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# Opening Ceremony Speeches


개회식어 김성  
Declaration

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## Unity and Harmony in Asia

The 8th General Assembly of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace

 Asian Conference of Religions for Peace  
Religions for Peace Asia

## DECLARATION OF THE OPENING OF THE 8TH ACRP ASSEMBLY

**Dr. Sunggon Kim**  
*ACRP Secretary General*

**D**ear distinguished guests, delegates and observers. As the Secretary General of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, I sincerely welcome everyone to the 8th Assembly of ACRP.

We, the ACRP, have the 40 years of history since its foundation in 1974 in Louvain Belgium. I am very proud of what we did for the peace of Asia during the last 40 years with the cooperation of all our brothers and sisters from every religion in Asia.

Nevertheless, in every corner of the world, the conflicts between different religious and political groups are still ongoing, and millions of innocent people are suffering due to hunger, natural disaster, political corruption and international or interracial battles. We know that peace and justice are not free. It demands love, pain, endurance and sacrifice, which are the essential teaching of every great religion.

Now, we, the ACRP family, meet again to discuss issues regarding peace in Asia at this international city, Incheon, under the theme of “Unity and Harmony in Asia.” Through this Assembly, our extreme diversity shall create harmony like a beautiful orchestra. Through this Assembly, I am sure we will find that all brothers and sisters are walking toward the common goal, the Unity, whatever name it has in different religions.

Finally, I express great thanks to the Korean government and Korean religious leaders for their warm hospitality. I am also very grateful to all Asian leaders who supported to achieve the goal of ACRP. And I, as a Korean, sincerely ask all participants to pray for reconciliation and reunification of Korea, which is the last divided country in the world.

Now I announce the great opening of the 8th General Assembly of ACRP. Thank you very much.



## JOINT WELCOME REMARKS

### From the Secretary General and Moderator

**D**ear ACRP delegates, fraternal delegates, observers, friends and peace-advocates:

Warmest welcome and felicitation to our 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP General Assembly!

This year is also our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our moment of grace from the Almighty and a time for gratitude and joy to our great Founders. In September 1974, while attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Conference of Religions for Peace in Louvain, Belgium, our Fathers have thought of a Pan-Asian multi-religious cooperation that will harness the very rich diverse religions, cultures and traditions of Asia to bring unity and harmony among Asians, and peace to the world. This 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP Assembly is a testament of our dedication and commitment to realize their dreams and our courage to pass on the torch of their aspirations to our youth and all the generations to come.

Thus, our theme “Unity and Harmony in Asia” reverberates our continuing fidelity to our predecessors to manifest that religion, despite its shortcomings and failures, are the best social capital towards social cohesion; unity and harmony. Where hatred, materialism, narcissism and individualism dominate our socio-economic and political relations, our religions remind us that only through love, truth, honesty, integrity, compassion, mercy, forgiveness and hope can there be authentic joy and fulfillment in living with our neighbors. Moreover, we assert that multi-religious cooperation through dialogue remains the strongest path towards achieving unity while preserving and advancing cultural identities.

We still cherish our beautiful and meaningful experiences at the Manila Assembly. We hope that our Incheon ACRP Assembly will strengthen the inspirations and hopes inculcated by the Manila Assembly. Incheon ACRP Assembly aims to ignite that flame of love and commitment to promote dialogue so that our Asia, in particular our leaders, will take the path of peace and unity in resolving conflicts and misunderstandings.

We are also most grateful to our host chapter the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace (KCRP), and the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Thank you to all of you for your commitment to be united with us in this gathering. It is precisely this unity of our religions that we express our message of love and peace. Thank you to all of you because, together as religionists, we are able to manifest that “unity and harmony” is a reality.

Finally, we hope to see the reconciliation and reunification of the North and South Korea in the near future.

