

Hiroshima Day Rally/ 2019 World Conference against A & H Bombs

Eum Mikyung
Vice President
Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU)
Republic of Korea

I bring you greetings of warm solidarity from the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions to all comrades participating in the World Conference with firm determination to achieve a nuclear-free and peaceful Korean Peninsula and East Asia and to defend the peace of humankind. Here's to our struggle.

Comrades, we are at a crossroads as we seek to transform the era of aggression and war that lasted more than 100 years into an era of peace. East Asia nowadays undergoes a situation that is more turbulent than ever. A sharper confrontation is taking place politically, economically and militarily. This is why people in South Korea and Japan together held the "Japan-ROK International Forum for a Nuclear-free and Peaceful Northeast Asia" in May in Seoul with the aim of proactively intervening in the situation to explore our roles in creating a system of peace in East Asia. And in June, we had a meeting in Japan and joined hands under the enthusiastic slogan, "Let's establish a nuclear-free and peaceful Korean Peninsula and Japan." I believe that we will be able to develop greater solidarity in the struggle for a peaceful Korean Peninsula and East Asia and a world without nuclear weapons.

Comrades, we are well aware of what consequences aggression and war can have. Damage from aggression and war adversely affect innocent people. People know how atrocious they are.

Wounds and pains left by Japan's colonial rule still persist in South Korea today. The issue of comfort women who were forced to serve the Japanese military and Koreans forced to work by Japanese companies during World War Two are not just things of the past. They are contemporary issues that remain to be settled. Today, South Koreans are infuriated at Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and other Japanese politicians who deny the history of the colonization and seek to destroy the peace constitution. It would be safe to say that these issues remain as consequences of Japan's inability to correctly resolve the problem of the imperialist war of aggression.

We know that Japanese people also fell victims to Japanese militarism and war. People underwent the worst kind of misery when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 9. Many Korean residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the time were left with unfathomable pain. They have told about their atomic bomb experiences that are beyond description. We have, in turn, been informed about their horrible atomic bomb experiences.

We, the people who are victims of imperialism, militarism and war, have the historical duty to stage a powerful struggle by standing firm in solidarity for the rejection of nuclear weapons and for the defense of peace.

Comrades, peace will not come spontaneously. Universal values can be achieved through a tenacious struggle. Last year, there was a miraculous development on the Korean Peninsula. But this year, there are various challenges facing the Korean Peninsula. On June 30, the leaders of North Korea and the United States had a dramatic meeting at Panmunjom, which symbolizes the war and division of the Korean Peninsula. But confrontation remains. US sanctions on North Korea remain. They have, in fact, been strengthened. Joint US-South Korean military exercises are held in defiance of criticism, undermining the agreement reached at the US-North Korean summit in Singapore on June 12 last year. The South Korean government are purchasing and deploying F-35 stealth fighter jets and other strategic assets. The deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense. (THAAD) system to South Korea is underway.

The United States intends to retain its military hegemony at any cost. It is putting pressure to bear on South Korea and Japan under the name of the alliance. It is forcing South Korea and Japan to buy state-of-the-art weapons and even increase their share of burden of military spending and it is also pressing the two countries to send their troops to the Strait of Hormuz in order to carry out sanctions and even military actions against Iran. The US military is also holding joint exercises with the Russian and Chinese militaries, and North Korea recently fired short-range missiles.

We are at the crossroads of peace or war. With the standoff remaining unchanged, we the people must solidify our unity to transform the current era of turbulence into an era of peace.

North Korea and the United States should implement their Singapore agreement to “establish their new bilateral relations, achieve a system of peace on the Korean Peninsula, and totally denuclearize the Korean Peninsula” by building mutual trust and taking stage-by-stage simultaneous steps. The complete denuclearization means establishing a complete system of peace free of nuclear weapons or nuclear threats. Nuclear threats need to be expelled not only from the Korean Peninsula but also from the surrounding areas. That should be what non-nuclear peace demanded by people of Japan and South Korea is about.

The true realization of peace without nuclear weapons will be made possible through ending the setup of aggression and war in the Korean Peninsula and the whole of East Asia. The historical task is for South Korean and Japanese people to end an era of aggression and war. In this respect, the South Korean and Japanese people are called upon more than ever to join in solidarity to help correct the worsening relations between their two countries.

The real issue involved in the present dispute between our two countries is a question of history and peace. The people’s movements in South Korea and Japan have been devoted to the efforts to let people know about the miseries brought about by colonial rule, the war of aggression, and the reality brought about by the atomic bombings. Above all else, they have been fighting to disseminate information about these things and to hold fast to historical justice. Japanese people are developing a struggle for peace in East Asia and in defense of the peace constitution. I want to express strong solidarity with your struggle.

I would like to close my speech by expressing the determination of the KCTU to continue to develop cross-border solidarity of the workers and peoples of our two countries. Thank you for your attention.