



Dr Ayesah (second, left) And Dr Kamarulzaman (second, right) showing their certificates of appreciation. They are flanked by Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah and Kyoko Okubu.

## 2 UMS academics honoured by Jica

Jason Santos DE 30-10-2014 3

KOTA KINABALU: Two Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) academics on Wednesday, were honoured with the 10th Japanese International Cooperation Agency's (Jica) President Commendation Award for their role in facilitating the peace process in the Southern Philippines.

Professor Dr Kamarulzaman Askandar, 46, and Dr Ayesah Uy Abubakar, 42, from the UMS Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, were accorded for their role in the Consolidation for Peace (Cop) meets that involved the Philippine Government, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and civil societies.

The husband and wife team believed the recognition is a testimony of the importance of the role of academics in peace building efforts in the Southern Philippines.

COP is one of the many initiatives carried out to facilitate the peace process in the Southern Philippines, apart from the formal talks held in Kuala Lumpur up to the Malaysian-brokered peace deal signing in Manila in 2012.

It is a programme held in collaboration between Jica and the Research for Peace Unit of Universiti Sains Malaysia since 2006, where both recipients had once worked.

Dr Kamarulzaman said: "It is an honour for the university and for academics alike in the field of peace-building.

"As we all know peace process is not an easy task and sometimes takes years, with chances of failure," he said after receiving the award.

Referring to the peace process in the Southern Philippines, he said: "Many issues involved in arm conflict call for negotiations and dialogues, such as division of power, wealth ... which require much detailed elaboration."

Meanwhile, Dr Ayesah, who is a Bangsamoro and also a Mindanao peace coordinator said, academics play a crucial role in providing an insiders' view involving those in conflict and areas that involved civil societies in the Southern Philippines.

Throughout their work, she said building the trust of those involved is most important, adding that a key to resolving issues in the region is to try not to be biased on any of the conflicting parties.

"In this case we had to try to be as neutral as possible and as professional as possible in the way of doing things," she said.

Both academics just completed COP's sixth meeting in Hiroshima, Japan in June, as both of them are also involved in other peace efforts in Aceh in Indonesia, Timor Leste and Pattani in Thailand.

Dr Kamarulzaman and Dr Ayesah are two of 22 recipients for the 10th Jica President Commendation Award across the country this year, where the award was handed over by a Jica's senior representative Kyoko Okubu and witnessed by UMS Vice Chancellor, Prof. Datuk Dr Mohd. Harun Abdullah, here.