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Ecumenical leaders urge churches to pursue agenda of Taiwan Ecumenical Forum

TAIPEI: The Taiwanese people within the international community and the rights of indigenous people, peaceful reunification of the Koreas and the human rights violations and traumatic experiences of Rohingya people in Myanmar and neighboring countries are among the concerns of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace (TEF), said Reverend Collin Cowan, general secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM)

The first meeting of TEF, organized and hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, will begin tomorrow, 28 November at the Presbyterian Bible College in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

There will be some 150 participants from across Taiwan and other parts of the world.

Dr Collin Cowan will preach at the opening worship.

In an interview, Dr Cowan noted that hate crimes, border issues, the strategy to divide and conquer, disregard for the truth, disregard for human rights and dignity and climate change are issues that dislocate people and destroy the environment in the world.

He reminded that the “forces of empire” remain dominant representing itself in both blatant and subtle forms.

Dr Cowan, who is a co-convener of TEF steering group wanted the meeting to have candid and open conversations around issues that are important to the PCT and the people of Taiwan as this process is meant to accompany them on the journey.

Dr Chris Ferguson, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches is the other convener of TEF.

Professor Victor Hsu, who is the PCT TEF Task Force coordinator, said that the PCT was eagerly anticipating the meeting which had been carefully prepared by the TEF Steering Group. “I am delighted with the enthusiastic response of the PCT partner churches. Moreover, the programme is carefully prepared in order to allow the participants to be updated about the latest developments in East Asia, including Taiwan and to discern together the signposts for the ecumenical journey for justice and peace in North East Asia,” he said.

The socio-cultural and geo-political issues have implications far beyond Taiwan, Rev. Cowan said and hoped that the meeting will have time and space to discuss the issues for “our mission as an ecumenical community.”

The general secretary of CWM also hoped that every ecumenical body and partner churches would take on the TEF agenda and seek ways to advance it within their constituency.

Among the objectives of TEF are to strengthen and widen ecumenical participation in the pilgrimage for justice and peace in North Asia with Taiwan as a case study in conflict management and resolution; to serve as a platform of common ecumenical action and advocacy in solidarity with the PCT, as it seeks national dignity, national sovereignty and a Taiwanese society built upon a solid foundation of love, justice and mercy; to mobilize and broaden ecumenical and Church support for the transitional justice process for the rights of indigenous peoples and victims in the context of the global ecumenical commitments; and to support PCT priorities for renewing relationships with the Chinese churches and the China Christian Council.

TEF is an invitation to the ecumenical community to journey together with people of Taiwan and the PCT.

Contact:

Dr Victor Hsu, PCT. Member, TEF Steering Group, and Coordinator, TEF-PCT Task Force,

Phone: +886-978004992