

Meiji Gakuin University, 16 September 2014

NGO Forum

## **Peace and Unification Movement in South Korea**

: Some cases of PSPD and NCCK

Introduced by Prof. Bo-hyuk Suh

### 1. People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD)

#### **Can Northeast Asia ever be free from nuclear weapons?**

- After finishing a NGO Forum for a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone at the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee.

Too difficult or impossible! This is what UN representatives of six-party talks think about 'Establishing a Northeast Asia nuclear weapon free zone'. As far as Northeast Asia has a nuclear-have, couldn't it be possible to eliminate nuclear weapons in the region until nuclear disappears from this world? Is it truly an unavailing hope of naive citizens?

Regardless of what they think, there are people who are raising their voices that it is possible. Civil and social organizations from Korea, Japan, and Mongolia including PSPD gathered in the UN headquarters on 30 April and discussed how to make it happen. That was a NGO forum 'Time for Action to Establish a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone' at the 2014 NPT preparatory committee.

Making a nuclear weapon free zone is the first phase towards 'Nuclear weapon free world'. It takes a role to accelerate removing nuclear weapons from the whole world. The idea is expanding nuclear weapon free zones one by one would have nuclear weapons disappear and eventually make this world nuclear-free. With a hope that making Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia a nuclear free zone could be a catalyzer, civil and social organizations from Korea and Japan including PSPD have gradually developed discussions.

In line with discussions, PSPD has insisted in the forum that it is necessary to overcome an inertial perception and prejudice against North Korea to resolve repeated nuclear crisis. It also proposed to change the policy 'Strategic tolerance' of Korea-US government focused on sanctions, and resume talks and negotiations for the purpose of establishing a Northeast Asia nuclear weapon free zone. Japanese civil society also agreed that it would do good for the security of the region and introduced their nuclear free zone activities of various levels from a grass roots movement within the country.

At the end of the forum, a joint statement was presented based on opinions and recommendations made by civil societies for realizing a nuclear weapon free Northeast Asia. It emphasized that it is time to take actions. States should primarily pursue getting out of security policies which rely on nuclear weapons. Especially, it stated that chronic nuclear issues of North Korea require comprehensive approach converting from armistice agreement to Korean peninsula peace system, and urged co-operations and supports from all fields.

As delegations of six-party talks think, establishing a Northeast Asia nuclear weapon free zone can be extremely difficult or even impossible. However, how hard and complicated negotiations would be, it can't stop efforts for the establishment. PSPD will continue and strengthen its activities for a nuclear free Northeast Asia until 2015 NPT review conference.

**PSPD and the Peace Forum of the Coalition of civil and social organizations** drafted the *Report on Peace Policy for Korean Peninsula* and distributed to the US embassy, diplomatic missions and

overseas' peace organizations in Korea. The report assesses disputes for the last 20 years regarding nuclear issues of North Korea and points out that 'hostile ignorance' policy which Korea and US government have maintained has failed.

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, the **Global Day of Action for Military Spending**, in South Korea 22 lawmakers and civil groups held a press conference and street campaign. It was the 4th Global day of action and key words of this year were 'Disarmament' and 'Welfare'. Main messages focused on reducing excessive military spending and investing budgets for solving problems of employment, education, housing and medical generated by social polarization, and eliminating insecure factors and worries such as large-scale disasters and safety-related accidents.

The military spending of Korea in 2013 ranked at top 10 worldwide. However, expenditure on social welfare as a percent of GDP is placed at 33rd among 34 OECD states. Suicidal toll reaches at 15,000 per year and 1/3 takes their lives because of economic difficulties. Campaign participants questioned what are real threats to be solved urgently delivering the story of a mother and two daughters' incident in March.

'Spend our taxed for welfare not warfare!' In other words, it means the national security comes from the safety of the people. We wish the government to stop arms race, and pursue multilateral cooperation and trust building. It is also desirable to invest for expanding social safety net and building security system.

## 2. National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK)

### **International Consultation on Justice, Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula**

54 participants, representing 15 countries and 34 churches and ecumenical organizations shared in this WCC consultation held at Bossey Institute, Geneva.

