

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Suzy Kim, (in English)

Hyun-Kyung Chung, (347) 622-1014 (in Korean)

International Women Peacemakers Appeal for Urgent Korean Cooperation for DMZ Crossing

May 13, 2015—Just three days before 30 international women leave for their historic walk across the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea to call for an end to the Korean War, their DMZ crossing has not yet been finalized. The international women’s peace walk is scheduled for May 24, International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament.

Nobel Peace Laureates, Mairead Maguire from Northern Ireland and Leymah Gbowee from Liberia, will walk with women leaders from fifteen countries, many of which participated in the 1950-53 Korean War. Their goal is to draw global attention to the urgent need to end the Korean War by replacing the ceasefire with a peace treaty, to help reunite families separated by the DMZ, and to ensure that women are involved at all levels of the peacebuilding process.

“In 48 hours, women from every continent will board international flights to support peace and reconciliation of Korea,” said Mairead Maguire. “We cannot continue to be on hold. Both governments should make every effort to cooperate over our DMZ crossing.”

On May 4, the Korean Committee for the Solidarity with the World’s People (KCSWP), a government entity under North Korea’s Cultural Foreign Relations Committee, hand-delivered a request via the Red Cross to the South Korean Ministry of Unification (MOU) seeking permission for the 30-member delegation to cross the DMZ by foot at Panmunjom. This is where the 1953 Armistice Agreement was signed that halted the Korean War.

“Thousands of women have been preparing for this event across every province in South Korea,” says Dr. Vana Kim, one of the lead organizers. “Korean women’s hearts are so full to embrace and walk with the international women who have reinvigorated their hopes and dreams for a brighter future for Korea without division and war.”

The women’s peace walk has [garnered wide international support](#), including endorsements from U.S. President Jimmy Carter, authors Alice Walker and Naomi Klein, Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, co-founder of Twitter Evan Williams, actor Robert Redford, and physician Deepak Chopra.

“Seventy years of painful division is enough,” Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, Bishop of the Seoul Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church, wrote yesterday from Rome. “We must all be able to overcome the site of confrontation and deep wounds embodied by the DMZ. The women’s peace walk is a gift of hope and courage. I earnestly appeal for everyone’s goodwill and help to realize their plans, as Pope Francis called for courage to pray for peace on the Korean peninsula during his visit to South Korea last year.”

On April 3, North Korea officially approved the women's peace walk and a symposium in Pyongyang, and on April 17, South Korea informed the international delegation it would "render necessary cooperation" once the official endorsement from "responsible and relevant North Korean authorities" is confirmed.

The UN Command recently notified the international delegation that it "will respond to an official request" from the South Korean government, which will determine if the 30 international women will cross the DMZ and where. South Korean organizers say that the MOU has said it would announce its final decision on Friday, May 15.

The international delegation urgently appeals to both governments to cooperate to make this historic crossing for peace and reconciliation at Panmunjom in the Joint Security Area, the most symbolic vestige of Korea's division and unresolved war.

###