



GPPAC Southeast Asia Statement on Rising Militarism and the Importance of Article 9 as a Peacebuilding Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific Region

October 24, 2015

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Southeast Asia network convened in Melayu Patani/the Deep South of Thailand in October, 2015. Discussion focused on ongoing crises in the region such as political repression and armed struggles; the volatile peace process in Melayu Patani/the Deep South of Thailand; the changing global and regional security situation; and the role of peoples and civil society in peacebuilding. Concerns were raised regarding the increasing militarization of the entire Asia-Pacific region, exacerbated by territorial disputes, increasing military expenditure, and provocations and rising nationalisms that fuel a vicious cycle.

As an example of an important conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanism, Article 9, the peace clause of the Japanese Constitution, was also discussed. Indeed, this clause was recognized by GPPAC in its Global Action Agenda, presented to the United Nations in 2005, as “a foundation for collective security throughout the Asia Pacific region.” This year marks 70 years since the end of World War II and Japan’s aggressions throughout the region. For citizens throughout the Asia-Pacific, Article 9 has been received as a pledge, particularly to those neighboring countries that suffered under Japanese invasions and colonial rule, to never repeat its mistakes.

Within the current regional political context, participants expressed great concern regarding the current Japanese administration’s forceful passage in the parliament of security legislation that breaches this peace constitution and allows Japan’s Self-Defense Forces to use force overseas. This, combined with an increase in the country’s military budget and relaxing of the long-held arms export ban, only serves to exacerbate tensions within the Asia-Pacific region, threatening a further arms race and militarization on the part of other regional countries. This is already affecting the balance in the region, as seen for example by the new Japan-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement.

As a civil society network working for the prevention of armed conflicts, GPPAC Southeast Asia:

- Reiterates the importance of Article 9 as a mechanism for peacebuilding; as a sample of demilitarization for the world, and as a tool for creating real peace and security both in the Asia-Pacific region and globally;
- Strongly disagrees with recent changes to Japan’s security policy, and express our utmost concerns at the potential repercussions these changes may have for peace and stability throughout the Asia-Pacific;
- Urges the Japanese Government to uphold Article 9 and its principles;
- Stands in solidarity with the majority of the Japanese people who are against these changes, and those working for the repeal of these laws;
- Calls upon ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to listen to civil society’s perspectives on this issue, and consider them while formulating their own response and engagement with Japan;
- Calls for both citizens and governments from throughout the region to engage in sincere efforts for dialogue and confidence building;
- And pledges to continue our active support for and participation in the Global Article 9 Campaign.