CONFERENCE MISSION STATEMENT
December 1-4, 2009  Seoul, South Korea

Introduction

The humankind experienced hell twice in the 20th Century. More than 100 millions were massacred in two world wars. The threat of nuclear weapons with the capability of annihilating the entire humankind looms. The Russel-Einstein Manifesto in 1955 challenged the existence of weapons of mass destruction such as the atomic and the hydrogen bombs saying:

"Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?"

We cannot ignore this hard question which demands a clear response from us of either a YES or a NO. Incredible as it seems, the Constitution of Japan made an unmistakable option of renouncing war as if predicting the challenge posed by the Russel-Einstein Manifesto nine years later. Article 9 of Japan's Constitution states:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Article 9 is the expression of sincere apology and repentance of the war of aggression and colonial rule of the people of Japan for the crimes committed during the 20th century. It is an expression of the significance and value of an unarmed, democratic state in today's world. In this sense, it can be said that the Constitution of Japan should be an inspiration for the constitution of any nation state. We believe in the importance of translating the principle of non-violence into other levels of our lives.

Though the Liberal Democratic Party is no longer in power, the threat to revise Article 9 still remains. The unification of Japan's Self Defense Forces and the United States Armed Forces in Japan is a disguise to support and participate in the U.S. led hegemonic war which practically strips Article 9 of its essential message.

Our Mandate

The Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 and Peace in Asia was organized to respond to this reality of grave concern. The Conference statement issued on December 1, 2006 affirms the following.

In the light of these dangerous developments in Japan, we cannot be passive spectators. Based on our religious teaching, we believe that:
• War is always a crime
• War brings death both to the body of the victim and the soul of the perpetrator

We commit ourselves to:

• Sincerely practice the spirit of Article 9 at all times and in all places
• Protect the dignity of the victims of all forms of violence

All religions are universal, transcending races and nations. Today, however, there are cases where religions are used to instigate and justify violence. Religions should be purified to their original inspiration, and their followers should faithfully translate these truths and realities about life in word and deed in their respective contexts. Each religion should be an expression of the universal truths like peace, and lead to collectively proclaim and live these rather than insist on differences that may lead to disunity or even hostility.

Our Calls

We are believers in the truth of unconditional love as we are aware of eternal life. Non-violence is based on this truth. We, the participants of Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 and Peace in Asia, based on the religious truth of non-violence, refuse to accept any ideology and behavior that promote the culture of war. We commit ourselves to protect and enliven Article 9. We defend the life and dignity of all people, especially, victims of violence, guarantee "the right to live in peace, free from fear and want" (Preamble, Constitution of Japan) and create right human relationships based on trust and respect. We understand this to include gender and ecological justice in society and in our institutions.

We call on citizens of the world to support and join our movement to make "renunciation of war" and "demilitarization" a concrete reality in Japan, Asia and the entire world. We commit ourselves to strive for this ardent desire of the human race and unite ourselves with all people who share the same prayer.

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Academy House, Seoul, Korea