

CENTRAL COMMITTEE POLICY STATEMENT ON PEACE AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA, MOSCOW, USSR, JULY 1989

I. In its “Statement on Peace and Justice”, the World Council of Churches’ Sixth Assembly affirmed that

“The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice or threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God’s people is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative in our time.”

The yearning for peace, justice and unity converges most poignantly and in a unique manner in the case of Korea. The Korean people have been divided by foreign forces, and remain divided by force and have been submitted to coercive systems of control which perpetuate this division and are justified by it. Opposing conceptions of justice have been created and systematised in Korea, where “security” imposes a continual state of confrontation. A so-called “peace” is maintained at the cost of the largest concentration of military force in the world. Peculiar notions of justice are maintained at the cost of the right of the Korean people to decide their own destiny. Korea remains technically at war, and so long as millions of families remain separated, there can be no claim that justice has been achieved.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians and churches in the ecumenical community to engage every effort to overcome division and bring about shalom, a true peace where righteousness and well being prevail. The biblical passage found in Ephesians 2:14-16 reflects clearly the hopes and promise of the long-suffering Korean people:

“He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh those commandments and ordinances that divide human beings. That he might create in himself one new human being in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end”.

The WCC confesses that it has not always dealt equitably with the Korean question. Mistakes of the past should weigh on the conscience of the ecumenical community and intensify our determination to struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea. As the WCC’s Tozanso consultation on “Peace and Justice in North-East Asia” states,

“The churches are called to provide hope, to witness for peace, justice and unity. They must become a model of dialogue and participation for all who have been affected by the tragedy of division. Christians must surround one another in love, supporting one another in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”

II. Reaffirming the Tozanso principles of ecumenical coordination in these pursuits, the WCC commends the efforts of many churches and ecumenical organisations which have already engaged themselves actively and responsibly in pursuing contacts with Christians in the DPRK, while at the same time maintaining intimate liaison with partner churches and the NCKK in the ROK.

The WCC also commends its Korean member churches and the NCKK for their courageous pursuit of human rights and democratisation in Korea, as well as their eagerness, despite

severe difficulties, to encourage the WCC's contacts with North Korea and to participate in the two historic Glion meetings involving delegations from both North and South. The WCC warmly welcomes the NCKK historic "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace", of February 1988 and the "Message of the International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea" of April 1988, which constitute important stages in the Tozanso process. It also commends the initiatives taken by women in the Korean churches.

The WCC commends the Korean Christians Federation for its active participation in the ecumenical efforts for peace and the reunification of Korea. It welcomes the new opportunities that the Christian community in the North has for wider ecumenical contacts as well as for public worship.

The WCC pledges to continue to work in the spirit of the Tozanso process to facilitate contacts and to act as a channel of communication between the Christian communities of North and South Korea, as long as this communication cannot be carried on directly. It recognises the special role of the Christian Conference of Asia and churches in Japan, the USA, the USSR and the People's Republic of China and Korean Christian communities abroad in this regard. Considering the crucial role of the USA in Korea, the work of the NCCCUSA including the policy statement on "Peace and Reunification of Korea" provides a positive example of ecumenical solidarity and cooperation.

The WCC instructs the CCIA to continue to monitor and analyse the situations in both parts of Korea, as well as developments in the region, and in the international community of nations, as far as the Korean issue is concerned. The CCIA is requested to work closely with inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations and to engage itself actively in the United Nations for the promotion of peace and the reunification of Korea.

III. In this context, the WCC encourages all member churches and related agencies and councils to initiate or redouble efforts to persuade their respective governments to review their Korea policies and bring them in line with the objectives of peace, justice and reunification. The WCC recommends the following elements as priority considerations:

1. The people of Korea should be the ultimate subjects in decisions affecting their future, without outside interference or tutelage. The reunification of Korea should be carried out through a process of democratic participation by all members of the Korean nation.
2. All parties concerned should be called upon to commit themselves to the principles contained in the joint North-South declaration of 4 July 1972, namely "independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity". The USA, USSR, Japan and China in particular should be pressed to state clearly their intention to pursue the reunification of Korea as a matter of national policy.
3. The reunification process should respect and recognise the reality of the two existing autonomous systems in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, with the objective of building up one unified country. Any proposal implying the permanent division of Korea should be rejected.
4. A radical reduction of military forces, facilities and weapons should be sought on the Korean peninsula in order to eliminate one of the major threats to regional and world peace. The scaling-down of military exercises and the signing of non-aggression declarations could be useful contributions to such force reductions.

