

Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Message of Religious Leaders on Security in the Korean Peninsula



**An Interfaith Statement by Religious Communities
and Interfaith Organizations in the United States**

**On Seeking a Just and Peaceful Path Toward
Reconciliation of the Korean Peninsula**

**Prepared for The Summit of The United States of America
and The Republic of Korea**

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As members and representatives of many diverse global religious and spiritual communities working cooperatively toward peace, we express our grave concern for the profound social, political, military, and humanitarian crisis affecting the Korean peninsula today. We stand for peace, and we call upon the political leaders who are positioned to bring about peace to give this crisis highest priority and to seek new and bold solutions to end this long-standing conflict. Especially now, in the face of rising tensions between the United States of America and Republic of Korea alliance and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and their respective allies, global religious leaders and communities renew our calls for, and commitments to, the fostering of a just and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula.

We appeal particularly to President Donald J. Trump and President Moon Jae-in, who will be meeting June 30 in Washington, DC, and to Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un, to demonstrate bold leadership in finding creative and innovative pathways to peace that faithfully honor the dignity of all of human life, especially those who suffer most from the current conflict.

Knowing that religious communities are enduring transnational institutions, in order to support meaningful efforts by the respective governments, we continue to pledge our own courses of shared actions, including renewed people-to-people exchanges, education and awareness advocacy, prayer, and humanitarian assistance.

Our religious institutions have long facilitated exchanges between religious leaders and peoples of faith in South and North Korea, and now join with them in their aspirations for peace and their longing for the oneness of the Korean people. The May 25-26, 2017 exchange between the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace (South Korea) and the Korean Council of Religionists (North Korea) in Beijing is the latest in a long series of such exchanges.

The escalation of nuclear and other military threats and the ongoing social, political, and economic crisis in North Korea require more than political rhetoric. They demand action. This crisis calls for moral, ethical, spiritual, and humanitarian leadership as well as deeply

considered peaceful interventions in order to avoid unnecessary military crisis and human suffering.

Since 2006, nuclear tests, missile test launches, and satellite launches by North Korea have led to six rounds of sanctions imposed by the United Nations on North Korea. The US, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and allies have joined in other progressive sanctions. These sanctions, while specifically targeted to deter North Korea's nuclear capacity, have nevertheless worsened the humanitarian crisis within North Korea. Sharp rhetoric exchanged between representatives from multiple countries, each holding shared and unique concerns for the security of the Korean peninsula, appears to have only inflamed the tensions.

In addition, with support from the former South Korean President, who did not seek the approval of South Korea's Congress and was accordingly impeached, the US recently initiated a cooperative deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) air defense system in South Korea. This course of action, while intending to be preventative, has raised concerns on the Korean peninsula and in China because of its strategic consequences.

The urgent commencement of multilateral government diplomacy and negotiations, complemented by the fostering of secure forms of person-to-person, faith-to-faith, and other civil society engagements, remain our best courses of action for achieving a lasting and peaceful solution.

In making this call for peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, we support the hopes and wishes of the religious leaders and their communities in South and North Korea, who are making a parallel appeal to US, South Korean and North Korean governmental leaders as the US–South Korean summit begins.

We call for our respective administrations to work toward the:

1. Taking of concrete steps for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and the continued reduction of the world's nuclear arsenal;
2. Reducing of armed provocations and adoption of a simple "first, do no harm" moral ground for engagement;
3. Reconvening of multi-party diplomatic talks on security in the Korean Peninsula;
4. Offering of signs of good faith between countries, including but not limited to humanitarian assistance to alleviate human suffering;
5. Crafting of a new non-aggression pact between the parties to supersede the hasty Armistice Treaty of 1953;

6. Restoring of full food aid through the World Food Program in North Korea, especially to bring assistance to the most vulnerable – children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities; and,
7. Integrating of the highest ethical standards and universal values with policy and practice.

We will also offer our own contributions. For our part, we will:

1. Invite our religious communities to study and take action on measures of reconciliation between the peoples of the two Koreas;
2. Engage our political leaders to consider multilateral and diplomatic avenues of peacemaking;
3. Intensify our own Track II exchanges between religious leaders / peoples of South and North Korea, as well as multi-party interests, such as the May 25-26, 2017 exchange in Beijing;
4. Call for increased humanitarian assistance as a sign of goodwill and good faith, even in advance of other efforts making progress, and contribute to our own people-to-people mechanisms for enabling this;
5. Request an end to the Armistice and replacement of it with a new peace accord that includes a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to sustainable peace;
6. Advocate to the international community and our religious communities about the importance of supporting the medical and agricultural sectors in North Korea with technical expertise;
7. Encourage prayer throughout our faith communities to invigorate the hearts and minds of those who can lead us to peace and of those who suffer in its absence;
8. Uphold our commitment to the full flourishing of human rights; and,
9. Show affirmation and respect for the sovereignty of the Korean people in all things, both for the sake of inter-Korean relationships and the future of Korean peninsula security and regional peace.

During the Summit, religious leaders in the United States and beyond will offer special prayers, meditations, and host peace walks to support peace and security in Korea, Asia, and the world.

We stand ready to work cooperatively with those who aim to advance peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Initially endorsed by Religious Organizations and interreligious organizations:

Won Buddhism of North America

Won Buddhism International

Religions for Peace USA

Parliament of the World's Religions

United Religions Initiative

Temple of Understanding

Korean-American Religious Peace Association of North America