



21 September 2024

## **CCA General Secretary's Statement on International Day of Peace 2024: Cultivating a Culture of Peace**

On this International Day of Peace, the CCA reaffirms its commitment to cultivating a culture of peace, and promoting peace across Asia and beyond. The International Day of Peace is observed worldwide on 21 September each year to strengthen the ideals of peace by promoting 24 hours of non-violence and ceasefire. In 2024, the theme is "Cultivating a Culture of Peace". This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, a significant milestone in the global commitment to fostering peaceful societies.

Today, fundamental human rights and respect for life are being eroded by persistent violence and discord. Asia, home to approximately 4.7 billion people, has experienced a range of conflicts that have led to immense suffering and instability, and peace remains elusive for millions of people. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's return to power has plunged the country into economic and humanitarian crises, putting the future of women, minorities, and civil liberties at great risk. Myanmar, since its military coup in 2021, has been engulfed in violence, with ethnic conflicts worsening and anti-junta insurgencies making peaceful conditions difficult. The military's grip on power continues to create devastation, leaving thousands dead and millions displaced.

Tensions between India and Pakistan remain high, particularly over the disputed Kashmir region, where militant activity and religious violence have escalated, threatening regional stability. Within India, religious hatred and tensions are rising, with increasing incidents of ethnic conflicts, political and communal violence. In Pakistan, religious extremist groups and governmental forces are engaged in fighting throughout the territory. The Philippine government has been in conflict with people's movements for several decades, resulting in severe human rights violations, internal displacement, and the loss of thousands of lives. Bangladesh has been experiencing significant unrest, marked by violent protests and political instability which has left many dead and injured.

Meanwhile, the Korean Peninsula remains a flashpoint, where war has only been paused and peace not achieved. North Korea's nuclear ambitions and frequent missile tests keep the region in a state of heightened alert. Maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas also continue to spark tensions, with territorial conflicts involving China, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and other nations. As violence, uncertainty, and suffering dominate the lives of so many, the call for peace has never been more urgent.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) joins the global community in observing this day of peace, recognising the urgent need for conflict resolution across the region and beyond. In these turbulent times, it is essential that those involved in conflicts move away from violent confrontations and instead engage in meaningful dialogue and negotiations. The path to peace can only be forged through cooperation, tolerance, pluralism, and solidarity.

As Christians, we are reminded of our duty to be peacemakers, following the teachings of Christ: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The task of cultivating a culture of peace begins with us and must extend to those spaces where violence and discord have taken root. It is vital to instill the values of peace, non-violence, and justice in children, our future generation, through both formal and informal education. Churches, as beacons of peace, play a central role in this endeavour.

The future of our world depends on our collective efforts to nurture understanding, respect, and harmony. Inculcating a culture of peace and prioritising peaceful solutions over warfare is vital to achieving this. Together, let us strive to build a future where peace is not just a fleeting ideal but a lasting reality.

Yours along the journey,

Dr Mathews George Chunakara  
General Secretary, CCA