

Women Making Peace

Statement on the Current State of Affairs for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

We, Korean civil society, gather here today to resolve the crisis and conflicts caused by the Cheonan warship incident and to take a major step forward toward our goals of democracy, co-existence, and peace.

Since the South Korean Cheonan navy warship rather mysteriously sank on March 26th, our society has grieved the tragic incident together, tried to clarify the cause, and endeavored to provide comprehensive countermeasures, in order to prevent its recurrence.

However, a handful of governmental and military officials have tightly controlled the relevant information under the guise of “national security” and “military secrets” thereby obstructing these voluntary acts of concerned citizens who seek to find out the truth about the warship incident.

Despite the fact that the Lee Myung-bak administration kept warning about coming to a premature conclusion, the Administration released reports that contained a number of unexplained hypotheses, and raised many questions before the necessary investigations were completed. The investigation was conducted by the self-interested military, which whitewashed its role and should have been reprimanded. In addition, without allowing enough time for the public and the National Assembly to review the investigation, the Lee administration precipitously and unilaterally announced dangerous military, economic and diplomatic countermeasures against North Korea without reaching a national consensus. These are the types of measures that make ineffective the “peaceful crisis-management system,” which has been gradually established since the “July 7 Declaration” by the Roh Tae-woo administration.

Do you think that such impetuous and dogmatic measures by the Lee administration are helping to resolve the situation? Instead, those actions are shaking the very foundation of the peace and prosperity processes, which would secure the future of the Korean Peninsula. Amid the international economic crisis, our economy was, arguably, slowly recovering but now it is faltering again. Efforts like the Six-Party-Talks and the denuclearization of North Korea are patently missing in the Lee administration’s enforcements of military and economic countermeasures against North Korea.

People!

Did you witness such military tension when peace and engagement policies were consistently pursued in the past? Now we are at crossroads and need to decide whether to go back to the adventurism of the Cold War era, where the national security issue was abused for power politics and blinded people to the truth. Compare this reckless approach to a future-oriented peaceful realism, which emphasizes the democratic process, checks and balances on the abuses of administrative and military power, and seeks ways for peace and co-existence rather than provocative slogans.

In this regard, we shall express our opinions.

First, both North and South Korea should immediately stop the military confrontation, which

will bring the Korean Peninsula to a war and economic crisis. The South should withdraw its series of dangerous military measures and economic sanctions against North Korea, which were promulgated and enforced without any public debate, National Assembly discussions, or diplomacy with concerned countries. In addition, the North also should refrain from provocative rhetoric and radical military actions but instead cooperate with a rational process of uncovering the truth about the warship case.

Second, we call on the South Korean government to take additional measures to clarify the facts of the case, which should be able to answer a number of remaining questions regarding the sinking of the Cheonahn warship.

Third, both the South Korean government and the media should not manipulate this case to further their vested interests in the upcoming election, which is directly connected to the welfare of the Korean people. The government and the majority party should explain why it was necessary to prematurely release the results of the investigation, as well as to also announce reckless military countermeasures. In addition, we urge the government to immediately stop abusing its immense political and legal powers in order to pressure the voters who only raise rational questions about the government's report and actions.

We appeal to you!

The crisis on the Korean Peninsula took place without our intentions, but we should be responsible to clarify the real cause and seek ways to resolve this problem in an appropriate way. It is directly related to our future democracy and peace. It is time to call upon your wisdom and courage to achieve peace.

At 3pm, on May 29, let us show our will to uncover the truth and accomplish real peace on the Korean Peninsula. Starting today, each night, let's begin to light up candles for peace on the Peninsula.

On June 2, Election Day, we will judge the current situation of the country and this period with a sense of civic duty and open up the future path toward democracy, co-existence, and peace for ourselves.

May 26, 2010

91 Civil Society Groups, 5 Opposition Parties, 104 Individuals