## WELCOME REMARKS FROM THE HOST

**Most Rev. Ja Seung**

*President, Korean Conference of Religions for Peace*

**G**reetings of peace to all!

Congratulations to the 8<sup>th</sup> Asian Conference of Religions for Peace/Religions for Peace Asia Assembly on the topic of “Unity and Harmony in Asia” in this beautiful city of Songdo, Incheon, Republic of Korea on behalf of the religious representatives in Korea. I am delighted to welcome all the 450 religious leaders from 20 countries in Asia.

Many thanks to our Moderator Prof. Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Secretary General Dr. Sunggon Kim, and the esteemed religious leaders from all countries in Asia who helped carry out this Assembly successfully. I also want to give thanks to the co-presidents of Korean Conference of Religions for Peace who cooperated with Asian Conference of Religions for Peace/Religions for Peace Asia for this conference to be held in Republic of Korea.

For the past decades, there have been some major and minor oppositions, conflicts and disputes. Unfortunately, some of the conflicts were caused by religions either directly or indirectly. However, many religious leaders who inherit the religious traditions in Asia have greatly contributed to overcome the difficulties and to achieve world peace.

At the 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP Assembly, there will be valuable and progressive discussions analyzing causes of both conflicts and disputes by actively discussing how we could overcome the problems from the perspective of religion. I am positive that this effort will be a great foundation for the Religions for Peace Asia, as well as a new turning point to establish safe and peaceful societies in the future.

Although Korea is a multi-religious society, it is possible to sustain peace without major conflicts for a long time due to the mutual trust and communications among diverse religious groups.

It is significant to have organizations as Asian Conference of Religions for Peace/Religions for Peace Asia that continuously put efforts to build trust and cooperation among religions. We have learned from the history that preventing conflicts beforehand is much better than trying to resolve it afterwards.

Therefore, this 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP Assembly goes beyond the gathering of religious leaders in Asia. This Assembly has a deeper meaning in the seeking of sincere ways to resolve conflicts in Asia as well as to achieve world peace.

I hope this 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP Assembly would round-off successfully so it could have positive effects for the religious leaders in Asia in leading a way to peace and it could be a foundation for world peace in the future.

Thank you again to the religious leaders of Asian nations for joining us in this Assembly, to ACRP Assembly leaders who organized the 8<sup>th</sup> ACRP Assembly, and to the co-presidents of Korean Conference of Religions for Peace. Thank you!

# Congratulatory Messages



## VIDEO MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY

**Geun-Hye Park**

*The President of the Republic of Korea*

**C**ongratulations to the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace and I welcome all the religious leaders from Asian nations. I would like to say thank you to the Moderator, Dr. M. Din Syamsuddin, the Secretary General, Dr. Sunggon Kim, the President of the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace, Most Ven. Ja Seung, and all other religious leaders for your effort.

Although Asia has achieved dynamic progress, historical trauma and political conflicts have become obstacles to our brighter future. I wish this conference, which is held under the theme of “Unity and Harmony in Asia” to help reduce the regional conflicts and disputes through religion and become a precious opportunity for the peaceful future and joint prosperity.

Next month, the Asian Game is going to be held in Incheon, I wish the song of peace and harmony that start in Incheon will spread beyond Asia and all across the globe.

I respectfully request all religious leaders here to put more effort into peace-keeping and reunification of Korean peninsula and harmony in Asia.

I promise you the Korean government will continue to devote towards peace in our humanity and public services.

I hope everyone will gain successful outcomes through this conference and I also wish you health and happiness.



## VIDEO MESSAGE FROM

**Swami Suhitananda**

*General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission*

**D**ear Children of God of the whole World. May I first greet you in the name of the true one supreme spirit, by whatever name we call and whatever way we worship, that personal-impersonal power that is at once transcendent and immanent with that illimitable intelligent which our faculty can comprehend only in the most primitive, in the words of Albert Einstein, and who permit, interpenetrate and envelop the whole universe of being both living and non-living.

Hinduism teaches that our whole life is our participation in the infinite cosmic life and divine existence. To be able to enter in this divine thought and to derive from it our sustenance and power is the secret of religious life.

