



The Taipei Declaration on Oceanic Peace

August 6, 2013

We, the GPPAC Northeast Asia Representatives and the participants of the international conference of “Seeking Peace from the Oceanic Perspectives”, together with other citizens of the Asia Pacific region, convened here in Taipei to address our common challenges of peace, particularly the territorial disputes of islands and waters in our region, and to awaken our awareness of being oceanic citizens.

The ocean we share, which is connected to us and we are connected to it, supplies our fresh water and most of our oxygen, gives us food, medicine, and energy resources. From the oceanic point of view, we are all islanders connected by the ocean. While the ocean has been the site of negative incidents, it has also historically contributed to the peaceful exchange between peoples and cultures, and helped to enrich our civilisation. When we remember how the ocean connects us together as a regional community, and how we have cooperated in the past to share its resources and gifts, we can imagine the path towards building a regional community for peace and sustainability for the next generations.

The territorial disputes of islands and waters are a result of the perspective that we can occupy and own the space we cultivate, exclusive of other possible owners. However, from the oceanic perspective, no one can own exclusively the majestic peaks, rolling hills and plains, basins, coastlines, and natural landscapes; they are all connected by the ocean. The water cycle of evaporation and rain, all major rivers, lakes and watershed on Earth drain into the ocean. The horizons of our islands are shaped by the vicissitudes of the sea level. It is the oceanic rhythms that decide how far we can see and how firmly we can stand on the land.

With such a view in mind, we are gravely concerned by the territorial disputes in the Asia Pacific region. Hostile policies and the “sovereignty” rhetoric are counterproductive and only exacerbate tension. The territorial disputes are linked to maritime militarization. We call on all the related governments in the regions to put an end to demonstrating military power, and instead to conduct regular regional peace talks with inclusion of civil society to find together a more productive way to resolve the territorial disputes. Let us be aware that the peace in our region has not only been threatened by armed conflicts, but also by the climate change that endangers a large variety of species in the ocean, and man-made contamination of our oceans such as that threatened by the negative effects of the nuclear chain.

At the same time, we urge the mass media and all citizens in our region to refrain from any behaviour or rhetoric that could arouse hostile sentiment or violence among citizens. Instead, we, as citizens of Northeast Asia, should dedicate ourselves to jointly work for common prosperity, peace and sustainability for the region. It is important for us now to reconsider the role of the ocean in building our regional community, and how we as civil society can use it as a shared space for nurturing mutual trust and exchange between people. Furthermore, we must keep in mind the perspectives of those directly affected by these disputes, such as fishing communities who have co-existed in the ocean for generations.

To fulfil this mission to create such innovative and peaceful solutions together, we should never forget our oceanic citizenship. Only when the governments respect this and find together a peaceful solution can our coming generations enjoy a peaceful common future. When we realize our oceanic citizenship with cooperative endeavours, we shall flourish in peace and sustainability, and create a world without fear and want.