

April 7, 2021

Dear President Biden

The undersigned faith-based organizations write in light of your administration's review of U.S. policy toward North Korea. As groups motivated by our faith to support peace and human flourishing around the world, we affirm the need to rethink tactics of isolation and maximum pressure and advance U.S.-North Korean relations through dialogue and engagement. We also urge an approach that supports faith-based and other organizations in meeting the humanitarian needs of North Korea's most vulnerable populations.

As fellow people of faith, we ask that your policy review consider the following priorities:

- **End the Korean War.** Although a ceasefire in 1953 brought an end to active fighting, the United States and the two Koreas never signed a formal peace treaty declaring an end to the war, and this ongoing conflict is the root of hostilities between the United States and North Korea. Korean people on both sides of the divide support an end to the Korean War, and the U.S. must support the will of Koreans and their right to live in peace. Declaring an end to the war provides the necessary security assurances to pursue denuclearization and is a long overdue and an essential first step toward a new relationship.
- **Agree to a step-by-step, action-for-action gradual denuclearization process.** In working toward denuclearization, the United States should avoid maximalist approaches and expectations that North Korea will unilaterally disarm with no security guarantees or other reciprocal processes.
- **Support confidence-building measures** that also address **humanitarian needs.** These measures include:
 - Reaffirming past commitments including those made in the 2018 Singapore Joint Declaration;
 - Strengthening exemptions for humanitarian activities so that humanitarian and relief organizations can quickly and flexibly respond to dire need in the country;
 - Consulting with humanitarian and peacebuilding organizations before implementing policy changes that could negatively impact their work;
 - Rescinding travel restrictions so that humanitarian travel can continue, including the monitoring and delivery of humanitarian aid, the recovery of U.S. service member remains, and the reunification of North Korean and Korean American families; and
 - Permitting Track II dialogues, private people-to-people exchanges and government-sponsored exchange programs such as the International Visitor Leadership Program which would expand opportunities for dialogue, engagement, and mutual learning.
- **Prioritize diplomatic engagement** and avoid actions that complicate diplomacy such as large-scale military exercises, hostile rhetoric, or rejecting opportunities for engagement.
- **Avoid unilateral action** that interferes with the engagement efforts of South Korea. Instead, give the Korean people agency to determine a peaceful future together.

Religious leaders around the world have led the call for constructive dialogue and a peace regime. [Pope Francis stated](#) after the Singapore Summit, "The Holy See regards favorably the dialogues in course" expressing hope that dialogues would "lead to shared and lasting solutions

capable of ensuring a future of development and cooperation for the whole Korean people and for the entire region.”

“The history of the Korean War has taught us that the reunification of Korea cannot be pursued by armed force and coercive means, given the tragic consequences of that conflict. It can only be achieved by peaceful means, through dialogue and cooperation,” reads [a joint ecumenical statement](#) issued by the World Council of Churches and signed by South Korean, U.S. and other international churches. We share this hope that sustained dialogue and engagement with North Korea can lead to meaningful change and affirm ongoing diplomatic engagement.

We believe that embracing the above principles will succeed where hostility and isolation have failed. Our organizations look forward to continuing to promote peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula and hope to offer our support for a constructive U.S. policy toward North Korea.

Thank you for your consideration,

American Friends Service Committee
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
DC Methodist Church
Fairfield Grace UMC
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Holy Cross Washington Korean Episcopal Church
Jungto Society USA
Korean Process Theology Study Group
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Council of Churches
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Global Witness
Presbyterian Peace Network for Korea
St John’s Episcopal Church, MD
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society