

**Statement of Religious Leaders
on North Korea
July 17, 2007**

The denuclearization agreement reached with North Korea is an important step toward halting the production of nuclear bomb material in that nation. This agreement will help to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in the region and enhance international security. We congratulate the Bush administration for its work in this negotiation.

The agreement requires specific actions in order to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We urge representatives of our government, including members of Congress, to give full support to the agreement so that the United States fulfills its part of the bargain. We urge continued diplomatic pressure on the North Korean government so that it completely dismantles all of its nuclear weapons-related facilities.

The agreement with North Korea demonstrates the value of diplomacy in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. It validates the preferential use of words, rather than war, as a response to conflict. Our religious traditions teach that efforts should be made to explore every alternative in resolving a conflict before going to war.

We urge the administration to pursue a similar strategy in the nuclear standoff with Iran. The United States should engage Iran in direct negotiations without preconditions to achieve the goal of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and enhancing regional security. This strategy has been effective in one geopolitical locale, and we urge its implementation in Iran.

*Organizations listed for identification purposes only.

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