

The Joint Statement Issued by the Parliamentarians and Civil Society of  
South Korea on the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Day of Action on Military Spending  
- Use Our Tax on Welfare, not Warfare

Today(14 April 2014), we are standing here with around 320 organizations in 70 countries to reflect a large sum of military spending and challenges to peace, and to urge using our taxes on welfare, not warfare.

These days, the world including South Korea experiences the polarization of wealth which gets worse. The anxiety of daily life concerning employment, education, housing, and medical treatment is threatening our lives, but social safety nets are not provided enough due to the lack of public finances.

On the other hand, a large scale of finances is spent on the military spending for mutual and mass destruction. According to the annual report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the global military spending figures had reached 1.75 trillion US dollar last year. Military spending in Asian countries has dramatically increased, while the global military spending is slowing down a little bit due to the reduction of military budget with U.S. government's Sequester. South Korea has also followed this line. South Korea spent 34.5 trillion KRW on military expenditure last year. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> in worldwide military spending ranking. Has our life been much safer due to that huge amount of military spending?

Arms race in Northeast Asia and military conflicts show that it is not true. Countries surrounding the Korean Peninsula such as U.S., China, Russia, Japan and South Korea spend the 60 percent of a total global military spending. However, peace in this region is still far-off. The reality that we are facing today such as territorial conflicts between China and Japan or South Korea and Japan, the Japan's rightward shift and the plan for becoming a military power, a large scale of joint military exercise by South Korea and U.S., and missile launches by North Korea shows that much military spending cannot solve the military tensions nor guarantee people's safety.

We share our concerns that the expansion of basic social security networks required for basic livelihood is ignored, whereas military expenditures are overspent. South Korea's social welfare spending of its GDP is the 33th among 34 OECD countries. While boasting the 10<sup>th</sup> in the military spending, social tragedies due to retreat of welfare pledges by politicians in South Korea are more frequently reported. In March 2014, South Korean society faced a tragic story of a mother and two daughters' death in welfare blind spot. Furthermore, Jinju medical center that had been a public medical center was forcibly shut down, and 23 patients, who are compulsorily discharged or moved from the center died in that process.

Issues such as global warming, climate change and an energy policy based on nuclear power also become global threats which need to be solved urgently. According to

the reports published by World Bank, if the 5 percent of total global military spending is used to eradicate poverty, the UN's Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) that make the impoverished population in the world reduced by half by 2015 can be realized. However, while a huge amount of budget has spent for military spending during wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the promise of countering poverty has not yet fulfilled. Hence, it is the time for us to raise question: What are the most urgent and crucial threats to our lives?

Accordingly, on the Global Day of Actions on Military Spending, members of the National Assembly and civil society organizations in South Korea propose as follows under the current situation that the peace on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia becomes far-off due to the dramatic rise of military spending, and retreat of a welfare policy;

1. We urge the government to freeze/reduce national defense budget in order to strengthen social safety nets. Increasing military expenditure in a limited national budget means decreasing welfare expenditure. What is the most urgent for us is to remove unstable factors in daily lives such as alleviation of economic polarization, job creation, expansion of medical services, solution for housing problem, and support for childcare and marginalized class. Finances secured by reducing military spending should be priorly distributed to solve various anxious factors in people's daily lives. Reducing military spending and expanding welfare system is away to prepare for unification of South and North Korea. For reunification of two Koreas, the government should first alleviate economic polarization by strengthening social safety nets, and prepare foundation of social integration.

1. We urge the government to establish a permanent peace system by seeking ways for constructing mutual trust and developing peaceful relationship with North Korea. Constant expansion of military spending only encourages mutual threats with North Korea, makes the relationship get extreme, and never brings us the peace of the Korea Peninsula. Especially under the present condition that military gaps between two Koreas are widening, it is desirable and realistic that we suggest freeze and reduction of military spending before North Korea. Furthermore, we should start dialogue to transform unstable armistice system that is resulted in military distrust into peace system.

1. We expect that global efforts to eliminate nuclear threats should be paid off as soon as possible. Nuclear weapon is the most inhumane weapon that can cause human annihilation. Policy that depends on the nuclear deterrence cannot protect anyone. Instead, people living in these countries who adopted this policy are exposed to bigger nuclear threats. Nuclear weapon agreement proposed by the UN Secretary-General Ban Gi-Moon should be signed as soon as possible. Also, Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone to remove the nuclear threats in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula should be started. The starting point is to resume the Six-Party Talks immediately and to start dialogue about well-balanced ways to realize peace system and denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula.

1. We express our concern about the present situation that territorial and resource conflicts are deepened, and that military alliances and aggressive military exercise and planning are reinforced in the Asia-Pacific regions including Northeast Asia. Territorial disputes and conflicts over resources should be solved in reciprocal ways. Above all, governments of related nations should cooperate in order to find the ways for residents around military conflict zone to safely enjoy the common resources. Appealing to military means and strengthening military alliances against a certain nation bring another military collision, and cannot solve the conflicts. We call on that all countries within the region stop the armed protests and mutual military threats, and reduce military spending and cooperate to make peaceful Northeast Asia.

1. More people's participation and solidarity across borders are very crucial for peace in the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia, and in the world. If we are mature enough to deeply consider the internal and external cause of conflicts and solve them peacefully, we can protect our community more effectively than through any other weapons. Cooperation and international exchange among people are also very important. We should consider whether threats from outside are exaggerated or not and that conflicts with outside can be solved through display of military strength. We cannot just leave the government to decide whether they spend more money on military expenditure or on welfare expenditure. People should be able to democratically control national security and policy priority should be determined by people, not by the government.

Use our tax on welfare, not warfare. This is a realistic slogan and the way that South Korea must follow. For this, we urge the government, the National Assembly, and every people to show their wisdom to choose peace for our future.

2014. 4. 14

All Participants for Joint News Conference of Parliamentarians-  
Civil Society in South Korea on the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Day of Action on  
Military Spending