Lastly, while this can all be achieved at the expense of material script, there are many underprivileged people, undernourished and deprived children in many parts of Asia and Africa. The supreme spirit dwells in them also. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda declared “submit to these marginalize people the best that we can submit to God.” In short, universal acceptance of all world religions and submit to man what we have to submit to God constitute the message of Hinduism, which found its best expression in the life and teaching of Siddhartha and Swami Vivekananda.

I extend my congratulations to the organizers of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace and wish you all a success.



From the Vatican, 21 August 2014

No. 50.255

Your Excellency,

In response to a request from Dr. Sunggon Kim, Secretary General of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, I would ask you kindly to transmit the following message:

*The Most Reverend Boniface Choi-Kisan  
Bishop of Incheon*

**H**is Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to be informed of the Eight Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, and he sends cordial greetings to all those participating in the meeting in Incheon. As the participants reflect on the theme “Unity and Harmony in Asia,” His Holiness prays that the Conference may be an occasion to strengthen the bonds of fraternity among religious leaders so that these same bonds of friendship and understanding may grow among their respective communities. For “a lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace.” (Message for the World Day of Peace 2014). Pope Francis invokes upon all present divine blessings of joy and peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Pietro B. Welch".

*Cardinal Pietro Parolin  
Secretary of State*

With gratitude for your valued assistance, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ

The Most Reverend Osvaldo Padilla  
*Apostolic Nuncio in Korea*  
SEOUL

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## MESSAGE FROM

**H.E. Phan Wannamethee**

*President of The World Fellowship of Buddhists*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP)  
Songdo Convensia, Incheon Korea  
August 25-29, 2014

On behalf of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and its networks, I wish to take this opportunity to offer my warmest congratulations to the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP) on the convening of its Eight General Assembly in the most beautiful modernized city of Incheon, Korea. It is wisely to choose Incheon as the place of the conference because it is not only the center of industrialization in Korea, but it is also home to the green Climate Fund which transfers its income to the developing world in order to assist the developing countries to encounter climate change. And it is in accordance with one of the significant topic about development and environment issue we will discuss at this conference.

Language, complexion, races and way of living may make difference to all people. And sometimes difference may lead to disagreement, hatred and conflict, which are often rooted in differences between people of different races and religions. However, religion does not divide people by those characteristics. Religion does not specify their disciples by race and nation, but embraces all people. Religion not only inspires and guides people but also provides them with loving-kindness. The philosophy of each religion is the philosophy of love, respect and non-violence. Therefore, with the world situation today full of violence, the theme of “Unity and Harmony in Asia” is significant to discuss. If all of us lead our lives with unity and harmony, peace will not be difficult to flourish in the world.

The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) acknowledges that all religions teach people to be good and live in harmony with one another. We must therefore take our religion seriously. We must have a clear and constructive understanding of others’



religions in order to live in harmony. Let us begin with ourselves, create love and kindness in families, communities, nations, and finally the entire world.

For this special gathering, I have much pleasure in taking this opportunity to extend our sincere best wishes to our ACRP friends and the organizing committee for the success and fruitful achievement in their efforts of promoting unity and harmony.

*Pran Anuram Thue*



18 August 2014

**Dr. Sunggon Kim**

*Secretary General*

*Asian Conference of Religions for Peace*

Dear Dr. Syamsuddhin, ACRP Moderator  
Dr. Kim, ACRP Secretary General

**G**reetings from the World Council of Churches

It is my pleasure to offer greetings as you gather at the 8<sup>th</sup> Asian Conference of Religions for Peace in Incheon, South Korea, under the theme “Unity and Harmony in Asia.”

As you well know, Asia is one of the most religiously diverse regions in the world so we take keen interest in your conference deliberations and the outcomes and learnings which you shall share as we, the World Council of Churches, as a global fellowship of Christian churches has the similar goal as you to reflect on the role of religious adherents for peace, human rights and environment. Last year, we, too, met in South Korea (Busan) for our 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly, under the theme, “God of Life, lead us to justice and peace.” That assembly’s mandate has set us on a pilgrimage of justice and peace over these next several years.

