

“Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and Peace in Asia”

AMAN 4th Assembly and International Conference

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On behalf of the Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 and Peace in Asia, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your invitation to be here with you, and for the opportunity to present a brief history of, and message from, our conference.

For your information, I brought a message about Article 9 to all people in Asia and the world in order to promote “Peace and Nonviolence,” as well as our call to hold the “Third Asia Interreligious Conference on Article 9” in Okinawa in November of 2011. I hope you have already received this message.

However, my presentation is not identical with that message, though the contents of my presentation are almost same. This is because I have simplified my presentation, so that you can better understand Article 9 and the issues about it. The outline of my presentation is as follows:

- a. What is Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution?
- b. What is the significance of Article 9, domestically and internationally?
- c. Article 9 is in jeopardy. Why? and How?
- d. A brief history of our conferences
- e. Our message to AMAN

1. What is Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution?

As you can read the words of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in the message I brought for your information, I will now only summarize its contents:

- 1) The state formally renounces war as a sovereign right.
- 2) The state bans the settlement of international disputes through the use of force.
- 3) To accomplish these aims, armed forces with war potential will not maintained.

Article 9 is a clause in the national constitution of Japan that prohibits an act of war by the state. It came into effect on May 3, 1947, reflecting the sad history of Japan’s invasion of Asian countries, which killed more than 20 million people. In one sense, this is the Japanese nation’s pledge to the people of the world that Japan will never

wage war again.

However, in 1950, following the outbreak of the Korean War, the National Police Reserve (NPR) was created to maintain order in Japan and repel any possible invasion from outside. This is because those U.S. troops that occupied Japan had to go to the front lines of the Korean War. In 1954, the NPR became the Self-Defence Force (SDF) under the conditions of the Cold War, and through pressure from the United States.

2. What is significance of Article 9, domestically in Japan and internationally?

In Japan, under the Cold War situation and since the end of the Cold War, the SDF has grown to be the second largest military force in Asia. The SDF is the *de-facto* armed forces of Japan, and contradicts Article 9. The SDF was recently deployed in Iraq for logistic duties at the request of the U.S.

However, due not only to the existence of Article 9 but also to Japanese civil society's strong support for its pacifist principle, in the complexity and delicacy of Japan's international relations, the Japanese government has to maintain its peace policy, including the non-exporting of weapons, the three non-nuclear principles (a ban on the possession, production, and import of nuclear weapons) and the prohibition of deployment of the SDF abroad for combat duties.

In the international scene, it is said, "Article 9 has played an essential role in rebuilding trust between Japan and world community, in particular with the people in the Asia-Pacific region who suffered from the barbaric invasion of the Japanese military." ("*Protect Article 9 for Peace*" by Akio Sugeno, JUST Commentary, June 2007)

Also, "Article 9 and the pacifism of Japan's constitution is not merely a domestic Japanese constitutional provision but rather is an international mechanism to reduce tension and to prevent war, an arms race and military violence." (*op.cit*)

In 2005, the international communality gradually recognized the significance of Article 9. For example, GPACC, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, an initiative convened by the U.N., refers to Article 9 in the context of the challenges of arms reduction and demilitarization in North-East Asia.

On April 26, 2007, as Japanese Prime Minister Abe dined with President Bush at the White House in Washington D.C., hundreds of U.S. religious leaders, in support of

broad sectors of the religious community and civil society groups in Japan, protested outside in the hope of saving Article 9. Prime Minister Abe, with the support and encouragement of the Bush Administration, had been campaigning to eliminate Article 9 and move forward with Japan's remilitarization and integration into the U.S. "war on terrorism."

The protest outside the White House was the latest action in a global campaign in support of Article 9. Prior to the protest, delegates representing hundreds of U.S. religious organizations delivered letters in support of Article 9 to the Japanese embassy, and requested that these letters should be hand-delivered to Prime Minister Abe prior to his meeting with President Bush.

3. Article 9 is in jeopardy. Why and How?

In contrast to the international community's recognition of the significance of Article 9, Article 9 is in jeopardy in Japan. Japan is accelerating a process of radical change in its involvement in war. From being a country that collaborates with and supports war, Japan is becoming a country that can wage war.

The current transition is intimately connected to the global realignment of the United States (U.S.) defense strategy. Japan's cooperation in this objective consolidates the defense structure in relation to what the Pentagon calls *the Arc of Instability*, which spans from Eastern Europe over the Middle East and India to East Asia. The realignment, which is the greatest since the Korean War, involves the whole gamut of strengthened military cooperation, ranging from Japan's commitment to full participation in ballistic missile defense, search and destroy operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and counter-terrorism, including the fingerprinting of visitors to the U.S. and Japan. The realignment also 'justifies' Japan's deployment of the Self Defense Forces outside Japan and the expansion of the U.S. military presence in Japan, using Japan's seaport and airport facilities, roads, water spaces, as well as control of airspaces and frequency bands.

