

# **An Open Letter to the leaders of the Six Parties Talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear stand-off**

*by Ven. Junsei Terasawa, a Buddhist monk from Japan*

Namu-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo!

Dear brothers,

## **1. Introduction**

With full respect for your responsibilities as leaders of your respective nations, I write this open letter to you as a fellow inhabitant of this planet, bearing equal responsibility for preserving our common human civilization and its collective future.

## **2. 60th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.**

At the time when you read this letter, the first and only two cities in human history to be attacked by nuclear weapons are about to remember their fateful days of 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945. This year marks the 60th anniversary, full oriental astrological cycle. Those bombs unleashed over two Japanese cities instantly obliterating hundreds of thousands of inhabitants at the end of World War II, were so shocking and horrifying that no political leaders until now have ever ventured to actually use them a third time. However the present nuclear-armed states have developed them because of this very deadly destructive posture as 'deterrence' – yet the total capacity of all nuclear weapons on Earth remains enough to destroy all living things, together with our history of humankind, many times over.

## **3. Potential nuclear flash points may soon proliferate beyond any effective international control.**

We all know that the post-Cold war and post-9/11 world has brought us into a totally different geopolitical and security environment, as if the new century's "Great Game" were being replayed throughout the Iron-Curtain-free Eurasian Continent, from post-Saddam's Iraq to the Korean Peninsula, from post-Milosevic's Balkans to post-Taliban South Asia. This vast trans-continental space has become the strategic lifeline, upon which the present industrialized world depends for much of its future energy. Here, we see many mismanaged regional conflicts adding new dangers linked to national and private interests. Here, the newly independent states or "abandoned" states face the enormously complicated task of nation-building with their newly-(re)discovered cultural identities often conflicting with external great-power games. You see here a rapidly growing pan-Islamic militancy turning the new Great Game into a global clash between civilizations.

When India and Pakistan obtained nuclear over-kill capability with their delivery systems, now we find such a clash could escalate into a nuclear exchange. Who can guarantee that Pakistan's nuclear arsenals will not fall into the hands of the militant Islamists, especially when they have already been elected and control the majority seats in the parliament?

In the global war on terror, the risk of a pre-emptive first strike against a potential threat could provoke adversary states and non-state military groups to opt to obtain their own nuclear deterrents, and even to

use them quickly before they are attacked. Who could imagine such a situation, in which some time soon we could face the potential nuclear flash points proliferating beyond any effective international control?

#### **4. The failure of nuclear disarmament**

Despite the fact that nuclear disarmament has been a primary task of the United Nations for its 60 years history, the world body has proved disastrously impotent. Mainly because the five permanent members of the Security Council, who enjoyed a monopoly of nuclear weapons until recently, did nothing to fulfill their share of obligations to achieve nuclear disarmament as speedily as possible. On the contrary, as major power players in world politics, they have (mis)used their nuclear status as their diplomatically effective currency, trading their nuclear know-how and related military technologies to other nations with short-sighted Machiavellian calculation. As a result, here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we may soon find ourselves in the lawless jungle of nuclear terror.

A vivid analogy to this situation is this: let us remember the tragic end of the terrorist siege at the Beslan school in the North Caucasus, or that horrendous rampage during the Moscow theatre hostage crisis. Hostage-takers used innocent civilians as hostages to meet their certain political demands. They were condemned as terrorists, their acts as barbaric and unacceptable in the civilized world.

What difference can you find in the logic of the nuclear military doctrine, which in essence takes a whole society, all the civilian population, and indeed the whole of humanity, as hostages to the nuclear terror of certain states? A surprise pre-emptive first attack, being planned and prepared around the world in the ongoing Global War on Terror, keeps the civilian population of certain countries, as well as its own, at constant risk of nuclear war. Such military preparations around the globe are right now going on in total secrecy, hidden from the public, and known only by handful of decision-makers and military planners. What gives them such an authority that takes away from the people their fundamental right to life, the right to choose their future? Why does no-one question their legitimacy? A fundamental pillar of modern democracy is that the sovereignty of the nation belongs to the people. Nuclear weapons have deprived the people of sovereignty.

For some nuclear states, their nuclear blackmail is used as a shield against international scrutiny when, within their boundaries, people are subjected to severe state repression, and in worst case, to genocide. In the case of an international humanitarian intervention, (such as that which took place during the Kosovo war) this could mean a nuclear World War III. It is still fresh in my memory that, when faced with mounting international criticism of his brutal war in Chechnya, the then Russian President Yeltsin reminded the world of his possession of nuclear weapons. It is symbolic that he made his threatening statement during his first post-Soviet Sino-Russian summit in Beijing.

