

World Council of Churches Pushing for Korean Peace Treaty

The World Council of Churches is pushing newly elected South Korean President Moon Jae-in to sign a peace treaty with North Korea that would replace the current armistice agreement that has been in effect since 1953.

WCC is highly critical of what it claims is President Donald Trump's "escalation" of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Last month it issued the following statement after the Department of Defense announced the *USS Carl Vinson* was being positioned off the peninsula in the Sea of Japan:

The World Council of Churches (WCC) joins the National Council of Churches in [South] Korea (NCCCK) in expressing grave concern at the re-deployment of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier group to the seas surrounding the Korean peninsula. In a context of already heightened tensions—especially in the midst of the ongoing joint U.S. and South Korean Foal Eagle-Key Resolve military exercises and the steps being taken to deploy the U.S. missile defense system THAAD in South Korea, and North Korean threats of a nuclear response—this constitutes a further escalation of military confrontation in the region.

WCC has been engaged for more than 30 years in promoting dialogue and encounter between North and South Korean Christians, accompanied and supported by representatives of the global fellowship of churches in WCC membership. Our purpose has been and continues to be the promotion of peace and reunification of a country and people divided by an unresolved conflict. Particularly in recent years, almost all other channels of dialogue and encounter have been

closed off in favor of escalating military confrontation and tightening sanctions. We do not believe that this is a recipe for peace, but rather for increasing the risk of conflict. War cannot achieve a sustainable peace, as the modern history of the Korean peninsula all too tragically demonstrates.

We call urgently for measures to reduce tensions and promote dialogue and negotiations, rather than initiatives such as those now being taken that can only increase tensions and the risk of conflict that would prove catastrophic for all Koreans, North and South, as well as for people throughout the region and the world.

We call for all people of good will to join in praying for wisdom and restraint on the part of all those with the instruments of such deadly force in their hands, and for peace and unity among the people of the Korean peninsula.

WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit led a delegation to South Korea's Blue House to meet with Moon, who is a former human rights lawyer. Although he said that recent repeated missile tests by the North obstruct peace prospects, he remains committed to "engaging in dialogue" that will lead to "democratization, human rights, peace and reconciliation in Korea."

Following their meeting, Tveit issued the following statement:

That President Moon received us so early in his term is a sign of his recognition of the role that churches in Korea and the WCC have in building relations for peace on the Korean peninsula.

Everywhere I go around the world, especially in these times of heightened geopolitical tensions, I am asked about the situation in the Korean peninsula and about how the WCC and the churches in Korea can do more to help reduce tensions and to promote peace and reconciliation in this region. We

have a long history of supporting encounter and dialogue between Christians from both North and South Korea, and we are committed to doing more.

We and our member churches place much hope in your leadership for a fresh start for peace among the divided Korean people, and we pray for you as you serve in this high position in this significant time for your nation and for the world. {eoa}