

# **The Korean Peace Treaty as a major step to reverse the arms race in Northeast Asia**

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Any person with common sense would be aware that the current arms race and the threat of nuclear war will possibly lead to the destruction not only of humanity, but of all life on earth, and even the earth itself. We are the 99% common people, we know that the fuse of nuclear war could be lighted by the 1% elite with vested interest. Instead of peaceful relations of cohabitation, which is the soil for the proliferation of trust and cooperation, those who are supposed to be, and themselves claim to be, our guardians seek to create and perpetuate conflicts, tensions and wars, that is, an environment conducive to the increasing investment in the research of techniques and technologies of inevitable destruction. Instead of trust, they breed mistrust; instead of love, hatred; instead of cooperation, conspiracy and destructive competition. Instead of promoting the health of society and humanity, they poison not only the earth, but also the minds and social relations, instituting insecurity as the ground of all relations, tearing societies apart by the continual production of all forms of separation and polarization.

For over seven decades since the use of atomic bombs at the end of World War II, the so-called balance of terror strategy, which justifies the continuous investment of exorbitant resources into the production of weapons of mass destruction, is based on the logic of MAD – mutually assured destruction. The arms race – with its research, production and usage of weapons – is not only a gigantic wastage of resources on earth, but also a speeding towards death. Since the late 1940s, humanity has narrowly escaped a nuclear war or the Third World War, though regional and local wars have never ceased in different parts of the world. Common wealth which could, and should, have been used for improving people's livelihood and well-being has been deployed for destruction. Today, the world is ruled by financial capital hand in hand with the military-industrial complex with its base in the major powers, especially USA. The arms race protects not the security of the common people, but the interest of a privileged minority. This privileged minority,

composed of transnational corporations and the leadership of powerful nations, deploys, or threatens to deploy, military force to protect the security of their scramble for natural resources, control over territories, and domination in the globalized finance. The 1% minority prevails over the 99% majority not only by force, but also by lies, and blackmails. We the 99% are told to rally behind the war-mongering elite which professes to give us security through preventive or combative measures against the “enemy”. We are told to give up our judgement and give in to the security needs of our nation-states, accepting austerity measures, accepting the devastation of our environment, accepting to be sacrificed.

However, we, the many women’s peace organizations and networks present here today, along with numerous peace movements across the globe, declare our lucid position: we want life, not death; need, not greed; good, not evil; reciprocity, not violence; peace, not war. We reject the blackmails that attempt to coerce us to support the arms race and the MAD. We are committed to prevent wars at all costs, and to eliminate the conditions that fuel wars. We salute the efforts of peace activists, especially those in South Korea, for the decades of work in the struggle for lasting peace and good governance, culminating in the Candlelight Revolution, which has contributed to the current advances for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean Armistice Agreement signed on 27 July 1953 by USA, North Korea and China has not been followed up by a Peace Treaty. For 65 years since the Agreement, the Korean Peninsula has remained a site of military tension and conflict. There are reportedly 15 United States military bases in South Korea alone, and many more in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region. This is the primary factor of instability in the region. The deployment of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile system beginning in March 2017 spurred high tension on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. It is a great relief when, on 27 April 2018, the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification on the Korean Peninsula was signed by President Moon Jae-in of South Korea and Chairman Kim Jong-un of North Korea. Hopes are now high for South Korea and North Korea to move towards complete denuclearization and formalization of a full peace treaty, with unification in prospect.

The wish of the 99% has never been so explicit: we do not permit war-mongering aggressions leading to catastrophic regional and global wars to be launched with any kind of excuse.

Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will be a hopeful first step, which must be followed by denuclearization globally. The current encouraging step moves towards reversing the logic of the arms race that institutes a state of exception as the everyday reality in which the question of “national security” overrides questions of law, rights of the people, and democracy. Such a logic turns the question of security as a collective concern into a privatized concern, determined by a few selected elites through secretive decision making mechanisms; the people are expected to passively accept a fate thrust upon us.

Therefore, the move is encouraging because it is a sign of a changing of minds of ruling elites. However, to reverse the race to death, the race to plunder the 99% and to plunder nature, it falls upon all, not only those claiming to be our guardians, to say No to arms race, No to the race to death. The system pursuing arms race diverts gifts and talents of humanity from devoting to the well-being of humanity as a whole, not just the 1%, while the monopoly of financial capital with its systemic crises creates an increasingly harsh and hostile environment against commitment to long-term efforts working for the common good. Gifts and talents are trapped in the whirlwind of short term private gains. The two together not only aggravates our situation of being dragged deeper and deeper into systemic crises, such a path of so-called Development and Progress is not sustainable for its energy dependence, addicted to fossil fuel and nuclear energy, while all it serves is the short-sightedness of private gains, and the destruction of nature’s cycle for regeneration. This means that the concern for the arms race today must also take seriously the ecological crisis confronting us now, for it complicates our struggle for peace by confronting us with the question whether we can survive the man-made ecological crises.

Thus, for us the 99%, the question of security is a collective concern, with the well-being and agency of the people placed in the centre. The basis of both socio-economic and ecological sustainability follows a logic of justice, wherein communities organize their interdependence in productive and creative cooperation, defending their commons for livelihood and bonding. This is not the logic of so-called Development and Progress which inevitably privileges a minority against the majority, with an inherent aggression fueling war and destruction.

For humanity to have a future, for life on earth to sustain, we need the powerful intervention of the 99%. In this articulation of peace movements and ecological and livelihood movements for another

world which is possible, we can learn a lot from women's struggles for peace, that is, struggle for peaceful cohabitation among persons and peoples, as well as for forms of life at peace with nature.

In the name of our children, let us work together to build a world free from nuclear weapons, free from fear, greed and hatred, a world of justice, peace and love.