

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION ASIA –PACIFIC

Regional Program on Peace Building & Dialogue on the theme

A Prophetic Call for Peace Ecumenical Students & Youth for Sustainable Peace in Korean Peninsula

Hosted by Korea Student Christian Federation (KSCF), Seoul, Korea
on August 17-24, 2018

CONCEPT NOTE

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

April 27, 2018, is a historic day for the world! The extraordinary historic Summit between the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea held in Panmunjom. Many were moved around the world, especially the people of North and South Korea as their leaders came together to embrace the people of North and South Korea as one people and promised to restore peace and harmony in Korean Peninsula. The Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity, and Unification on the Korean Peninsula is a milestone! Certainly a time of great relief and joy for many people and communities to celebrate. The document commits the two countries to a nuclear-free peninsula and talks to bring a formal end to the Korean War.

Importance of peace process after Inter-Korean Summit

The recent development of the Panmunjom summit is certainly welcoming and a ray of hope! For many, the Inter-Korean Summit was like a dream, and Panmunjom summit is still like a dream until it translated into a reality. The summit is still delicate to bring changes in the political and military areas of normalization of diplomatic relations, disarmament, denuclearization, mutual trust building, sincere dialogue and peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. As the world still discussing the inter-Korean Summit, we were shocked by the sudden announcement by the President of USA, Donald Trump canceling the highly anticipated June 12 Summit with the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Even though there are speculations that the summit might still be a possibility.

To transform the Panmunjom Declaration into a reality, the participation of people, communities including faith communities and civil societies is equally significant. History has witnessed that people-to-people relations and continuous efforts of advancement of sustainable peace through constructive dialogues in various levels have foster peace and harmony in conflicted regions. Hence it is imperative to engage the diverse group of people from both south and North Korea who are prepared to work for an inter-Korean peace regime for sustainable peace.

The incomprehension between North and South Korean people, especially among South Korean and particularly among youth might be a challenge to the unification. It was reported by the Asian Boss (an alternative media) that 86% of young people in South Korea are not in favor of the unification of Korean Peninsula. It is obvious that many young people are insecure about their future as they struggle to compete in the market-driven education system and employment. Therefore, their analysis of the unification is mainly from the financial point of view. Their major concern that the South Koreans will have the burden of the financial needs of the people of North Korea. However, a similar view is reflected by many people in different parts of the world while responding to the integration of the migrants and refugees in their countries.

In this context, it is imperative to develop and cultivate the culture of peacebuilding and dialogue to embrace differences. An inclusive and peaceful community is possible through a process of continuous dialogue and discourse. Furthermore, developing a deeper understanding and critical analysis of the global geopolitical situation for the young people is equally important. How to respond to the manipulation of resources spent towards war and militarism across the globe in the name of protecting the borders and terrorism? How the young people live a life without fear and violence and achieve their dreams? And how young people play an effective and constructive role in their society and country? These are some of the challenging issues we need to grapple with. Though we live in a more open, accessible and connected world today still human beings are valued based on their nationality, race, caste, per capita income of the country, rather identifying and embracing the diverse richness to benefit each other and to grow in sharing, caring, friendship, communal harmony.

A Prophetic Call for Peace: Role of Student and Youth for Sustainable Peace in Korean Peninsula

In recent times, a single factor espoused in this vicious cycle of reality is the deficient platform of opportunities for engagement in constructive dialogue and advocacy to pursue sustainable peace with justice enabling reconciliation and reunification of the estranged Korean people. The challenge of the hour is the need of the significant members of our Societies to come forward who love peace and say a big 'NO' to any form of violence and war. Undoubtedly, one of such communities that emerge from the Korean turbulence is the youth and students from both sides of the fence. A community that is vocal and action-minded, and they are the worst victims of the war needs to be engaged in the process of creative dialogue and peacebuilding in the Korean Peninsula.