We are well aware that while the basic tenets of most religions call us to live in and work for peace and justice, often it is various interpretations of those very same religions that fuel division and violence.

Earlier this year, the WCC organized a consultation to address the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula. As I shared with the WCC central committee about the Korean peninsula and other situations of division and conflict, I share with you as you assemble to discuss these important matters.

First of all, we are human beings connected to one another. There is one Korean people and one Korean peninsula, still divided by the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The division is a root cause to the hostility, of division caused by the lack of peace, of division of families, of threats, of the suffering of innocent people.

I am mindful that as we commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War I this year, we are addressing urgent geo-political conflicts and interests, security and military activities, human rights and peace in the Korean peninsula and in many other

areas of conflicts in the world. In this case as in other issues of justice and peace we are addressing, we should claim that a crisis and a conflict caused by human activities and misbehavior, basically affecting the ordinary human beings living there, must be and can be addressed by other human initiatives and relations. This requires also a spiritual courage.

To change the human-made tragic and stalled conditions, there must be somebody who has a vision for another reality, for another future, for another life together as human beings. There must be somebody who is willing to give priority to that human dimension first of all, to see the world from the perspective of the victims of conflicts, both men and women, old and young. There must be somebody who is willing to be in the shoes of the other, and see and act accordingly. There must be somebody who has the courage to build human relationships across the lines of conflicts, who can see a common cause as higher than the more narrow interests of one group.

May you have the spiritual courage to continue to work for the peace that is so desperately needed.

Yours in Peace and Justice,



Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit

## FOCOLARE MOVEMENT President

25 August 2014

**D**ear participants of the 8<sup>th</sup> Asian Assembly of Religions for Peace gathered together at Incheon,

On behalf of the Focolare Movement it is a great pleasure for me to send my very best wishes for the success of this Assembly. For about thirty years now we have been collaborating actively on different levels with Religions for Peace.

The title of this Conference, “Unity and harmony in Asia” is very significant in this moment of history. In a world which has become a global village everyone is called to face the enormous challenges shared by all men and women of the world. The immense Asian continent, with its populations of several billion people and a great variety of ethnic groups, languages, cultures and religions, can offer, perhaps more than any other, a witness of harmony and diversity.

Nevertheless, we know that also in Asia, tensions are not lacking, due at times to religions being manipulated in different ways. Here, then, is the need for a commitment on the part of Asians to arrive at a living together of peoples and religious groups in all the contexts of this continent.

Throughout the centuries Asia has had great prophets who had marked out pathways of harmony and fraternity. Mahatma Gandhi affirmed that *“the world is held together by bonds of love”* and *“all humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, I cannot detach myself from the wickedest souls.”*

Today too love and the commitment to dialogue can also be the secrets towards the realization of that dream of universal brotherhood, which is close to our hearts and the hearts of the fathers of “Religions for Peace”. Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, said in this way to those who asked her if it is possible to have an authentic dialogue between different cultures and religions:

*“It’s certainly impossible for those who do not know what it means to love, because loving means being ready to die, to die for the other person. We aren’t always asked to die physically, but at least spiritually, and that is, to put aside all our thoughts, affections, desires, all that we plan to do, in order to listen to the other person. Putting everything to one side in order to listen to the other person is dying for us in order to enter into the reality of the other person, to understand him, to love him, to serve him. The other person does the same with me and this is the beginning of dialogue – it begins in this way. So for those who know how to love, dialogue is possible; for those who do not know how to love, dialogue is impossible.”*

My wish is that each one of you and the entire Congress may bear witness to the flourishing of a real commitment to dialogue founded on love, compassion, mercy and dedication, virtues which can be summed up in that Golden Rule present in each of our religious traditions. I am certain that this commitment will be a precious contribution towards realizing fully the title of this Conference – Unity and Harmony – in Asia and beyond.

