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Ulaanbaatar Process XII Summary Document

Context

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia regional network, together with the Mongolian NGO Blue Banner, convened the twelfth Ulaanbaatar Process civil society dialogue in Mongolia between September 6-8, 2026. With the aim of strengthening the position of civil society and supporting it to enhance and maintain inclusive and sustainable peace in the Northeast Asian region, the Ulaanbaatar process is grounded in Mongolia, a vital safe space for dialogue and multilateral cooperation, even as regional and global militarization and tensions continue to heighten.

At this key juncture, approximately twenty civil society members gathered from across the region and beyond—including Beijing, California, Dalian, Hong Kong, Kyoto, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Ulaanbaatar and Vladivostok, and representing a wide range of organizations including those focused on human security, feminist peace, and environmental protection.

This year's meeting took place shortly after Mongolia successfully hosted the UNCCD COP17 (17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), which took place in Ulaanbaatar from August 17 to 28, focusing on land restoration and drought resilience. In connection with GPPAC's EU-funded Climate, Peace, and Security (CLIMPSE) Project, discussions featured an emphasis on climate security in Northeast Asia. Words of condolence were also offered for victims of the Himalayan landslides, illustrating the immediate human impact of climate security issues.

As highlighted in the opening session by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director-General Byambasuren Guntevsuren, "at a time of heightened tensions and diminishing trust, the Ulaanbaatar Process is especially important. It provides space for dialogue, confidence-building, and exchange among actors who might otherwise have limited opportunities for direct engagement." Mongolia's role hereby is vital, enabling open communication under the conviction that dialogue must not be abandoned.

This year's UBP highlighted critical themes including nuclear disarmament and risk reduction, the current situation on the Korean Peninsula, and climate security, emphasizing their interconnectedness in relation to regional stability and sustainable peace in Northeast Asia. Participants renewed their commitment to identifying key joint actions to together contribute to the prevention of armed conflict, noting the massive global impacts of wars in Iran and Palestine, and urging an immediate stop to the violence. With nuclear disarmament a key pillar of the dialogue, participants also affirmed that stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons worldwide—and particularly in Northeast Asia—is a vital responsibility for citizens everywhere.

Peace Games

On the first day gathered in Ulaanbaatar, the Peace Games were held in collaboration with local partners the United Nations Association of Mongolia, Mongolian Peacebuilding Institute (MONPI), and the Mongolian Institute of Northeast Asian Security and Strategy (MINASS) as well as Blue Banner. Highlighting the focus on climate security, this year's Games were on the theme of "Northeast Asia Transboundary Collaboration for Biodiversity & Ecological Resilience." The Peace Games are now fully integrated into the UBP agenda, serving an important role for both capacity development and youth engagement. Following the simulation, participants also discussed how to consolidate youth exchange and education initiatives further by embedding Peace Games into future regional gatherings, sustaining engagement through ongoing communication, and expanding relevant social media presence.

Nuclear Disarmament and Risk Reduction

Geopolitical discussions centered on Northeast Asia, Mongolia's Third Neighbour Policy, the controversial considerations surrounding Hormuz Strait troop deployments, foreign policy pressure from the Trump administration, and the complex dynamics of China-U.S. strategic balancing. Other regional developments discussed included Japan's Takaichi administration's defense policy, which includes abolishing arms transfer restrictions and increasing the defense budget, as well as JSDF military build-ups. Civil society responses to the Takaichi administration's revision of the 3 Strategic Documents planned by the end of 2026, preparing a civil society vision of peace and security.

In relation specifically to nuclear disarmament, participants highlighted the urgent need to enhance multilateral frameworks such as the NPT and TPNW, alongside Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs), drawing on lessons from Mongolia to build more inclusive, non-traditional models. Discussions emphasized elevating first-hand survivor voices including Global Hibakusha, while addressing emerging technology risks like military AI, missile defense systems, and nuclear submarines. These efforts respond directly to the transition from the post-Cold War era into a new cold war environment marked by active hostilities in Europe and the Middle East alongside rising tensions in Northeast Asia.