However, with a great sense of gratitude it is an acknowledged fact that, the Churches in the Korean Peninsula under the auspices of the World Council of Churches have contributed significantly towards availing common platforms for Churches and Christians from both North and South Korea to engage in a series of meaningful dialogue in order to advance reconciliation and peace in the region. In the past, there have been committed and sincere efforts to mobilize the actors from both ecumenical and secular communities along with governmental parties with potentials to champion the Korean cause towards reunification and peace.

This is where; the students emerge as a “Power-packed” ecumenical community to articulate their sublime alternative ideas to develop sustainable approaches towards reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of the Korean people. The fertile minds and open hearts of students and youth carry loads of potential for engagement in pursuing the dreams of Korean reunification through creative dialogue, theological reflection, so also through small yet sincere co-actions of advocacy and peace-building.

Prophetic call for peace is going beyond of faith and ideology to restore peace based on Justice. Today young people are being used as an agent by Churches to preach gospels to various communities by aiming religious conversion. Many a time the innocent communities become the victim of the backlash of their actions. It is necessary for the gathering of youth students with Christian spirit of peace and reconciliation to demonstrate the capacity of the Christian student movement that has made a peace-building movement through the global network in the international community to understand Asia’s international network for peace and reconciliation. Specifically, it is necessary for the WSCF an international ecumenical network of students and youth exhibit the prophetic role as they are called to be as peacemakers- “we are many, we are one – sent out to build God’s peace” (*Theme of 35 GA of WSCF*)

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Regional Program on Peace Building & Dialogue On August 17-24, Seoul, Korea

Historically the WSCF has played important role in the process of building peace and reunification in the Korean peninsula. Especially many senior friends of KSCF have contributed to this process from the beginning together with the leadership of World Council of Churches (WCC). A great deal of International support and solidarity shown to KSCF through international network especially form the WSCF global networks towards peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula.

In this backdrop, a regional level program of an international student and ecumenical youth community is being organized together with the KSCF while KSCF celebrates its 70th anniversary to witness the ecumenical journey among the student community. This solidarity action will certainly put an impact among the youth in South Korea, but also at the global level to foster sustainable peace in the Korean Peninsula, in Asia, and in the world. Given below are the participants and objectives of the regional consultation.

Participants: 33 participants from South Korea, (15 students and youth from KSCF, & Korean Churches), members of SCMs of WSCF Asia Pacific - Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Cambodia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Australia and

New Zealand, members from WSCF Global and Global partners – students and youth from the USA, Europe and United Church of Canada are expected to participate in the program.

Objectives

1. To facilitate a common platform for students and youth to articulate their ideas and desire for joint action towards shaping up a safer Korean Peninsula
2. To enhance common understanding of the theological relevance of peace and reconciliation around the world, especially, envision a desirable future of the Korean Peninsula
3. To create awareness among the youth community towards peace system and practices in the context of Korean Conflict and Peace-building
4. To inspire the students to bear the witness of Jesus Christ's Love and Peace by playing a prophetic role in the peace and reunification process of the North and South Korea
5. To impart new knowledge and skills in the area of Advocacy, Peace strategies and Result bound negotiation, especially developing a new outlook and increased awareness towards a "Nuclear-Free World"
6. To sensitize the youth community to internalize the issues and challenges involved in the peace-building efforts and develop a gender perspective of the Korean Conflict and the peace-building process
7. To develop a long-term program to strengthen the relationships of youth from both North and South Korea by cross-border people to people relation
8. To foster new collaborations and networks among the young community to increase a sense of solidarity towards opening new avenues of co-action and act as "Peace Advocates"

Methodology

- A. Use of participatory learning techniques/tools such as socio-matrix, role play, creative workshop
- B. Fission and Fusion approach in the discussions and deliberations
- C. Case studies of Conflict and peacebuilding from around the world
- D. Panel discussions
- E. Peace tour / Exposure to DMZ/ Panmunjom
- F. Working groups to carry forward the outcome/work plan of the conference