

COMMENT ON SPECIAL ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY THE ROK PRESIDENT REGARDING THE CHEONAN NAVAL WARSHIP

"Peace on the Korean Peninsula cannot be secured by a military buildup and sanctions"

May 24th, 2010

International Women's day for Peace and Disarmament

Women Making Peace¹

A series of events regarding the sinking of the Cheonan naval warship shows that peace and security on the Korean Peninsula is facing a serious threat even about 60 years after the Korean War.

We express our deep condolences for the deaths of 46 sailors who died as a result of the sinking of a warship and we sincerely hope that this situation will not be repeated.

It has been two years and five months since the inauguration of President Myungbak Lee, and during the period we find that the inter-Korean relationship has worsened to the extent of being a "war crises." Only two years has passed since the leaders of the two Koreas agreed to convert the West Sea into the sea of cooperation and now it has become the "sea of animosity and confrontation." The governments of the two Koreas should be responsible for the current situation.

The South Korean government's statement, released today, raises much suspicion in terms of the timing before June 2nd local election and the accuracy of its contents. Furthermore, the South Korean government's beefing up the military and imposition of sanctions on the North will only heighten the military confrontation and threaten the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula.

First, we show a great concern that the South Korean government changed its military strategy from a defense mode to "proactive deterrence." This "deterrent" action, through a military build up, will likely lead to a concomitant increase of the North's military power, and will further aggravate the arms race between the North and South Korea. In response to the Cheonan incident, the South Korean government announced that "if our territorial waters, airspace or territory are violated, we will immediately exercise our right of self-defense." It means that South Korean government would use military power if there is North Korean government's violation, referring to its "self-defense. We believe this action will increase the possibility of armed conflicts on the Korean Peninsula. In the past (i.e. 1998-2007), the inter-Korean West Sea battle did not expand to a greater scale due to the careful approach of the two Governments not to heighten the tension, as well as their efforts for reconciliation and cooperation. We call on both Governments to take such a peaceful approach this time as well.

Second, the South Korean government's decision to cease to implement the inter-Korean Maritime Agreement and to stop trade and exchanges will eliminate a buffer in this tense period. Inter-Korean economic cooperation and private exchanges have played an important role in the prevention of increasing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In the long run, North and South Korea should coexist and cooperate so that they can realize reunification. Economic cooperation should be expanded and the government should not stop, under any circumstances, providing humanitarian assistance, including private aid.

Third, defamation and a vicious circle of revenge only aggravate the crises on the Korean Peninsula and drive the whole country toward a state of war. We strongly believe that the Peace on the Korean Peninsula can be maintained based on the coexistence of both Korea. Both governments should seek ways to convert the Armistice into a peace region and pursue active dialogue and negotiation. In the process, the West Sea can be turned into the Sea of Peace and cooperation.

On May 24th, International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, we, women, express our hope that the Korean Peninsula will become a land of life, peace, and hope and pledge ourselves to make efforts to achieve reconciliation, cooperation, and peace.

Women Making Peace (South Korea) is a member organization of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). You can find their contact information, as well as a list of all IFOR members, on the IFOR website at <http://www.ifor.org/members.htm> .

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