



APPROVED

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Amman, Jordan, 17-23 November 2017, celebrates on the one hand new steps taken towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons, while on the other hand fearing that the next turn in the cycle of confrontation and escalation on the Korean peninsula might result in an uncontrollable slide into nuclear-armed warfare. The death and destruction that would inevitably result from any conflict in such a highly militarized environment cannot and must not be contemplated. The gravity of this situation calls for our most profound words of wisdom and our deepest commitment to work for peace. This is the holy work which all Christians are called to do, though we share this responsibility with all people who value peace and human life and dignity.

The escalating crisis on the Korean peninsula raises the awful spectre of resumption of the long-suspended state of war, threatening the lives and futures of all people of the region. Especially in a context in which nuclear weapons are now wielded by antagonists on both sides of the crisis, the possible consequences of slipping over the brink into conflict are incalculably horrific.

We appeal for all parties in this confrontation on the Korean peninsula to step back from the brink of war, to seek human encounter and dialogue without political preconditions, and to be true instruments of peace. We call on the leaders of the nations and the international community to release the Korean people from the threat of war with disastrous consequences for the whole region, and for the world. We call for real efforts for a peace treaty for the Korean peninsula, to conclude the suspended state of war and to enable the current challenges to peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula to be addressed more clearly and pragmatically.

In this coming Advent season, we invite all Christians around the world and all people of good will to join in prayers for peace, and in actions of solidarity. In a global campaign, "A Light of Peace", the WCC is inviting all Christians to express solidarity with the Korean people and the peoples of the region, and to support efforts to ease tensions and sustain hope.

This year as every year, we will light our Advent candles in expectation and hope for peace on earth, the peace that was announced through the coming of the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Light of Peace campaign this year, as we light the first candle for the first Sunday in Advent, we will pray for peace in Korea. And as we light the second candle, on 10 December, we will pray for a world free from nuclear weapons. On that same day, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), in which the WCC participates,

will receive the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. By lighting candles during special prayers and worship services two Sundays in a row, people in many nations from many faith traditions can join in amplifying voices of peace in the midst of the threat of war.

We pray for God's compassion and wisdom to enter the hearts and minds of political leaders. We pray that they might remember that all the children, women and men whose lives they threaten through their words and actions, are each – regardless of nationality or allegiance – made in the image of God, and that they might value those lives at least as much as they value their own. We pray that they will be inspired to take the path of dialogue and engagement, rather than the path of militarism and confrontation.

We pray that there will be no more war on the Korean peninsula. We pray that a region that has seen such brutal violence and destruction less than 70 years ago will not be subjected again to similar or even worse suffering, but will come to experience sustainable peace and co-existence rather than permanent insecurity and the continuous threat of war.

We pray that nuclear weapons never again be used, neither on the Korean peninsula nor anywhere else on the globe. We pray that they, and the threat that they pose so long as they continue to exist, will be utterly eliminated from the world.

We pray for our Christian sisters and brothers in both North and South Korea, that their lives and witness in their communities and societies will be preserved and strengthened, for the good of their people and for God's mission in the world. We pray that the political reasons for their division from each other will be resolved, and that the peaceful reunification of the divided nation of Korea will be achieved.