#### **5. North East Asia at a crucial crossroads**

Dear brothers, leaders of the Six Parties Talks,

While many people are gathering to pray for peace at this year's 60th anniversary ceremony in memory of the A-bomb victims at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, you are facing a nuclear crisis, which is locked in complex issues unresolved from the past and overshadowed by the new global power game. As time passes, the region is steadily heading towards the possibility of an unpredictable conflict, in which nuclear weapons could be used for the third time in this region.

To resolve this crisis peacefully is of paramount interest for everybody. At the same time, how to achieve this is crucial to shaping the future stability of North East Asia, since its outcome will determine the coming decade of global geopolitics.

However, the present atmosphere is not at all productive. It is one of deep suspicion, provocations and blame-games. What is missing is the collective search for a new vision for the future peace and prosperity of the region. The current political atmosphere is leading only to a spiraling arms race and the

rise of new forms of narrow nationalism, rivalry and antagonism between the North East Asian neighbors, whose total economic power is unparalleled in any other part of the world.

No doubt, we in North East Asia stand at a crucial crossroads, probably at the most dangerous point of no-return, ever faced for last 60 years. Unfortunately, however, the heart of the matter is covered by a massive smokescreen of politically-motivated propaganda and antagonism. For instance, DPRK's missile test shot over the territorial space of Japan was an unquestionably hostile act of provocation in peacetime. The same with the case of the Chinese submarine sneaking deep into Japanese territorial waters. In both cases, there were no warnings before, no official explanations and no apology later. Under the current terms of the US-Japan Security Treaty, what does it all mean?

We have recently seen the diplomatic controversy over the utterly insensitive behavior of Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, who insisted on paying an official visit to the Yasukuni war shrine, openly disregarding constitutional secularism. The Yasukuni shrine was the ideological sanctuary for state-imposed patriotism, the sanctification of Japanese racial superiority, and the glorification of Japanese military expansion in Asia, the very ideology, which misled Japan disastrously and consequently brought about an unprecedented catastrophe throughout Asia. Naturally, such a perverted action by the Japanese political leadership has provoked an emotional backlash of anti-Japan sentiment against its atrocious wartime past.

The leaders of China and S. Korea did not spare any time in escalating this foray into the spotlight of diplomatic theatre, in order to boost their countries' popular anti-Japan sentiments. For their part, they also played an insensitive role by interfering in Japan's internal debates on the problems of constitutionality, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and freedom of political expression. As state leaders, they ignored the customary norms of international relations not to interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign states.

In practice, what impacts have your actions brought about in Japan? You gave the best excuse for the powerful mainstream political forces of Japan to bury the present Japanese pacifist constitution for good. Is that really what you wanted to happen? You can rightly hate the Yasukuni shrine and the Japanese militarist past it represents. But I am afraid to say that, in China you are quite busy reinforcing Chinese patriotism and national pride, often fuelled by hatred against other nations and by its own moral and cultural superiority – which seems very similar to what Japanese militarists created through the ideology of the Yasukuni shrine.

## **6. Origin of my global peace pilgrimage as Buddhist monk for last 35 years**

Dear brothers,

We find ourselves at two dangerous thresholds, which are linked. One is the failure of the Six Parties Talks, which will immediately push North East Asia into a nuclear showdown. The other is the demise of the Japanese peace constitution.

Born and bred in Japan, I was stunned and horrified when I first came to know about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which instantly wiped out the peaceful continuation of everyday life of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people in an unthinkable cruel way, never seen before in history. How could such unimaginable misery happen to ordinary people? Who could do this? How did it happen?

My father, returning as a young conscript from the South-Pacific front after World War II, established our family. Until his recent death, he was never interested in the ordinary worldly life, but endlessly searched for a true spiritual answer to the questions he had faced since his wartime experience.

Driven by those questions, I became a disciple of the Ven. Nichidatsu Fujii, the legendary great pacifist Buddhist master of the Nipponzan Myohoji Order, at the age of 19. Often nicknamed “that peace monk”,

I led countless peace marches and demonstrations across the divided Europe during the highest peaks of the Cold War. With the convergence of millions of humans in waves around the globe, we began to realize the living answer, sharing with millions of people the newly- awakened reality of planetary solidarity, one humanity for peace, that transcends all barriers and differences. We simply chose to live together instead to perishing together. This new reality proved to be the only alternative to nuclear oblivion.

We saw that this reality brought down the walls, and dispelled the deceiving ideologies that kept people apart under the nuclear shadow. Together with unprecedented peaceful waves of spiritual awakening, I stood and prayed with my peace drum in many places: from the first Reagan-Gorbachev Geneva summit to the Kremlin summit, from the Saudi-Iraq border during Operation Desert Storm to the non-violent Moscow barricades during the 1991 failed coup d'état, from marching with Chechen and Russian soldiers' mothers into Grozny, to the great square filled with several millions during the Ukraine Orange Revolution, from the besieged Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem to the Indian subcontinent at the moment of highest nuclear alert, and in Baghdad with the Inter-Religious Peace Appeal to President Saddam Hussein - a last effort to avert the war before the ultimatum.

