Statement on the situation caused by the Cheonan incident

Reconciliation and Reunification Committee of the NCCK

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

(Matthew 5:9)

The committee believes in Jesus Christ as 'the Lord of Peace' (Colossians 1:20) and has been praying and making our every effort for reconciliation, peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula on the basis of the word "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." (John 14:27). Especially today as the 100th year of Japanese annexation of Korea, 60th year of Korean War and 10th year of the June 15 Summit Declaration, we have expected it could be a momentous point which we eliminate anything left from the Japanese Empire period, build peace on the Korean peninsula and accomplish reconciliation between the two Koreas and further reunification.

On March 26, however, we faced with the sinking of the Cheonan Navy ship near Baekryungdo in the West Sea and lost lives of 46 soldiers. We pray our God be with souls of those soldiers and civil people who were sacrificed in the course of rescue, and allow long-lasting peace, and deep comfort especially for the bereaved.

The government reported through the Joint investigation group the torpedo's attack by North Korea as its cause. Accordingly President Lee Myung-bak announced on May 25 of stern measure such as activating the right of self-defense, the complete cutting-off of all inter-Korea trade and interchange except for Gaesung industrial complex and supporting infants in NK, resuming psychological strategy including propaganda broadcasts against NK, banning commercial North Korean ships from passing through southern waters, the US-South Korea united military exercise against NK submarine, reinforce of PSI, taking this matter into the UN Security Council, and etc. As countermeasures, North Korea announced by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea that it will cut all communication routes with South Korea, freeze and dismantle the Consultative Office for South-North Economic Cooperation in the
Gaesong Industrial Zone, ban South Korean ships and airliners from passing through the North's territorial waters and air, precise shot against resuming psychological war.

We, as Christians, 'are called to work for peace' and have already confessed that to overcome the reality of division and to achieve reunification and peace is our mission task(Korean Christian Statement on national reunification and peace, 1988). Standing on this belief, we clearly state the opinion of the committee.

First of all, even though we are in severely confrontational situation between North and South Korea since the sinking of the Choenan, such national war as in 60 years ago should never be broken. Now we are going back to the mood of Cold Ward era and military confrontation that was before enacting the law of inter-Korea interchange and cooperation. Given these political measures which is conducting by two Koreas, we are in a very critical point in which even a tiny clash that each side doesn't intend to could bring it to an all-out war.

In this sense, we ask our government to take initiative from a broader viewpoint to eliminate any possibility of military confrontation. For example, in the case of flying propaganda paper toward North Korea and propaganda broadcast near DMZ which have brought North Korea with warning of their aggressive response of precise shooting on the speaker, it would be better for us to give up when we consider that it could be followed by another shot made by our army, and the possibility of hostage of our people in Gaesung industrial complex, economic crisis, and the dangerous all-out war. Our government should take a step for finding a dialogue with North Korea authorities, and try various measures for easing tension between two Koreas. Furthermore we expect it to take a series of complementary measure of peace such as expanding humanitarian supports and interchange through people's exchange. Even in this difficult time, authorities should not give up an effort of mutual dialogue and of opening a ay of reconciliation and co-existence on the Korean peninsula. The reason why the then governments took a careful measure in order not for going into a total war even in the incidents of North Korea's attempted raid on the president residence (Blue House) on Jan. 21, 1968, of the Rangoon bombing against a ruler of South Korea in 1983, and the terrorist' attack to KAL is that we had experienced 60 years ago its brutality which civil war has brought with.
Second, we demand all our diplomatic capability should be used for building a system of peace and reconciliation instead of confrontation as well as isolation of North Korea. We believe that peace in the Northeast Asia could be achieved through mutual cooperation and co-existence of the related countries including North Korea, and we also demand that the US, Japan, China, Russia and South Korea should not give up the principle even in this confrontational phase caused by the Choenan incident that they have to keep its regional peace in the Northeast Asia. In the case of expansion of military tension and confrontation through those related countries' intervention, we are concerned that its social, political, military and humanitarian loss would effect on all in Northeast Asia and furthermore on worldwide economy.

Third, hearing the report regarding the sinking of the Cheonan happened during its military exercise, we had an opinion that there was a serious blind point in military security system and those related for this should bear their responsibility. There are still raising questions in relation to the cause of the sinking of the Cheonan and we see those who raised questions and have different opinion are treating and oppressed with laws. Taking into account on that strong national security is based on people's trust rather than punishment, government should open the related material and investigation study which has already been informed to related countries including China and to get back trust from people.

Fourth, we have always expressed our sincere appreciation to overseas partner churches and organizations headed by the World Council of Churches for their prayer and commitment on peace and reunification of Korea since 1980'. And we understand well that their solidarity in our faith and fellowship has contributed on the progress of peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. In this rapid changing reality toward conflict and confrontation from dialogue and cooperation between North and South Koreas since the Cheonan incident, we ask those partners to continue to be with us in solidarity praying for that North and South could overcome this crisis, to eliminate any possibility for war, as well as reconciliation, peace, cooperation, co-existence and reunification.
We pray for that Jesus Christ who came to us as "servant of Peace" (Ephesians 2:13-19) help and lead us.

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