



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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August 10, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

Thank you for your continued diplomatic work for a solution to the mounting crisis on the Korean Peninsula. As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to share our concerns and that of the Korean bishops over the situation on the Korean peninsula, particularly in light of South Korean's President Moon Jae-in's proposed military and humanitarian talks with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The Catholic Church has long placed nuclear proliferation and warfare among the greatest threats to international security and peace. American efforts to halt the spread and use of these weapons is laudable. While the escalating threat of violence from the North Korean regime cannot be underestimated or ignored, the high certainty of catastrophic death and destruction from any military action must prompt the United States to work with others in the international community for a diplomatic and political solution based on dialogue. This crisis reminds us that nuclear deterrence and mutually assured destruction do not ensure security or peace. Instead, they exacerbate tensions and produce arms races as countries acquire more weapons of mass destruction in an attempt to intimidate or threaten other nations.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK) has pledged to "raise [their] voices for the peaceful co-existence of two Koreas." The President of the CBCK recently met with Pope Francis who offered his support of President Moon Jae-in's new peace efforts while stressing that "conflicts should be solved through dialogue and compromise." Copies of the CBCK statement and Pope Francis' comments are attached.

In solidarity with the Catholic Church in Korea and the efforts of the South Korean government, we urge the United States to encourage and support these talks. This avenue, unlike most others, offers the Korean Peninsula a future free from military conflicts or crises, which could simultaneously threaten entire nations and millions of lives in the region.

Earlier in July, bishops from the United States and Europe released a joint statement calling for our respective countries to join a nuclear disarmament conference that took place at the United Nations. As Pope Francis said in his message to that conference, true peace and stability "cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power, ...peace must be built on justice, on integral human development, on respect for fundamental human rights...From this perspective, we need to go beyond nuclear deterrence: the international community is called upon to adopt

Letter to Secretary of State

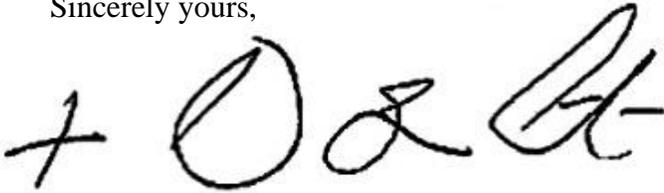
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forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid shortsighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security.”

As pastors and moral teachers, our Committee cannot offer a specific pathway forward beyond dialogue and diplomacy, but we join our voices and prayers with peoples of other nations and faiths in a global cry for peace and security.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oscar Cantú'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'O' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace

Enclosures (2)

Bishops welcome South Korean president's peace initiatives

But the 'way to a peaceful Korea will not be smooth'

ucanews.com reporter, Seoul, [South Korea](#)

July 17, 2017

The president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea has welcomed President Moon Jae-in's peace initiatives, saying it matches the church's views on how peace can be achieved on the peninsula.

"I deeply agree with President Moon's direction for the future relations of the two Koreas," said Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-jung of Kwangju, the conference president.

Since taking office, Moon has said South Korea will take the lead in the peaceful coexistence with the North and presented principles aimed towards such a goal. Moon said his administration is planning for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through guaranteeing North Korea's safety and the construction of a permanent peace system. There will also be economic and expanded civil exchanges, he said.

Such measures have been given full support by the Korean bishops. "First, we need a peace accord with support from surrounding countries and we should resume inter-Korean exchanges such as civil exchanges, the operation of Kaesong Industrial Complex and tourism to Mt. Keumkang," said Archbishop Kim.

The North and the South have been divided since Korea's liberation from the Japanese at the end of World War II. The Korean War (1950-53) made them bitter enemies.

In recent months, tensions have been high over North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development.

In June, the Korean bishops' Committee for the Reconciliation of the Korean People held a [symposium](#) and stressed that a peace accord would help usher in better relations with the North.

"The local church has actively participated in the exchanges between [the two nations] such as sending medicines and supporting farming development in North Korea and it will keep doing it," said Archbishop Kim.

Father Timothy Lee Eun-hyeong, secretary of the bishops' committee, said, "President Moon's direction is the same as ours." However, Father Lee said it won't be easy.

"The way to a peaceful Korea will not be smooth with the North's missile development and ever-changing international affairs," Father Lee said.

"Just as the church in Germany took an important role in the reunification of East and West Germany, the Korean church will raise our voice for the peaceful co-existence of two Koreas," Father Lee added.

Pope to pray for peace on the Korean peninsula

A Korean special envoy visited the Vatican looking for a peaceful solution to North Korea's nuclear threats

June 2, 2017

Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong, presidential special envoy to the Vatican, met Pope Francis and high Vatican officials to garner support to peacefully solve the conflicts surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development.

Archbishop Kim visited the Vatican and met Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, secretary of state for the Vatican and concelebrated Mass at Casa Martha, the pope's residence. He also asked the pope to pray for improvement in inter-Korea relations.

Archbishop Kim said, "I informed Pope Francis of the election of the new president of Korea and asked him to cooperate and support President Moon's duty to keep peace in the peninsula. I asked him to pray for Korea and he replied 'yes.'"

"The pope understands the situation in the Korean peninsula and stressed that conflicts should be solved through dialogue and compromise," he added.

While meeting the pope on May 24 in St. Peter's Square, Archbishop Kim conveyed a letter from President Moon Jae-in. In the letter, the president showed his gratitude to Pope Francis for his visit to Korea in 2014 when he consoled the bereaved families of the Sewol ferry disaster.

Archbishop Kim said, "President Moon sent me to Vatican to get support from the pope now that peace in the Korean peninsula is threatened. I expect the Vatican will support us spiritually and diplomatically."