

Civil Society Organisations Network in Korea

Civil Peace Forum

Press Conference: People of All Walks for Peace and Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula

(11 April 2013, Seoul) Marking the 60th anniversary of armistice agreement, the Korean peninsula in 2013 is facing an unprecedented level of military tension – moving dangerously close to a state of war. Shutting down the Kaesong Industrial Complex, which was deemed as the last resort for exchanges of dialogue and cooperation between the two Koreas as well as the recent North Korean threats of a missile launch are testament of deteriorating relations. On the other hand, the voices for peaceful reconciliation have had very little effect, causing concern amongst the public which has resulted in fluctuations in the state of the economy.

For this reason, Peace Forum under the Civil Society Organizations Network in Korea held a joint meeting of representatives from all spheres to call for peaceful dialogue and cooperation and the withdrawal of all types of military threats. Fifty representatives who gathered today have agreed to organize the “Joint Meeting of People of All Walks for Peace and Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula” and to take actions on the prevention of armed conflicts, achieving peaceful resolutions through negotiations, creating an environment of mutual respect where the viewpoints from the opposing party are respected and seriously considered, people-oriented peace alternatives, and implementation of peace and solidarity. The Joint Meeting is determined to promote peace talks in all social spheres, carry out campaigns and urgent action in all areas to prevent a military conflict in the Korean peninsula, explore peaceful cooperation with the Parliament and the government, suggest peace from the perspective of the citizens, and to perform non-governmental diplomacy.

For this press conference, fifty figures from various fields gathered and issued the statement: ‘People should Act Now to Overcome Crisis of Armed Conflict in the Korean peninsula,’ an open letter to the government of the Republic of Korea and the USA “We Have to Avoid a Military Conflict in the Korean Peninsula through Dialog and Cooperation” and an open letter to the government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea “The Recent Temporary Closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex”.

Attachment 1.

[Press Statement] People should Act Now to Overcome Crisis of Armed Conflict in the Korean peninsula

Attachment 2.

[Open Letter to the Government of the Republic of Korea and the USA] We Have to Avoid a Military Conflict in the Korean Peninsula through Dialog and Cooperation

Attachment 3.

[Open Letter to the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea]
The Recent Temporary Closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex

For more information

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[Appeal Letter to the People]

People should Act Now to Overcome Crisis of Armed Conflict on the Korean peninsula

(11 April 2013, Seoul) In 2013, the 60th anniversary of armistice agreement, military tension is rapidly mounting in the Korean peninsula. It started with the rocket launch by North Korea at the end of last year which intensified conflicts between North and South Korea, and between North Korea and the USA. Military threats and hostilities against each other have risen by the third nuclear test by North Korea in February and also by the Key Resolve joint military exercise of South Korea and the USA in March. The situation has become a tinderbox. The Kaesong industrial Complex, which is a symbol of exchange and cooperation between two Koreas and the last buffer zone to prevent the worst military conflict, is actually closed and hotline between two Koreas was cut.

The biggest victims of the current hostility and military confrontation that has no exit strategy are 70 million people living in the Korean peninsula. North and South Korea, and its neighbouring countries must immediately stop provocative military threats and hostile actions that risk 70 million people's lives and safety. Incendiary over-reaction such as provocative comments and armed protest must be immediately stopped.

The only solution is to seek ways to open dialogue and compromise while respecting each other and put themselves in each other's shoes. The reality does not provide a good example that a hostile approach attempting to control the counterpart by force came to a success.

Promoting and maintaining peace invites people to raise their voices and show actions of 'No' to the current precarious situation. People, who will be the actual victims of armed conflicts in the Korean peninsula, must protest against all forms of military threats and hostile actions. People must consistently and

patiently raise their voices to solve this deep-rooted conflict by dialogue and negotiation.

In this regard, representatives of civil society and religious communities who participated in today's meeting resolve to establish a "Joint Meeting of People of All Walks for Peace and Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula". The Joint Meeting is a self-help cooperation body to prevent armed conflicts in the Korean peninsula and to resolve the deep-rooted conflict by cooperation and dialogue. From the point of view of people who are direct victims of the current situation, we will do our best to promote and encourage reasoned expression of views, alternatives and actions of people to ease the military tension in the Korean peninsula, reopen economic cooperation and eventually establish 60th years of armistice as the year of peace.

We appeal to people of all social walks to join our cause and act accordingly.

