportunity than a unitary system for greater participation at sub-national levels" (Elaigwu, 2001).

Media Coverage:

The Forum and our sponsored speakers participated in media events, which resulted in articles in the Philippine's main newspapers including the Philippine Star, Manila Bulletin, and The Daily Tribune. Dr. Alex Ekwueme and Céline Auclair both gave televised press conferences during the conference.

#### Multilateral meeting:

At the request of the Forum, the organizers hosted a dinner, which notably included the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Mr. Blas Ople, three Senators, practitioners and international guests, participants from the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNPD), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Germany, Switzerland, Canada, India, Thailand, Nigeria, Spain, South Africa, Cambodia, Hungary, Uganda and Namibia. Almost all of the people present were new to the Forum. The Interim President of the Forum, together with Senator Pimentel, delivered a welcome speech.