

UN chief welcomes new law giving extra autonomy to Muslims in Southern Philippines

The [UN Secretary-General](#) on Friday welcomed a new law which grants extra autonomy to Muslim communities living in the Southern Philippines, describing it as a “landmark achievement on the road to lasting peace”.

Philippine President, Rodrigo Duterte, signed the new legislation, formally known as the Organic Law for Bangsamoro in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, on Thursday, raising hopes that years of separatist violence involving central Government troops and militants from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, can be brought to an end.

“The Secretary-General congratulates negotiators for the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Bicameral Conference Committee, the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and civil society groups for their efforts,” said the UN chief, [in a statement](#) issued by his Spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric.

According to news reports, the long-anticipated new autonomy came four years after the Government signed a peace deal with the separatist group, which dropped its bid for full independence, seeking instead a new deal over self-rule.

The Front began its uprising in 1978, marking a period of violent confrontation which left around 120,000 dead. The new expanded autonomous region in the south, will be led initially by a transitional authority, before being run by a new parliamentary body, say reports.

The statement from the UN chief said that the UN “will continue to support the Philippines in the implementation of the law, and to help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority as an effective conduit for peace, democratic governance, and human rights”.