



World Council of Churches

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The Right Honourable Shinzo ABE,
Prime Minister of Japan

Geneva, 16 January 2015

Subject: A comment on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution from the World Council of Churches

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

As the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, an association of about 350 Christian churches in 140 nations, it was my privilege to attend and speak before the 4th Global Inter-Religious Conference on Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution when it was held at Tokyo in December 2014. Since that time, the World Council of Churches has strongly endorsed every aspect of the Final Statement of that Conference, including the affirmations that

- We believe Article Nine is a foundation stone for peace in Asia
- We believe Article Nine is more relevant today than ever
- We respectfully request that the Japanese government protect and preserve Article Nine
- We are convinced that to reinterpret or alter Article Nine would be counter-productive, rendering Japan and its neighbours more vulnerable and more insecure.

Religious communities around the world, some of whom were represented in Tokyo, see Article Nine as a pillar of peace in Asia and an example for nations in other regions. We know that Japan has excellent credentials for fulfilling Article Nine as an instrument of peace: wisdom, foresight, honour and proven experience in international cooperation.

The World Council of Churches and our partners in religious dialogue and action believe that this is an opportune time for Japan to exercise leadership in seeking justice, friendship among peoples, peaceful resolution of regional animosities, and also to address the continuing burdens imposed by having US military bases on Japanese soil and in the region.

At such a time, Article Nine should be **reaffirmed** by the Japanese government, not reinterpreted. Government statements which address the historic grievances of neighbouring states must be honoured, including the Kono Statement of 1993, the Murayama Statement of 1995 and the Kan Statement of 2010. We hope to see Article Nine repositioned at the centre of Japan's international relationships, not relegated to the margins of national politics.

We feel certain that Article Nine is an essential part of Japan's rich heritage: not a relic from the past, but a model for the future.

In deep appreciation of the importance of this discussion, I remain respectfully yours,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches