

# **The Ulaanbaatar Process 2016 Meeting**

14-16 November 2016, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

## **Summary Document**

### **The Ulaanbaatar Process: Making a Habit of Dialogue in Northeast Asia**

The Ulaanbaatar Process, a civil society-led dialogue for peace and stability in Northeast Asia, was launched by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in Ulaanbaatar in June, 2015. A worldwide alliance of civil society organizations structured around 15 regional networks, GPPAC convenes and facilitates the Ulaanbaatar Process.

The overall objective of the annual Ulaanbaatar Process meetings is to support the creation of conditions of peace and stability in Northeast Asia through the promotion of greater civil society dialogue and interaction. The 2016 Ulaanbaatar Process meeting, held on 14-16 November 2016, provided an opportunity for sincere and open civil society dialogue on promoting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, the goal of establishing a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and discussion of how civil society can contribute to reducing tension, expanding engagement and cooperation, and building peace and stability in the region.

### **Mongolian Civil Society's Role in Enabling Regional Dialogue**

Central to the Ulaanbaatar Process is a strategic role of Mongolia within the Northeast Asian context. It is a state that maintains friendly relations with all the states of the region and enjoys an internationally recognized Nuclear Weapon-Free status. GPPAC's Ulaanbaatar Focal Point, the Blue Banner NGO, plays an important role in convening this regional dialogue.

### **The Geopolitical Context, November 2016**

The meeting was held against the background of increasingly weakening trust in the established political regimes, a transition period in US foreign policy in the wake of the recent Presidential and congressional elections; growing military spending in East Asia; the region's preponderance in relying on nuclear deterrence; and heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula as well as the unpredictability in the Republic of Korea. On the other hand, the United Nations General Assembly was expected to adopt a resolution to start international negotiations to ban nuclear weapons, in view of their total elimination.

### **Major Regional Concerns Discussed**

Participants recognized the need for a new collaborative approach to Northeast Asian relations, acknowledging the ineffectiveness of sanctions and non-engagement policies in establishing the basis of lasting peace. Engagement was seen as the most viable path to conflict resolution on and around the Korean Peninsula and to regional confidence-building and stability in general.

Also highlighted was the critical role of civil society in promoting people-to-people relations in the region. To this end, the potential role of the scientific community, think tanks, faith-based groups and women's organizations in confidence-building was highlighted. The role of multilateral dialogue processes, such as the Mongolian government-initiated Ulaanbaatar Dialogue, can also serve as channels for broader exchanges and engagement.

Also discussed was the idea of the shared security of the region and re-framing the narrative in cooperative terms. To this end, the proposal for a comprehensive approach to a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone was examined.

During the meeting, participants also discussed specific challenges relating to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, including the armistice regime and lack of a peace treaty to end the Korean War, the continued nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula and the US deployment of THAAD to the Republic of Korea. The importance of understanding the historical context of the issue, the role of third-party countries, and the responsibility of the United Nations were also noted. Participants highlighted the need to promote dialogue, including bilateral dialogue between the US and the DPRK with no preconditions.

### **Next Steps**

The participants welcomed the marking in 2017 of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mongolia's initiative to make the country a single-State Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. This initiative led to its unique and internationally recognized Nuclear Weapon-Free status, which the five Nuclear Weapon States (P5) have pledged to respect and not violate. They also welcomed Mongolia's policy of working closer with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and making the status an organic part of East Asian security architecture.

In closing, participants affirmed to continue their commitment to the Ulaanbaatar Process, based on the principles of inclusivity, partnership, and mutual trust. Further concrete efforts will be implemented regarding communications, outreach and visibility, as well as engagement with policy makers and expansion of the constituency of the Process. Working towards a next meeting to be held in the second half of 2017, the Ulaanbaatar Process will continue to "make a habit of dialogue" for peace and stability in Northeast Asia.