5. As a contribution to the reduction of tensions and a sign of good faith, the USA should be urged to remove immediately all nuclear weapons from Korean soil, and both the USA and the USSR should be urged also to remove all nuclear weapons aimed at Korea. This would open the way for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Korea.

6. The USA, which along with the DPRK is a co-signatory of the 1953 Armistice Agreement, should be encouraged to cooperate in negotiating a peace treaty which could create conditions leading towards the withdrawal of its military forces from the peninsula.

7. A fresh, truly impartial initiative should be launched by the United Nations in an effort to rectify its historical legacy of bias and complicity in Korea's division. Serious consideration should be given to the proposal that the United Nations Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea oversee a mutual troop reduction by North and South Korea.

8. Both North and South Korea should be pressed to find solutions to outstanding humanitarian problems, foremost the tragic situation of millions of separated families. With due recognition that this is an extremely complex problem, open to political misuse and whose solution should not contribute to the perpetuation of division, all parties to the conflict must be urgently reminded of the humane and moral imperative of finding appropriate mechanisms to open many and varied forms of contact between the two parts of the country.

IV. Reaffirming the "Gion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea", the WCC supports the decision of churches in both North and South Korea to observe 1995 as the "Year of Jubilee for Unification" and recommends that all WCC member churches and associate ecumenical councils and conferences join in prayer with the Korean churches by observing the Common Day of Prayer.

As one step towards the Jubilee Year, the WCC should explore the possibility of direct reciprocal ecumenical visits between North and South Korea.

The WCC urges all member churches and ecumenical bodies to help Korean Christians in their struggle for peace and the reunification of their people by engaging in activities of solidarity which may include the following elements:

1. Establish or maintain contact with churches and Christians in both parts of Korea. Such contacts should promote the building of confidence between North and South by providing first-hand information, thus contributing to an atmosphere of trust and reconciliation.

2. In planning contacts and visits to North Korea, it is important to respect the non-denominational character of Christian life there. The Tozanso guidelines, which state that all such visits be undertaken in consultation with the WCC and the CCA, should be observed. Visits should be ecumenical both in composition and sponsorship. Visits should be followed up, where possible, with reciprocal invitations to North Korean Christians. Churches in socialist countries carry a special burden in helping North Korea to overcome their isolation.

3. The production and wide dissemination of information about Korea, both within the churches and where possible to the wider public, continues to be essential, given the fact that general knowledge about the Korean situation is grossly inadequate. Such information should include the NCCCK "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on

National Reunification and Peace” and the “Gion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea”, as well as the text of this WCC Policy Statement and the background paper.

4. In view of the fact that Koreans have been made victims of a global Cold War, all efforts to halt the East-West confrontation and arms race will lighten the burden of the Korean dilemma. Churches everywhere must participate in the breaking down of enemy images and the ideological walls which divide both the world and Korea. The overcoming of hatred and hostility is not only a political task but also centrally a task of biblical and theological peace education.

5. Efforts should be made to determine at least the status of separated family members, and explore the possibility of communication. Caution must be exercised that such efforts always remain within the context of reunification for all Korean people. In the words of the “Message” of the International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea at Incheon, “It is essential that efforts for the reunion of Korean families be responsibly interrelated among Koreans living inside and outside Korea, to ensure that these deeply emotional desires are not exploited for negative political ends.”

V. There has been good progress in the struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea during the years since the Tozanso Consultation. It is a credit to the Korean churches and the solidarity shown by ecumenical partners that so many positive steps have been successfully taken. But there is yet a long way to go. The immense tragedy of the division of Korea is still little known. The disproportionate human cost paid by the Korean people for the Cold War and geopolitics is little known. The continuing agony of the separation of millions is little known. The potential for escalation of the conflict even to a nuclear conflagration is little known.

VI.

It is in highlighting these concerns for world-wide recognition that the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical community can make a unique contribution. The Korean division is in microcosm a symbol of the division of the world. If this wound in the human community can be healed, there would emanate from Korea a hope for all of humankind. We pray that the cross of the Korean people can lead to an Easter for us all.