Throughout these decades of my peace actions, one unforgettable experience in my youth remained deep in my heart like a resounding echo, and drove my endless peace pilgrimage. It was my personal encounter with the aging A-bomb survivors, who explained to us gently their hellish anguish of that day. However, their voices were filled with deep compassion for all humanity and with prayers for the future world to be spared the nuclear apocalypse they had experienced.

## **7. Our repentance and new pledge born out of nuclear revelation**

Dear brothers,

On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 6th August 1945, could you open your hearts as human beings and imagine that you are listening to their voices? Please try to imagine as though you were also among many people standing together in front of the peace monument at the center of the Hiroshima Peace Park. In front of you, you may find that little stone monument, which was carved with a few words. I often visited this spot and meditated on those words. It reads:

*“Be in Peace.  
Never must such mistakes be repeated.”*

This simplest expression of repentance and pledge were born from the first nuclear revelation in human history, and it must be kept alive and shared with the whole of humanity, if humanity is not to perish in nuclear annihilation. Japan as a nation awakened from the catastrophic mistakes it committed, and enshrined this most simple repentance and pledge in the new Japanese peace constitution. It declared that the sovereignty of the nation belongs to the people and it acknowledged that the people's right to live in peace is supreme and supersedes any state's sovereignty. Therefore, Japan will never make war, and will never keep its own army.

Now, 60 years later, this most precious pledge, born out of unprecedented national tragedy, are on the brink of oblivion.

## **8. From the mistakes in the modern Asia's tragedy to the new vision of collective peace**

There is one more important mistake, which brought disastrous tragedy into modern Asian history, and that must be addressed in order not to be repeated again. From the very beginning of the Asian modernization process, which aimed to counter the threatening presence of the Western powers in Asia, our modern nation states were built on self-centered nationalism, neglecting our precious bond of common spiritual heritage, upon which our Asian civilizations evolved. Ancient Wisdom of Asia for universal spirituality and peace were replaced with nationalism and militarism by the modern state's technocrats, who only believe in military strength for their pursuit of state interests. Once the

modernized Japan made the fateful mistake of invading Korea, Taiwan, China and other Asian neighbors as part of a cruel geopolitical power struggle with Western powers, its ultimate catastrophic failure was already determined.

Here is a little-known historical episode about Mahatma Gandhi and my spiritual master Ven. Nichidatsu Fujii. At the time when Japanese army was waging fully-fledged war upon China, Ven. Fujii lived in India and often lived in the ashram of Mahatma Gandhi in Wardha, where Gandhi was leading his non-violent struggle to free India from the British empire. Gandhi was deeply concerned about the two Asian great neighbors fighting each other. Gandhi unequivocally condemned Japanese military actions in China as being the same as Western colonialism. He did not accept the Ven. Fujii's painful explanations that Japanese military actions were intended to free Asia from the British colonial rule (Ven. Fujii also from the earliest stages deplored the Japanese military invasion of the continent, warning that Japan would face inevitable national disaster as a result). When Ven. Fujii decided to return to the Far East, where World War II was approaching, Gandhi told him that his mission must be to restore the spiritual bond between the peoples of China and Japan and to prepare the ground for the two countries' reconciliation. Years later, after the independence of India and the Chinese revolution, and when Mahatma Gandhi was no more in this world, India and China fought over a territorial border dispute. Ven. Fujii immediately visited India and China, pleaded to the Prime Minister Nehru and Chinese Premier Chou en Lai to rethink their positions and asked them to send himself and all his disciples to the disputed zone in order to prevent the military hostility. Gandhi envisioned the great continent of Asia bound together by its age-old common spiritual heritage for peace. His vision was kept alive by the Ven. Fujii's actions and continues to live in our convictions until today.

## **9. My proposal of New Agenda for Peace**

Dear brothers,

I apologize for spending quite some time on my own personal reflections. But I believe there is nothing of greater importance than that awakened repentance and the pledge from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with Gandhi's vision of the common Asia with its spiritual civilization for peace.

In order for North East Asia to be freed peacefully from the impending nuclear crisis, in order for this region not to cross two dangerous thresholds, and not to repeat the catastrophic mistakes of modern Asia's tragedy, I appeal to you and all people who may be concerned, to adopt the following new agenda for peace:

### Six Parties Talks and other possible alternatives:

So far the recently-resumed Six Parties Talks are the only existing available channel aiming for a diplomatic solution to the unpredictable nuclear stand-off. However, the very format of these Talks has severe limitations and they can not be expected to bring about a substantial resolution. This is because all parties have their own conflicting military, strategic and economic interests. Furthermore, compromise is more or less blocked by the many layers of antagonism among the parties.