*Maria Voce*

Maria Voce



20 August 2014

Distinguished members, guests and delegates of the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace,

**P**lease accept my warmest regards. I sincerely congratulate your effort to promote mutual understanding, culture of co-existence and most importantly, unity and harmony in Asia and the world.

The Creator of the Universe, our Lord says: “You will not see any transgression or disorder in whatever the Lord the Compassionate creates. Just look around and try to find a defect, an error? Then, look around again: your eye, in its hopeless endeavors (to find a defect in His creation), will rest in futile exhaustion.” This proper and wondrous balance and order in the universe is possible because no being transgresses the domain of the other but exists in coherence and cohesion with the others in its own place and rests in unity and harmony. This unity and harmony is seen in the perfect and delicate balance and cooperation between the day and the night, the seasons, the sun and the earth, the air and water and the soil just for a single fruit of a tree to come into being. Therefore, the price of a single fruit should be the whole universe in unison. The same truth manifests in living organisms, say, a human being that represents a smaller version of the universe. That very cohesion, solidarity, unity and harmony is very easy to observe in a human being, too.

Dear friends, this unity, integrity, peace, cohesion and order and the excellent system of living organisms as well as the solidarity and cooperation among them has been possible as every element, organ and component never attempts at transgression the space of the other but lives by respecting the others’ existence and tasks. Allah, our Lord, demands the same order, cohesion, solidarity and cooperation from us, humans, whom He has honored as the most glorious of beings. As such, Allah abhors bloodshed and discord among human beings and encourages peace, order and cohesion as the best of conduct and behavior. Islam, which denotes peace, serenity, unity, cohesion and well-being, demands that human beings live in mutual understanding, peace, calm and harmony. Therefore, it is obvious that we need to realize this very unity, cohesion and harmony within our bodies also for the sake of the well-being and the welfare of mankind.

Distinguished guests, today, the world needs mutual understanding, peace, dialogue, solidarity and cooperation more than ever. Globalization is the natural outcome of

advancement by means of travel and communication both of which urges and provides unprecedented opportunities for improving mutual understanding, dialogue, peace, solidarity and cooperation. However, it is sad that our earth, which is supposed to be a cradle of fraternity among people, represents an arena of warfare and conflict because of conflicting interests, policies dependent on such interests, polarized ideologies and misunderstood and badly-practiced religions. It is particularly sad to see that certain groups develop misconceptions about Islam and abuse it whereas Islam is a religion which does not allow violence, killing and discord among human beings. Therefore, our first and foremost task is to follow the divine purpose which requires us to meet, know and understand one another as different nations and communities to come closer and cooperate. This is incumbent on us as individuals, communities, nations and countries so that we can get to know and properly communicate and make this world a land of peace and serenity and ultimately know ourselves better by knowing each other better.

In concluding, I have this unshakable belief in your deep comprehension and endeavor for this divine purpose and I extend my thanks to the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace for this beautiful event. May Allah's assistance be with you in your works and efforts of peace.



Fethullah Gülen  
*Honorary President*

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

### **MESSAGE TO EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ASIAN CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE Incheon, 25th-29th August 2014**

I am pleased to send greetings to all those attending the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Asian Conference of Religions for Peace.

You come together at a critical time. In too many parts of the world, religion and faith are being abused by a minority to justify atrocious suffering and violence. World religions founded upon the same peaceful principles that you come to celebrate here are being perverted by those whose extremism threatens to undermine the same teachings they profess to uphold.

Against this disturbing trend, we can take heart from the constructive efforts of religious leaders who deplore violence, encourage tolerance and act for the greater good. This Assembly represents such unity in diversity. The United Nations is dedicated to defending freedom of belief, fostering inter-religious dialogue and advancing greater understanding among peoples.

I count on you to make a clarion call for peace and an end to conflict wherever it is taking place. I also hope that you will pray for unity and harmony on the Korean peninsula and in East Asia.

I count on you to join your voices in support of our shared goals of human rights, development and peace for all.

In this spirit, I wish you great success.