



“Let Peace be the Imperative, Not the Alternative”: Concern about Increasing Militarisation in Asia

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...”
(Ephesians 2:14)*

(1) As a fundamental tenet of our faith, we recognise Jesus as the Prince of Peace. With this acknowledgement, the 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is deeply troubled by the alarming surge in militarisation and the frenzied arms race sweeping across Asia. The signs are unmistakable—from military parades in the Korean Peninsula to contentious territorial disputes and cross-strait tensions in the South China Sea and the East Sea, territorial disputes between neighbouring countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and other parts of Asia, and the growing military presence of various nations, including the United States, in the region.

(2) The repercussions of this arms escalation are profound and far-reaching. It is not confined merely to geopolitical or economic concerns; it affects the very fabric of our societies. Indigenous communities, women, children, and those already living in poverty within these regions bear the cost of this militarisation. Billions of dollars that could be redirected to address pressing issues, like hunger and poverty, are instead squandered on building up vast arsenals. This diversion of resources is exacerbated by the onslaught of neoliberalism and cutthroat competition among affluent nations, which exploit economically vulnerable countries in Asia and inflict devastating consequences on their people. The environment suffers and precious resources that communities rely on for their livelihoods, such as fishing and agriculture, are depleted.

(3) The spectre of increasing militarisation looms ominously in places like Myanmar and the Philippines, where human rights are at grave risk. In light of these urgent concerns, the 15th CCA General Assembly:

- Calls upon the CCA constituencies to actively engage in addressing this critical issue. Collaboration with churches in the affected countries and assistance with programme development and advocacy initiatives are vital steps forward.
- Urges the CCA itself to forge partnerships with other ecumenical bodies and international entities that share our concerns, as this collective strength will amplify our advocacy efforts.
- Urges the CCA to continue to monitor and assess the escalating militarisation in Asia, providing guidance to member churches in their advocacy endeavours.
- Implores the CCA constituencies to take proactive steps in supporting vulnerable communities, those who often lack a voice in these matters, Peacebuilding, in our context, means prioritising essentials like food over arms, fostering job opportunities rather than dependencies, and championing justice while mitigating exploitation.

(4) ‘Let Peace be the Imperative, Not the Alternative’¹ is a calling deeply rooted in our faith and conscience. As followers of the Prince of Peace, let us steadfastly uphold the imperative of peace, working tirelessly to transform it from an alternative to a living reality for all.

¹ Phrase attributed to Rev. Dr Liberato Bautista