



## Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict – Northeast Asia Statement on the Occasion of the Global Day of Action on Military Spending April 13, 2015

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, and the division of the Korean Peninsula. Yet full peace and reconciliation is far from being achieved in Northeast Asia.

Tensions between Japan, China, and the Koreas over territorial disputes, historical issues and nuclear weapons programs, exacerbated by overall regional trends of nationalism and militarism, are triggering an arms race and creating a climate of increasing mistrust among key Northeast Asian countries. The security environment in the region has been additionally complicated by the US "rebalancing" to Asia, including its strengthening of alliance in Northeast Asia. Ongoing efforts by the current Japanese administration to revise the country's war-renouncing constitution play a further detrimental role in this regard.

While global military spending has tended to decrease in recent years, notably in the US, tensions in Northeast Asia are driving a significant rise in defense expenditures in the region. In 2014, China ranked second top global military spender, with Japan 9<sup>th</sup> and South Korea 10<sup>th</sup>. The three countries are among the top five spenders in Asia-Pacific.

In 2015, China's defense budget will reach 886.898 billion Yuan (US\$142 billion), which represents a 10% surge from last year. Japan's will climb to a record high of 4.98 trillion Yen (US\$ 42 billion) – a 2% increase from last year and the third rise after more than a decade of cuts. South Korea's will increase by 4.9% with 37.4 trillion Won (US\$35 billion).

Such a growing militarization of the region is threatening a dangerous escalation that could lead to an actual military confrontation.

We express our concerns about the increase in military spending and ongoing military buildup in the region, which puts the fragile peace at risk and threatens a dangerous escalation that could lead to an actual military confrontation in Northeast Asia.

It is a matter of urgency to find ways to diffuse tensions and avoid the development of an uncontrollable situation, by promoting confidence-building measures and building bridges towards establishing a regional peace, human security and cooperation framework based on a shared vision for a common future. Common steps should be sought towards disarmament, demilitarization, and cooperation on issues of common interest, such as disaster prevention, diseases and the environment. Civil society initiatives have offered positive contributions to fostering dialogue in the region and can continue to play a crucial role in building a lasting peace that does not rely on force. Resources should be shifted away from the military and instead to such purposes.

Thus, on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Day of Action on Military Spending, we call on Northeast Asian governments to:

- Put an immediate halt to the militarization of the Northeast Asian region, notably by reducing their defense spending; phasing out existing US bases and abandon the construction of new ones; suspending missile defense development and deployment; and stopping joint military exercises.
- Shift resources from military purposes instead to contribute to the human security and sustainability of the region.
- Make genuine efforts to peacefully resolve the ongoing Korean War, by shifting from the armistice system to a peace regime and addressing the nuclear crisis through initiatives such as the creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Northeast Asia.
- Engage in a sincere dialogue to resolve the ongoing territorial disputes and to develop a common understanding of the region's shared history, and refrain from manipulating nationalism to stimulate mutual distrust in the region.
- And recognize the important role Article 9 of Japan's Constitution has played as a foundation for peace and stability in Northeast Asia.