For the first time in 3 years, members of the NCCK met their brothers from Korea Christian Federation. Especially we rejoiced to meet the new Chairperson of KCF, Rev. Kang Myong Chol, who was attending along with three others. On this historic occasion, we meet in the Spirit of the Tozanso Process of 1984. Last fall, (Sept., 2013), WCC General Secretary Olav had visited Pyongyang and laid the foundation for this meeting to follow up from the WCC 10th General Assembly. The Consultation was to consider the role of the churches and the involvement of the ecumenical movement in Korean Peninsula reconciliation.

The opening worship was led by Rev. Dr. Bae Hyun Ju, Korean member of WCC Central Committee. The CCA General Secretary Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang preached, saying that for a long time there has been ideological conflict on the Korean Peninsula and families are still separated in agony. In this consultation churches are called to collaborate for peace, and this is a good time to meet in loving solidarity.

June 18 saw the main work of the consultation as all talked together of their hopes for peace. In particular, the words of Gil Young Ok, former sexual slave taken by the Japanese military, were very meaningful. She said Korea should not be in war, and she hopes for our descendants that they will not experience pain and agony due to war.

At the closing worship on June 19, Rev. Kim Young Ju and Rev. Kang Myong Chol signed the 2014 North South Common Prayer for Liberation Day, 2014, and gave it to General Secretary Olav. It will be translated into all the WCC languages and distributed to all member churches with recommendation that all churches share it in their congregations on the Sunday before August 15.

### **The National Council of Church in Korea – The Korean Christian Federation, Held a South-North Joint Prayer at Bong Su Church in Pyongyang**

The 8.15 Joint Prayer Worship for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula was held at the Bong Su Church in Pyongyang with The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) and The Korean Christian Federation (KCF). For this, the NCCK organized a delegation of 19 people from

member denominations and affiliated organizations, and they visited Pyongyang from August 13<sup>th</sup> (Wed) up to 16<sup>th</sup> (Sat).

The first steps toward this joint worship service began with the proposal of the Declaration on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula at the World Council of Churches (WCC) Busan Assembly in 2013 and then the process for action agreed upon at the Bossey, Switzerland International Consultation on Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.

The National Council of Churches (NCCCK) and the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), after the Bossey Consultation, held this joint worship prayer service at the Bong Su Church in Pyongyang keeping in mind the meaning of the 8.15 Week of Prayer for the Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, which was adopted by the churches of the world.

The Joint Prayer Meeting began with masters of ceremonies and Rev. Kang Myung Chul (Chairperson of the KCF) welcomed the NCCCK delegation with a message of welcome for visiting Pyongyang during a difficult time. He said that still, we have been connected as one in Jesus Christ even though we have not had opportunities to have frequent meetings. Also he mentioned that our gathering has a very significant meaning for creating a peaceful atmosphere, as peace and reunification is the path toward life, while distrust and war is the path toward a ruined country. We should not forget that we are one people and one blood even if we are divided by foreign powers. He said that Jesus said there will be blessings for those who work for making peace in the Sermon on the Mount. And he emphasized that carrying out the 6.15 Declaration and the 10.4 Declaration is the way toward peace and the way that our people might live. And he wished that this joint meeting could beseech God so that the peace and reunification of God would be realized immediately in this country.

Rev. Kim Young Ju (General Secretary of the NCCCK) expressed gratitude to the KCF for inviting the NCCCK delegation. And he said that to have a joint prayer for the purpose of making harmony and peaceful reunification is particularly meaningful, especially today, which is the day that we were liberated from colonial control. And we should meditate on the fact that the true liberation will be completed only when we have realized the peace and reunification of the South and North. For a long

time, the churches of South and North Korea have done their best to work for cooperation around peace and reunification. We should not forget that the division of Korea after liberation came about from more powerful countries following their own interests, and we had no power to overcome them at that time. The North and South governments, through the June 15th (6.15) Declaration and the October 4th (10.4) Declaration, set out the practical provisions for peace and reunification. However, we have unfortunately not been able to follow through on those agreements. In this reality, we should fulfill our role as apostles of peace, and our task is to uncover the stumbling blocks toward making peace.

The North and South Churches hope that through this South-North Joint Prayer, the efforts for healing, reconciliation, and reunification of the people will bear fruit.