



GPPAC Northeast Asia Regional Meeting: Ulaanbaatar Process V Summary Document

August 22-24, 2019

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Background

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia Regional Meeting and fifth Ulaanbaatar Process meeting was convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia between August 22-24, 2019. Hosted by the Mongolian NGO Blue Banner, the meeting was co-convened by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) including its Northeast Asian Regional Secretariat, Peace Boat.

The Ulaanbaatar Process is a civil society dialogue on peace and stability for the Korean Peninsula and broader Northeast Asian region, and has been held annually since its launch in 2015, with the goal of “making a habit of dialogue.” While a great distance remains to go to achieve sustainable peace in the region, participants reflected upon the changes which have taken place in Northeast Asia in these several years, acknowledging the momentous steps which have been made and the significant progress made during this period by both the Ulaanbaatar Process itself and other initiatives for peace in the region.

Overview

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a member-led network of civil society organisations active in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding around the world. GPPAC was founded upon the proposal by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, and officially launched in 2005. It is structured around 15 regional networks, with its Global Secretariat located in the Hague, the Netherlands.

Approximately 25 participants joined the meeting, including from the GPPAC Global Secretariat (the Hague), GPPAC Northeast Regional Secretariat (Tokyo), and network members and partners from Beijing, Kyoto, Pyongyang, Seoul, Shanghai, Tokyo, Ulaanbaatar and Vladivostok, as well as the United States and Southeast Asia. This included a range of actors including grassroots peace organisations, feminist groups, peace and disarmament experts, humanitarian practitioners, academics and educators, researchers and more.

The meeting began with an official opening hosted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia and including the participation of His Excellency P. Ochirbat, the first democratically elected President of Mongolia, State Secretary D. Davaasuren, and Member of Parliament N. Oyundari. This was followed by two and a half days of closed-door consultations.

The special opening session featured the launch of GPPAC Northeast Asia’s second publication, “Perspectives on Peace and Security in a Changing Northeast Asia - Voices from Civil Society and the Ulaanbaatar Process.” This collection of twelve essays captures the diverse perspectives, opinions and concerns of a region now standing at a critical crossroads, following the historic Summits of the past year and as there is an unprecedented interest from the broader international community in peace on the Korean Peninsula. This publication contains a variety of perspectives from academics, peace activists, educators and practitioners, featuring sections on the changing dynamics in Northeast Asia and the impact of the changes in the US-DPRK relationship, the path towards

denuclearization of Northeast Asia, and the efforts of civil society to support a peaceful future for the region. The contributors to this volume, nine of whom were present at the meeting in Ulaanbaatar, are all involved in various initiatives for peace and denuclearization in Northeast Asia, and united by their involvement with GPPAC.

A Region at a Critical Crossroads: The Current Context

The meeting took place at a time when the Northeast Asian region stands at a critical crossroads. While the previous meeting took place in December 2018, amidst an unprecedented optimism for concrete progress in the peace process for the Korean Peninsula, developments in the months since have included the lack of an outcome of the Hanoi Summit and increasing tensions between countries in the region. Notably, the fractured relationship between Japan and the Republic of Korea, reaching a serious level at the time of meeting, is of serious concern. Further, despite the numerous summits and talks which have taken place recently, we are yet to see real progress in the US-DPRK or inter-Korean dialogues. A great deal of action is required to achieve the concrete results required for building real, sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the region.

The negative impact of sanctions on humanitarian initiatives in the DPRK, which play a significant role in building mutual understanding and supporting the peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula, are also of great concern, and meeting participants shared the specific and serious obstacles these developments create for the continuation of their work.

Other current obstacles raised by participants included the trade war and ongoing “cold war” and its impacts on peace and security in the region, for example prevention of implementation of constructive economic development projects. Military build-up and militarization in the region, as well as aggravated hate speech and crimes, were also raised as serious challenges to be addressed by civil society in the region, and the roots of these issues in continuing colonialism, racism and sexism were noted.

Key Priorities

Since the launch of the Ulaanbaatar Process in 2015, the priority themes have been issues pertaining to peace and human security on the Korean Peninsula, and the establishment of a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. Within are the subtopics of ending the Korean War with the replacement of the armistice with a permanent peace treaty, trust and confidence building in Northeast Asia, and denuclearization and disarmament of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. The continued importance of these themes was reaffirmed at this meeting, and discussions on concrete activities that can be taken in these areas formed a significant part of the proceedings.

The peace and common human security of the Korean Peninsula is maintained as a key priority. Particularly, participants emphasized the urgent need for an end to the Korean War. As mentioned above, discussions examined the negative impact of sanctions on the lives and livelihoods of people in the Korean Peninsula, and the severe obstacle sanctions comprise to humanitarian aid and even the possibility of people-to-people exchange. Questions were raised as to the effectiveness of sanctions in achieving even their supposed goals, and suggestions made regarding cooperation with research on this issue, including with researchers from countries such as China. Further, the need for more concerted outreach to the international community and the United Nations on this issue was underscored.

