



East Asia Declaration in Support of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution

August 6, 2013

Japan's constitution was born following the Japanese invasions, colonial rule, and the loss of countless people's lives throughout the Asia Pacific leading up to and during World War II. It has been supported by the Japanese people and citizens of the region for the past 65 years, thanks to its unprecedented peace clause Article 9 that renounces war as a means of settling international disputes and prohibits the maintenance of armed forces. This clause is based on non-violent and non-military principles, shared not only by the people of Japan but by citizens throughout Asia and globally.

On this Hiroshima Day, as we remember the tragic loss of countless innocent lives, we call on the citizens and politicians of Japan not to revise Article 9. We send encouragements to Japanese civil society groups working to resist the move to amend it. Also, we ask the citizens, experts and politicians of East Asia and worldwide to support the non-military and non-violent principles of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, and to cooperate in promoting and even replicating it around the globe.

For East Asia, Article 9 serves as a regional peace and security mechanism to put a brake on mutual distrust amongst states and instead build confidence. Article 9 has acted as a legal restraint on Japan, as the former regional colonial power and invader, and prevented it from becoming a military superpower. It has also forced the government to maintain its policies of non-export of arms, the three non-nuclear principles, and not deploying the Self-Defence Forces in active combat - the basic peace principles of Japan. At the same time, it acts as the foundation for collective security for the Asia Pacific region, and is key to the future realisation of an East Asian Community.

Despite Article 9 playing this vital role and being supported by citizens in Japan and around the region, unfortunately, the current Prime Minister Abe's administration is trying to revise the most important part of this peace constitution. This amendment would enable Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense and to participate in military actions in the name of "self defence." This threatens triggering a regional arms race, and fundamentally destabilising the region, raising serious risk of armed conflict.

In parallel to the debate on constitutional revision, Japan has been witnessing a series of offensive statements and actions by Japanese top officials and politicians, and the rise of neo-nationalist, racist groups making public hate speech based on racial and ethnic discrimination. These developments indicate a worrisome new trend of nationalism, historical revisionism and militarism, and threaten to destabilize the fragile regional peace. This simply cannot be tolerated within the 21st century international community.

The East Asian region continues to face various tensions based on tragedies of the past and lingering Cold War structures, including territorial disputes, the division of the Korean Peninsula, and the Cross Straits issue. All involved parties should recognise that military options are not practical to resolving or preventing such issues, and that instead they should be approached in a non-military and non-violent method, based on the principles of Article 9.

Remembering the immense loss of human lives on this Hiroshima Day, we reconfirm the crucial importance of Article 9 as a key element for building peace in our region, stand together in solidarity with the people's movements to save this peace constitution, and pledge to continue efforts to promote its non-military and non-violent principles in our work to prevent further suffering by citizens through armed conflict around the world.

Adopted on Hiroshima Day

By the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia

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