Addressing increasing nuclear threats and the weakening of international law, participants highlighted a gradual weakening of international law and order, pointing to the selective enforcement and application of international norms and sanctions, which rarely yield constructive policy changes in target states. They noted the failure of the NPT to reach an outcome document, as well as the expiration of New START, which leaves no formal limits on U.S.-Russia strategic nuclear forces for the first time in 50 years. Furthermore, a growing focus on battlefield Tactical Nuclear Weapons threatens the 80-year nuclear taboo, underscoring the urgent need to prioritize nuclear risk reduction at regional meetings. Participants also analyzed the dual-use nature of artificial intelligence, evaluating its potential both as a tool for positive peacebuilding and as a risk to strategic stability.

Regarding Mongolia's unique nuclear-free position, Blue Banner outlined Mongolia's NWFZ status and highlighted the 2024 UNGA resolution to conduct a second comprehensive study of NWFZs. This study, in which Blue Banner's Ambassador Enkhsaikhan took part, will be announced at the upcoming UN General Assembly later in September, and will include Mongolia as a non-traditional NWFZ model.

Korean Peninsula

A session was held specifically dedicated to the current situation on the Korean Peninsula, spotlighting the experience of UBP members working in that context. They shared that under the current administration, South Korea faces geopolitical and military pressures from the U.S. to increase military spending, adopt U.S. missile technology, and purchase U.S. shipbuilding products to pacify trade tensions. There are also controversial new considerations to deploy ROK troops to the Hormuz Strait, which civil society groups strongly oppose.

Discussion also focused on shifts in strategies toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. A growing realist view proposes that denuclearization talks with the DPRK should be postponed until global nuclear powers engage in multilateral disarmament, and the risks and realities of effectively recognizing the DPRK as a de facto nuclear state. Participants highlighted that “the most realistic way to practically guarantee the safety of the people on the Korean Peninsula is to resume the suspended peace negotiations... President Lee Jae-myung’s proposal to North Korea and relevant nations to negotiate an end to the Korean War and establish a peace regime is a positive step. The core of this approach is creating an environment that eliminates North Korea’s incentive to deploy and use nuclear weapons—by converting the unstable armistice agreement into a permanent peace regime, normalizing North Korea-U.S. and North Korea-Japan relations, and improving inter-Korean ties. Creating an environment where nuclear weapons are no longer necessary must come first. Therefore, it is preferable to discuss denuclearization at a separate table from the issue of ending the war.”

Other issues examined included the ROK government’s announcement to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, which risks triggering a regional arms race, raising concerns in Japan and potentially entangling South Korea in U.S.-China maritime rivalries, and the need to address military AI and regulatory gaps. Rapid military adoption of AI and drone technologies by both North and South Korea is accelerating regional arms dynamics, while domestic legislation currently lacks safety regulations and oversight systems for lethal autonomous weapons.

At the same time, existing civil society initiatives for peacebuilding and confidence-building measures were highlighted, such as the Korea Peace Action, which advocates ending the Korean War, establishing a permanent peace regime, suspending joint military exercises, and prioritizing military confidence-building before addressing formal denuclearization. The vital role of women’s participation in the Korean Peninsula peace process was also highlighted, including key activities by Korean women’s organisations.

Climate, Environment & COP17

Regarding the climate crisis as a security threat and COP17 outcomes, with UN estimates indicating that up to 40% of global land is degraded (affecting 3.2 billion people) and over 80% of Mongolian land is impacted by erosion and desertification, UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia was highlighted as a landmark event. The proceedings demonstrated that climate action, land restoration, and drought resilience are directly coupled with peace, security, and human stability. Recognising this connection, GPPAC also joined more than 380 organisations in endorsing the [CSO-led Declaration on Land, Peace and Security](#) announced at COP17.

A particular focus during discussions at the UPB was environmental diplomacy and transboundary cooperation. Borderless environmental challenges—including land degradation, desertification, soil

conservation, and sand and dust storms (SDS)—serve as low-stake, high-effect starting points for regional parties to build negotiating habits and mutual trust across hard geopolitical divides. Green diplomacy initiatives, transboundary protected areas (TBPAs), and international joint actions highlight environmental security as a practical bridge for regional cooperation - a theme which was also examined through the Peace Games. Further, active participation by the DPRK at environmental fora, including their statement regarding COP17, presents a valuable entry point for broader regional dialogue.

The experience of Mongolian partners at COP17 highlighted the role of cities, youth, and civil society advocacy, and how municipal leaders and city mayors are becoming increasingly central actors in environmental diplomacy. Examples included the successful engagement of youth by UNA Mongolia, which hosted a Green Zone Pavilion engaging over 3,800 visitors, and the championing of key declarations by civil society organisations.