11 April 2013

Participants of the Joint Meeting of People of All Walks
for Peace and Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula

[Open Letter to the Government of the ROK and the USA]

We Have to Avoid a Military Conflict in the Korean peninsula through Dialogue and Cooperation

We express our deep concerns on the closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the tense climate in which war seems to be imminent. The Korean people are the ones paying a heavy price due to an impasse in finding a diplomatic solution. Therefore, the policy makers should allocate high regards for the views of the Korean people. Timely, John Kerry, the Secretary of State, is planning to visit South Korea and coordinate policies on North Korea. We hope the ROK-US talk will be a crucial start point to solve the current situation and appeal as follows:

First, the two parties must arrive at an agreement whereby the North's concerns are properly addressed. The negotiating parties from the west are disturbed by the North's continued policy of taking provocative measures in order to achieve their desired objectives. Calling for a shift in North Korea's strategy, for the past twenty years, the western negotiating teams have resorted to the same old strategy of responding with ever toughening sanctions which have largely proven ineffective in changing the North's strategy. Indeed, it is the North Korean citizens who are suffering unimaginably due to such economic sanctions.

Secondly, the Korean government should take more aggressive measures to revive cooperation at the Kaesong Complex, which, as of the eighth of April 2013, has had all its 53,000 North Korean workers removed by their government and effectively shut down all activities. Unnecessary provocative actions must cease from both parties. Since the North Korean regime consistently views the U.S.'s military buildup on its doorsteps as an existential threat, the latter's government must be actively engaged in sincere diplomatic dialogs aimed at producing a lasting peace in the Korean peninsula.

Third, the issue of signing a peace treaty must seriously be looked at by all parties. Two governments from both sides, are partly responsible for the current crisis in the Korean Peninsula. Nine years have passed since the 9.19 Joint Statement, the fruit of the six-party talks in which both sides agreed to hold ‘additional forums’ to discuss peace agreements. Yet none has been held since the Lee Myung-bak’s Government. In this regard, we stress that the establishment of peace system is the only way to resolve the crisis in Korean Peninsula, and strongly urge the Korean and the U.S. governments to promptly start working on negotiation of peace agreement.

Fourth, if we put half the efforts that we are currently putting in pressuring, isolating, and sanctioning the North into sincere negotiations, we can greatly improve the chances of arriving at a solution for the current dilemma through peaceful channels. Thus, we appeal to Mr. John Kerry who is currently touring Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo to make a visit to Pyongyang. Furthermore, Barack Obama, the U.S. President, should be more active in the U.S.-North summit talks. This is the best way in nudging a peninsula that is on the verge of a full-scale war back to genuine negotiations.

Lastly, we encourage the current administration to recognize the fact that advancement or lack of progress in finding a diplomatic solution between the two Koreas will ultimately have a major effect on our nation. We are thus expecting that the Park Geun-hye administration actively promote the North-South dialog, mediate the North-U.S. talks, open up a golden age of three-way relations, and become a historic government.

11 April 2013

Participants of the Joint Meeting of People of All Walks
for Peace and Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula

[Open Letter to the Government of the DPRK]

The Recent Temporary Closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex

(11 April 2013, Seoul) The Kaesong Industrial Complex is currently under crisis. This is a crisis of the relationship between the North and South Korea and of reconciliation, peace and future of unification and prosperity at the same time.

On 8 April 2013, you decided to withdraw all your workers from the Kaesong Industrial Complex by the statement made by Mr. Kim Yang-gon, secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea Central Committee. We express our deep concern on this matter because your decision is contrary to the will of most people in Korea hoping for development of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. As your statement points out, 'the Kaesong Industrial Complex is a result of the June 15 South-North Joint Declaration and has contributed to reconciliation, unity, peace and unification of our people.' When the relationship between two Koreas was deteriorating in the past, the Kaesong Industrial Complex came close to a closure, but it never actually closed down as it reflects the nation's desire for the unification.

Likewise, the Kaesong Industrial Complex is a source of prosperity and unification, cherished by both North and South Korea. Therefore, it is hard to agree with your argument that main reason of the closure is the Kaesong Industrial Complex is now a source of the invasion of North Korea. It is a broad interpretation of some provocative views and most South Koreans do not agree with those minor views.

We would also like to point out that you could have shown at least some consideration and respect towards small business owners who have invested all their assets and worked very hard to develop the Kaesong Industrial Complex. As equal stakeholders, they have a right to discuss with you on such a crucial decision. In fact, these small business owners are symbols of reconciliation and cooperation against 'battlefield Kaesong' which makes your

concern. The history of the Kaesong Industrial Complex in fact is rather a proof long constructed by these small business owners standing against confrontational views, that reconciliation and cooperation are possible.

Paradoxically however, we intend to understand that your current decision came out as an emphasis on the need of cooperation and dialogue, from the conditions of the closure in your statement. As you argue, the condition to make the Kaesong Industrial Complex as a spark of the invasion of North Korea can be immediately resolved by dialogue between two Koreas on normalization of the Kaesong Industrial Complex.

We believe in resilience of the trust built between business personnel from North and South Korea and their workers. Also, we believe that it is now time to start a dialogue. We urge you to start a dialogue with business people from South Korea first regarding the current situation of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. That small start will bring changes towards transforming crisis to opportunities.

We look forward to your favorable reply.

11 April 2013

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