- 1) Therefore, it is desirable to find a wider and more constructive permanent regional security forum, possibly as part of the present APEC framework. APEC should undertake new responsibilities to provide a permanent mechanism for the overall regional peace and security arrangement, by concluding a treaty on the permanent renunciation of the use of force among all member states, which would include DPRK as full member (Asia-Pacific Peace and Security Treaty, APPST).
- 2) The upcoming Pusan APEC summit in October this year should provide the opportunity to consider APEC taking on such a role. For that purpose, a DPRK delegation should be invited and given a mutually acceptable accreditation status.

- 3) Under such a new APPST framework, a provision must be included, by which nuclear weapons member states should give security assurances to all other member states that their nuclear weapons will never be used in the region. There must also be a provision which removes all nuclear forces from all foreign military bases in the region, and also no nuclear navy ships or submarines may be deployed in APPST waters.
- 4) The APPST would establish permanently-available standing bodies of civilian and military experts, who are mandated for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and mediation in any part of the region.
- 5) The Pusan APEC summit should adopt plans for emergency humanitarian aid and plans for energy and infrastructure reconstruction for the DPRK, which will be implemented should DPRK decide to return to the NPT framework.

Global Nuclear Disarmament:

- 1) The five permanent members of the UN Security Council should make a binding commitment as soon as possible, by Security Council resolution, to call emergency special sessions on nuclear disarmament, which declare the use of nuclear weapons as a crime against humanity, and negotiate and adopt a time-bound nuclear disarmament process.
- 2) Other Security Council members should boycott the Security Council until the five permanent members make such a decision.
- 3) APEC members as well as other friendly groups of countries should refuse to pay into the UN budget until the five permanent members make such a decision.
- 4) All workers of the UN Secretariat and its related agencies should make a one day boycott of their work until the five permanent members make such a decision.
- 5) A worldwide public campaign should be launched from the day of this years' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to realize the above-mentioned actions.

New vision for a common Asia with its new civilization for peace:

In order to overcoming modern Asia's tragic past, every level of people's initiatives should be encouraged. They can be a source of inspiration, to promote rapprochements and reconciliation between the peoples of Asia and to create visions of a shared continent with a new peace civilization.

- 1) Starting from the upcoming Pusan APEC summit in South Korea this year, I propose to organize a pan-Asian pilgrimage for reconciliation and a new peace pledge, which will cover China, DPRK, South Korea, Russia and Japan. The governments of those countries are requested to provide every necessary assistance to make such a peace action possible.
- 2) For the renewal of the common historical bond of the spiritual heritage for peace in Asia, Peace Pagodas should be built at historically significant places, as pan-Asian peace and reconciliation projects, following the great peace legacy of King Ashoka of India, who built such Peace Pagodas as his repentance for war-making and as his new peace pledge. Such Peace Pagodas should be places for promoting reconciliation and harmony between peoples of different cultures, religions and civilizations.

I propose such a Peace Pagoda project should start first to celebrate the 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the translation of the Lotus Sutra into Chinese by Kumarajiva next year at the ancient Buddhist

temple near Xian, where he lived and translated the major important Buddhist manuscripts into Chinese. His monumental work was the most brilliant example of the Indian-Central Asian-Chinese civilizational interactions and had a powerful influence on the shaping of Far Eastern spiritual civilization.

A second such Peace Pagoda project can be started at Mt. Kumgang-san in DPRK as symbol of reconciliation and the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

- 3) Scholars of history in Asia should undertake a project to come to an objective understanding of modern Asia's war history and its collective results should be presented to the new generation, so they can learn the mistakes of the past, but not by blaming and condemning particular nations for their past wrongdoings. History education should not only emphasize one's own national events, but also shed light on the rich interactions and exchanges between different nations of Asia. It can help the new generation to learn the beautiful and creative common history of Asia.
- 4) In order to build a positive and future-oriented public attitude among the people, there should be efforts to keep alive the creative and beautiful history of cooperation and friendship, rather than war monuments, war museums and cultural programs on the theme of past wars.

## **10. Conclusion**

Dear brothers, leaders of the Six Parties Talks and all friends of peace,

I am grateful to all of you for sharing my thoughts and visions at this historic moment when we remember the beginning of the nuclear age 60 years ago. How will future historians comment on our actions today? There are many possibilities in front of us. Let's have a deep moment of reflection in order to fulfill our responsibilities to the future.

May the sacred intuition in everyone's hearts be awakened and connect us all. So as to live and let others live the Life of True Compassion in the Sacred Universe.

With hope,

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