



## **Communique - Peace Building And Dialogue: Ecumenical Youth And Students Advocating For Sustainable Peace In The Korean Peninsula**

**WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION ASIA PACIFIC. 7 SEPTEMBER 2018**

We, the representatives of the Student Christian Movement (SCMs) of Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Taiwan met at the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Asia Pacific's Regional Program on Peacebuilding and Dialogue held at Marist Education Centre, Seoul, Korea from August 17-24, 2018. We come from diverse identities, culture, and contexts trying to connect our common stories of struggle and committing to journey together in dialogue as we envision sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Through conversation with activists, experts, ecumenical leaders and community visits, we heard the suffering and pain that is present throughout the Korean Peninsula. We acknowledge the historical struggle for liberation, peace and reunification which has drastically influenced the landscape of both North and, South Korea. The legacy of the Korean War exists today in the military culture, mandatory conscription and military industrial complex; on-going persecution and imprisonment of political activists; gender inequality and discrimination of sexual minorities; economic disparity and corruption; and, the continued influence of foreign governments on the autonomy South and North Korea. We celebrate, in the face of this suffering, the role that the church, ecumenical, women's, and student and youth organizations have played in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula since the Japanese Colonial era.

## *Cultivating a Culture of Peace: Learnings from Our Korean Brothers and Sisters*

First, we heard that we are all members of a global prophetic circle, called to speak truth in a time when we are coming to grips with the failure of the notion of the nation state and the neo-liberal capitalist system. Second, we heard the importance of ecumenical groups, such as student groups and civil societies; these offer opportunities for people to share their life stories, for connectivity, and to building new bridges of understanding. As well, we heard that we are called to move beyond “peacekeeping”, which uses violence and intimidation to enforce the status quo, toward becoming “peacemakers” who ensure everyone is able to contribute to the peace process. This “peacemaking”, or “peacebuilding”, calls on the life-giving power of truth, love, and unity in diversity. It resists the destructive powers of anxiety, fear, control and greed. Peacebuilding comes from a place of “inner peace”, which for us, as Christians and ecumenical partners, is derived from a life of faith and the inspiring story of the radical Jesus Christ. We denounce global powers, like the government and military of the United States of America, which continue to undermine the peace process on the Korean Peninsula by employing violence, fear-mongering, and greed.

We celebrate the unique vision for peace that our brothers and sisters in the Korea Student Christian Federation (KSCF) shared with us; their passion for justice, intersectionality, ecumenism, and unification is inspiring. All of our participants will take back a seed of the hope and determination that we have witnessed together this week in Seoul.

## *Our Call to Solidarity: Working Towards Sustainable Peace on the Korean Peninsula*

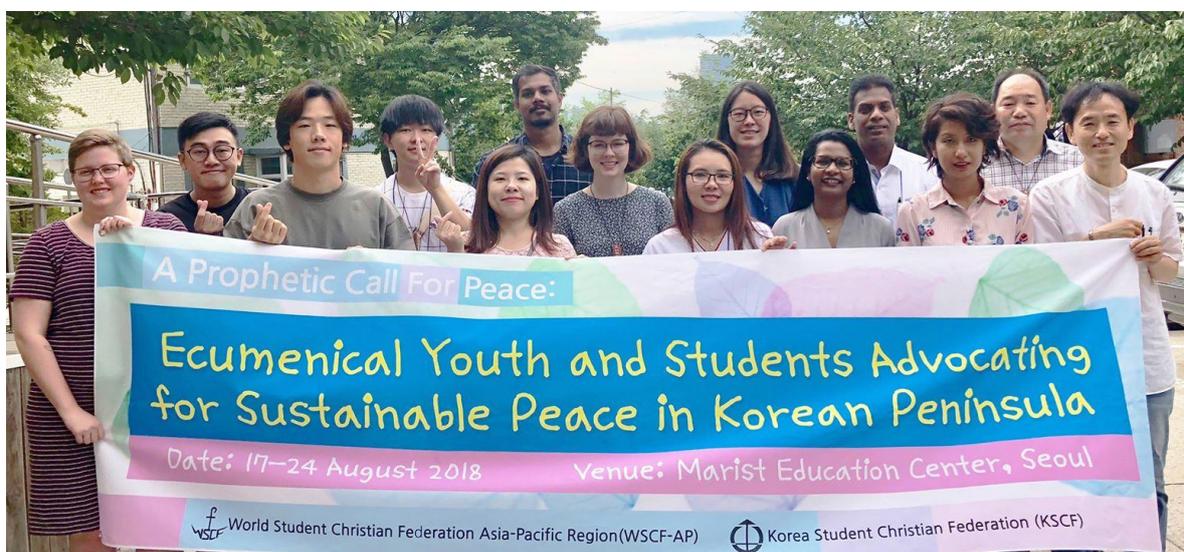
We have been called, by our brothers and sisters in Christ on the Korean Peninsula, to consider, and act in solidarity, on a number of issues: We feel the WSCF is called to advocate for the release of political prisoners, freedom of speech, and transparency across the Peninsula. We call on the governments of the North and South, as well as the United States of America, to demilitarize the border and allow for trade and movement of people, inviting mutual economic development and the reuniting of families divided at the separation. We also call for the denuclearization of all parties, not just North Korea, moving us towards a nuclear free world—it is unjustifiably dangerous for any government power to hold and intimidate using these weapons of mass destruction. We uphold the 1988 Declaration by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) by advocating for the governments of North and South Korea to honour the Panmunjom Declaration by signing a peace treaty, bringing an end to the uncertain and anxious era of the 1953 Armistice Agreement. We also call on leaders, both political and grassroots, to continue to work towards ending the polarizing discrimination of North Korean peoples by South Koreans; it is only through mutual respect and trust that true peace can be achieved.

## *More Than Mainstream Sustainable Peace: Role of Youth, Women and Sexual Minorities in Peacemaking in Korean Peninsula*

In the ongoing process of peacebuilding, we would like to call for more interactions and communications of youths from the two Koreas who can contribute to the community-based or grassroots movements of peacemaking. Women must also be involved in the process of decision-making, given all the effort women's organisations have contributed to reunification in the history of Korea, as the lives of women have been severely and disproportionately impacted by war. The recent sexual assaults, be they in churches or in society, which have triggered the uprise of the [#MeToo](#) movement in South Korea, as well as the stigmatisation of sexual minorities calls for gender equity and a place free from violence and discrimination in the process of peacebuilding.

Additionally, we regret that some of our friends from the member SCMs could not join us due to the denial of visas, as well as unexpected circumstances. We acknowledge that the denial of visas for SCM members from Nepal and Bangladesh was due to racist immigration policies in South Korea, as the country struggles with the recent influx of Yemeni refugees in the south. All of our South Korean friends who heard about this were deeply apologetic. They expressed shame that the South Korean government would turn away people who had come to discuss peace for the Korean Peninsula. We are hoping that their government will soon change its discriminatory policies and that it will never happen again.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the 70 years of work that the KSCF has done on the Peninsula. They continue to be a beacon of light, speaking out against the muddying darkness of corruption, patriarchy, hierarchy, nepotism, "justified" violence against the marginalized, and polarizing political speech. We are honoured to call them friends, brothers and sisters, and partners in this great work of justice. As Jesus said, "두려워마라" (Do not be afraid).



*The Delegates of the Peace Building and Dialogue Program - WSCF Asia Pacific*