LETTER TO US SECRETARY OF STATE REX TILLERSON REGARDING KOREA

Posted on March 8, 2017 by Phil Tanis Leave a Comment

The following letter was sent to United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on 3 March 2017.

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is the international organization representing 80 million Christians in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches in 108 countries worldwide. Called to communion and committed to justice the WCRC fosters church unity and coordinates common initiatives for peace, theological reflection and formation.

In close cooperation with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and in accordance with ecumenical policy positions issued during the past three decades, the WCRC has encouraged its member churches in Korea and in the world to engage in new areas of

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global cooperation for peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula. The WCRC has repeatedly emphasized that peace in Korea is of vital importance for peace in the region and in the world.

Following a long history of ecumenical accompaniment of the churches in Korea a delegation led by WCRC President Rev. Dr Jerry Pillay and WCRC General Secretary Rev. Chris Ferguson undertook a visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 24 to 29 September 2016.

The WCRC, which is committed to peace and to the abolition of all nuclear weapons calls upon the US government to acknowledge that North Korea voted in favor of negotiations to ban nuclear weapons at the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee on Disarmament on October 27, 2016.

In the course of its visit, the WCRC delegation heard that the large scale US-South Korean military exercises south of the Demilitarized Zone raise grave concern among the leadership and population of North Korea. The fact that in 2016 these joint exercises involved the largest number of troops since the Korean War as well as the deployment of additional and more threatening weapon systems by the US and South Korea were described as a clear indication of an aggressive attitude towards the DPRK.

Therefore the WCRC urgently calls upon the US government to end provocative military exercises, which destabilize the situation on the Korean peninsula, and to engage in a true dialogue, where all countries will feel equally respected, with the aim of achieving durable peace in Northeast Asia.

The WCRC calls upon the US government to take decisive steps towards replacing the Armistice Agreement of 1953 by a Peace Treaty, so as to allow the Korean people to accomplish the peaceful reunification of the Korean nation on its own terms.

During its visit the WCRC delegation heard the urgent wish for the de-escalation of provocation and tension, the need to re-establish dialogue and negotiations and mostly the desire to change the Armistice into a Peace treaty.

The WCRC delegation was impressed by the great resilience of the people of North Korea and by the many technological,

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architectural and economic achievements, which they were able to witness in Pyongyang. Nevertheless it is obvious that the sanctions imposed by the international community make life more difficult for a large part of the population.

During its visit, the WCRC delegation was also confronted with the tragedy that had occurred in the North Hamgyong Province, where floods caused the death of hundreds of people and left tens of thousands others homeless. Such natural disasters put a strain on the resources of the country and reveal the inhuman and cynical character of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council and the US government.

Therefore, in the light of its visit to the DPRK, the World Communion of Reformed Churches calls upon the government of the United States of America to take the initiative of lifting the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council on the DPRK first in 2006 (resolution 1718) and later intensified by the resolutions 1874, 2087, 2094 and 2270. This initiative should be coupled with the start of negotiations to end the present state of war and to begin a process of confidence building on the Korean peninsula.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson
General Secretary

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