Following a dedicated session during the meeting, discussion was also conducted regarding steps which civil society can take to contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Examples of existing proposals, such as the relevance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) roadmap for denuclearization of Korean Peninsula were shared and discussed. A further focus the role of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and the need to eliminate the nuclear component from extended deterrence, along with the need to remove nuclear threats from the Korean Peninsula comprehensively, including the nuclear umbrella. Discussions then focused on GPPAC's approach to ongoing governmental talks regarding denuclearization, and the need to share and welcome different ideas, while clearly communicating the goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The need for expanded multilateral dialogue and trust building among states was recognized as key, particularly reflecting upon the recent situation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). As a civil society initiative, it was suggested that it is important for GPPAC to raise awareness among civil society, especially for those potentially affected by the nuclear problem, and to build public opinion. And finally, the core emphasis on human interaction and an inclusive approach were emphasized.

Underscoring its core foundation as a civil society initiative, the Ulaanbaatar Process aims to develop civil society in Northeast Asia's capacity to effectively contribute to regional peace and security. A particular focus during this year's meeting was placed on youth capacity development. Participants shared various activities and initiatives they are undertaking throughout the region toward this goal, such as Peace Boat's Global University, the Northeast Asian Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI), and activities with university students. This echoes GPPAC's Youth Policy adopted in May 2019, emphasizing the importance of meaningful youth involvement in peacebuilding as leaders, partners and agents for peace.

Concrete discussions continued regarding how GPPAC can concretely contribute to developing the "capacity to engage" – for youth and also other members of civil society to constructively engage in the peace process, and in international spaces discussing peace and security. A desire for not only training but for more opportunities to test and implement the skills developed in a safe space was expressed, particularly for participants from the DPRK. In this respect, suggestions such as expanded provision and sharing of training materials and opportunities through the GPPAC network, programs targeting students, and consideration of establishing a youth track or branch of the Ulaanbaatar Process were raised. As a concrete follow up, it was also suggested for the GPPAC NEA secretariat to compile lists of opportunities for capacity building and youth involvement, so as to expand access to and inclusivity in already existing platforms and events.

The issue of gender mainstreaming in the region, and particularly in the Korean peace processes, was also crosscutting throughout discussions. It was recognized that women and girls are affected differently by armed conflict, and yet that their voices and faces are not heard and seen in peace talks at this moment. Several participants shared their experiences in cooperating under the auspices of the Korean Peace Now! Women Mobilize to End the War Campaign, working to ensure full and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and redefine security from a gender perspective. Further, participants also expressed the need for more gender analysis of conflict and sanctions, and for expanded collaboration with women-led movements.

Action for the Future: Moving Forward

With heightened global attention on Korean Peninsula, and the crucial moment of the end of 2019 near approaching, the key question for the Ulaanbaatar Process is how to utilize this momentum to persuade the international community to support progress in the peace process. The conveners of

the Ulaanbaatar Process will continue to collaborate with participants to further elaborate both a short-term and also five-year plan, tying in with GPPAC's strategic planning process.

Participants were reminded of the long-held goal of the process to set up a follow-up group to more deeply examine the issue of a Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone. This, along with other potential working or spinoff groups, could also incorporate the objective of self-evaluation of the process as it approaches five years since its launch.

Concrete initiatives to deepen youth participation in regional peace and security discussions will also be pursued, with a particular emphasis on capacity development and opportunities for engagement for youth from the DPRK. Such opportunities were discussed in relation to GPPAC and the Ulaanbaatar Process itself, and coordination between existing opportunities in which participating civil society organisations and universities are already involved was strongly recommended.

Participants also agreed to issue a statement regarding the highly concerning increase in tensions between Japan and the Republic of Korea, to be used in mobilizing public opinion particularly within the Japanese context. The heavy impact of differences in historical recognition and the ongoing legacies of colonialism were noted as root causes for this current situation, and participants agreed on the need for further dedicated efforts to overcome these ongoing challenges.

Reflecting upon the principles and agenda of the Ulaanbaatar Process agreed upon at the inaugural meeting, participants emphasized that they remain current and important, and reaffirmed their commitment to continued participation in the Ulaanbaatar Process. Co-convener Blue Banner expressed its willingness to once again host the next meeting in Mongolia, potentially in June or September 2020, while the Charhar Institute of Beijing also indicated interest in providing opportunities for the network to convene. The relevance of engaging with government officials and think tanks was debated during the meeting, and some participants suggested to pursue partnerships or hold a specific session during the next Ulaanbaatar Process meeting inviting such actors. Further suggestions for the next meeting included organizing a public event, pursuing the launch of a youth track, and conducting an internal evaluation as the process reaches the five year milestone. Participants remarked upon the usefulness of outreach documents such as the publication launched during the meeting's opening session, and the desire to develop further such tools and materials.

Finally, while confirming their own ongoing participation, members reaffirmed that this process remains broad and open. They emphasized the hope of expanding collaboration with civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the coming years, grounded on the principles of inclusivity and openness, and focusing on peacebuilding opportunities rather than security threats, while building mutual friendship and understanding.

*This Document features salient points raised during the meeting,
not an exhaustive documentation of discussions.*

*For further information, contact GPPAC Northeast Asia Regional Liaison Officer,
Meri Joyce (meri@peaceboat.gr.jp)*