The need to look at climate and environmental issues through a gender lens was also highlighted, including policy briefs presented by civil society during the COP17. Further discussion was also held regarding the climate, militarization, and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) nexus. Particularly, advocacy frameworks such as WILPF's 'Move the Money' campaign was introduced for its emphasis on the intersection of climate resilience, demilitarization, and the WPS agenda, calling for the reallocation of military expenditures toward ecological human security. The relevant campaign by WILPF Kyoto poses the important question of "Would missiles protect us from extreme heat or thirst?" - all the more relevant as citizens throughout Northeast Asia experience more climate related disasters and challenges.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations discussed during the dialogue included the following:

Dialogue:

- **Institutionalize and Expand Dialogue:** Regional platforms must institutionalize regular communication channels and expand participation to sustain confidence-building momentum across political cycles.
- **Strengthen Citizen & Local Diplomacy:** Governments and international bodies should support citizen-led initiatives such as Peace Parks along border areas and Peace Games simulations to actively engage youth and local communities in cooperative security.
- **Develop Innovative Funding Alliances:** Civil society leaders should build institutional structures that connect regional entrepreneurs with peace and environmental NGOs to sustain vital civil society work amidst shifting institutional funding landscapes.

Security and Disarmament:

- **Refocus Disarmament Platforms:** Shift focus from bilateral denuclearization negotiations, which have proven ineffective, toward multilateral negotiations within frameworks such as the NPT and TPNW. This should incorporate "non-traditional NWFZ" concepts to make regional security zones more inclusive. Ultimately, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can only be achieved through multilateral arms control negotiations that place not just the DPRK's nuclear program, but also nuclear weapons policies of neighboring countries, on the agenda.

- **Elevate Nuclear Survivor Voices:** Incorporate Global Hibakusha and survivor testimonies alongside expanded educational outreach on nuclear-free initiatives within disarmament advocacy.
- **Addressing Naval Arms Race Risks:** Policymakers should address and curb regional naval escalation, particularly concerning the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines.
- **Regulate Military AI and Autonomous Weapons:** Governments and international bodies should establish robust safety regulations and oversight systems for military AI and autonomous weapon applications.
- **Examine Sanctions Dynamics:** Given the long history of international sanctions in the region often resulting in secondary sanctions that impact citizens, upcoming UBP meetings should examine the selective enforcement and broader consequences of these measures, to address their humanitarian and economic impacts across Northeast Asia.
- **End the Korean War and Establish a Peace Regime:** Urge the conversion of the armistice agreement into a permanent peace regime to formally end the 76-year war and create an environment where nuclear weapons are no longer necessary.

Climate:

- **Utilize Environmental Diplomacy as a Gateway:** Policy makers should prioritize issues such as soil, land restoration, and migratory corridor management as low-stake, high-impact starting points for building trust between regional parties, effectively strengthening cooperation before tackling hard security issues.
- **Promote Regional Environmental Cooperation:** Regional cooperation on transboundary challenges through financial, technological, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms can effectively mitigate the crises experienced throughout the region. Further, greater publicity is needed for existing cooperation models. The active participation of think tanks, universities, and research organizations is crucial. Furthermore, COP17 provides a platform to elevate Northeast Asian environmental issues onto the global stage and forge new partnerships, where raising awareness and centering youth voices remain essential.
- **Incorporate Climate into WPS NAPs:** National governments should integrate environmental security and climate resilience directly into regional Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) National Action Plans.

Looking Ahead

The year 2027 marks the 35th anniversary of Mongolia's initiative for Nuclear-Weapon-Free status. Blue Banner plans to commemorate this milestone by hosting a broader national event in Mongolia to translate shared goals into concrete ideas and proposals. In tandem, organizers are planning an exhibition highlighting Mongolia's nuclear-free status alongside contributions from other organizations, framing Mongolia's journey as part of a global movement. Educational outreach will be expanded, and Peace Games simulations will also continue with a focus on Mongolia's experience, demonstrating how smaller nations can effect change when supported by international partners. To capture these evolving dynamics, civil society voices will be featured in an upcoming fourth publication edition. Furthermore, organizers aim to broaden UBP participation by extending invitations to interested individuals and organizations in conjunction with the 35th anniversary.