In May 2006, a bilateral agreement was reached in Tokyo to further concretize Japan's role. The transfer of the global headquarters of the First Army of the U.S. from Washington State to Camp Zama near Tokyo, where the SDF will also establish the headquarters of a Ground SDF Central Readiness Force Command, indicates a desire for the unification of the U.S. Forces in Japan and the SDF. Japan is heading towards

full collaboration with the U.S. global war on terror, and also strengthening its missile defence system.

4. Brief history of our conference

<First Conference in 2007, in Tokyo>

In the light of the developments in Japan that open the door to militarism, the pacifists and the religionists in Japan cannot be passive spectators. In May 2007, we the Japanese inter-religious group sent the religious communities in Asia and the world a call to hold an “Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 and Peace in Asia.” In response, religious leaders from Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany and Japan met to study and listen to keynote addresses and panel presentations, to discuss action plans, to pray and sing together in a peace concert and to march together for peace. Appeals were made by participants from Burma and the Philippines to address the critical situations in their countries. The meeting was held at the Korean YMCA in Tokyo, Japan, November 29-December 1, 2007 and was attended by 220 people. The meeting expressed the need for ongoing gatherings of this kind. It was also able to consolidate an inter-faith network for peace and non-violence in the spirit of Article 9 in a meaningful and hopeful way.

We were reminded that peace can never be achieved through military violence, but only through promoting a culture open to patient dialogue and diversity that promotes justice, equality, and respect.

<Second Conference in 2009, in Seoul>

In October, 2008, the hosting committee in Japan organized a follow up meeting in Tokyo at which an International Working Committee (IWC) was formed. The IWC decided to organize the Second Conference in Seoul in December 2009, hosted by the Korean religious community, including the National Council of Churches in Korea.

During this Second Conference, more than 80 religious leaders representing Buddhist, Christian and Muslim faith communities from Asia and the world attended to study a report on developments in Japan and the rest of East Asia. Our deliberations brought many insights to light, including the following seven points:

Supporting Article 9 has changed the interactions between religion and politics. In a sense, it has helped the communities re-learn what it means to be living their faith in an area of public concern;

- The issue of Article 9 is the first time that communities of faith as a group has taken a faith-based stand in public on peace;
- Supporting Article 9 has created solidarity among different religions, and among religions and other peace advocates;
- Countries that have made war on their neighbors have to make right with their neighbors in order to find a lasting peace. Article 9 is a reminder that truth and reconciliation after past conflicts is necessary;
- Japan must move beyond its 'One Nation Peace Identity' to the joint building of regional peace with its neighbors;
- East Asia's post-war race to prosperity and success has divided the region in new ways;
- Article 9 is more relevant for regional and international relations than ever, and is forward-looking. It can be seen as the core value of a future East Asian Community;

5. Our Message to AMAN

As a message from our conference to AMAN, I would like to present this slightly shortened version of the resolution adopted by our 2nd conference as follows:

It is our resolve to actively pursue the following to advance the spirit of Article 9:

- To broaden our perspective that peace is not just the absence of war but that which is based on justice and human dignity;
- To undertake more vigorous cross-generational peace education (i.e., children, youth and adults), to include exposure programs, inter-religious dialogues, the training of peace education facilitators and advocates, and the use of creative media.
- To support the Japanese people in their efforts to interpret in their own terms the spirit and application of Article 9;
- To expand the peace network in countries experiencing conflict and violence, including the Philippines, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia and other countries;
- To study the link between US foreign domination and peace building in Asia, and to support all efforts at reunification in the Korean Peninsula.
- To actively oppose the presence of US bases and self-defense forces, which are contradictory to Article 9;
- o hold inter-religious dialogues at the level of communities where the impact of conflict and militarization is felt most intensely.

We commend this Statement to all religious communities for their prayerful consideration, commitment and deliberate action as individuals and as communities.

Finally, I would like to inform you of our third Conference being held in Okinawa from October 3rd to 7th in this year, of which main focus is to share the values of Article 9, and to discuss strategies to sharpen peace and justice advocacy in the region, based on the spirit of Article 9.

The Conference also aims to highlight issues related to peace and reconciliation and integrate them into the mainstream agenda of the religious communities in Asia and the world.

I wish the Conference would encourage us to work towards building solidarity, enhancing perspectives, and initiating a proactive role as a faith-based community in building peace and justice in Asia. It is very significant to hold the 3rd Conference in Okinawa as Okinawa has been the focal point of US military strategy in the whole Asia and beyond.

I hope AMAN will be able to share the mind and spirit of our conference and cooperate together toward justice and peace.

Furthermore, I would like to thank you for your attention to my presentation.