



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

#HRC58 • 19 March 2025



PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

Ms. Elizabeth SALMÓN, Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The SR presents its most recent report on the human rights situation in the DPRK, focussing on the critical interlinkage between economic, social and cultural rights, peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and relevant SDGs. The human rights situation in the DPRK remains a serious concern. The country's prolonged isolation, **lack of humanitarian assistance** from the United Nations and other organisations, and further restrictions to access to information have aggravated people's human rights.

Stricter laws introduced by the Government have **curtailed rights to freedom of expression and opinion**, to work, and to freedom of movement. Harsher punishment including the **death penalty and public executions** are being imposed for violating them. Recent reports suggest that the DPRK has deployed its soldiers to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. While military conscription is not against international law, the poor human rights conditions of soldiers while in service in the DPRK plus the Government's widespread exploitation of its own people raises several concerns. The DPRK's extreme militarisation policies are sustained through **extensive reliance on forced**



labour and quota systems. All military personnel must be protected under international law if they are captured.

Last November, the DPRK participated in its fourth cycle of UPR. The delegation agreed to consider two-thirds of the recommendations made by Member States. Implementing some of these requires re-prioritisation of resources in order to increase social investment, realise all human rights, achieve SDGs, and promote a culture of peace. The SDGs adopted in 2015 reflect much of the core content of economic, social, and cultural rights. The DPRK has **committed to implementing the SDGs** through its national development goals and has signed a strategic framework for cooperation with the United Nations. Unfortunately, at the current pace, it is far from meeting its SDGs targets before the 2030 deadline. The DPRK alleges that **sanctions hinder their progress** in the national development goals. It must be reminded, however, that a sanctioned state is still the primary duty bearer in realising the economic, social, and cultural rights of its people. It is upon the DPRK to take **steps towards denuclearization** so that sanctions can be eased and more resources become available for human rights. SDG 16 shows that disarmament leads to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

The DPRK ratified key United Nations treaties on economic, social, and cultural rights. While these rights have a progressive nature, they impose immediate obligations on states who must guarantee minimum social levels for all. Most importantly, any form of regression or discrimination is prohibited. The Government's overall approach does not address the inaccessibility of marginalised groups to food, health, education, water, and sanitation. For example, despite the DPRK's focus on increasing overall domestic food production, over 45% of the population, **11.8 million people are undernourished**. The Government has shifted from accommodating informal markets to establishing a state monopoly selling of a staple food. Under the strict border shutdowns since early 2020, many cannot afford food. Yet, the Government's **public distribution system is discriminatory** and irregular. Only those loyal to the leadership receive regular public distribution. Reports indicate instances of starvation during the border shutdown and possibly more to come during the harvest gap in spring. The most affected groups are the elder, people with medical conditions, and those without savings in rural areas.

Similar challenges are present regarding the **right to health**. The law of the DPRK guarantees a universal free medical care system. The country has a high ratio of doctors to population and a strong network of hospitals and clinics. Nevertheless, the medical facilities lack medicine, medical equipment, water and sanitation, electricity, and trained medical personnel. Patients have to bear the cost by bringing in necessary items or buying medicines in markets. Therefore, **health services are not affordable for the vast majority**.

The DPRK has made efforts to ensure the **right to education**, guarantee compulsory 12-year universal and free education by law. As of 2017, completion rates were nearly universal and literacy rates remained high for both men and women. However, significant challenges persist in guaranteeing equitable access to this right. Reports indicate that the students are frequently required to contribute to the school's operation and teachers' salaries, making education unaffordable for children from low-income families. Children with disabilities continue to face multiple barriers to accessing education and much fewer women than men get enrolled in higher education.



Likewise, the DPRK has committed to ensuring the right to water and sanitation. The Government has admitted a slow progress despite active measures in achieving the SDG 6 on water, sanitation and hygiene. Access to water is not consistent due to irregular electricity supply in the country. **Over half of households lack adequate sanitation**, causing diarrhoea and death among children and worsening malnutrition.

The roadmap to achieve the SDGs in the DPRK depends on the State's compliance of economic, social and cultural rights. This cannot be done if the Government continues to ignore discrimination based on *songbun*, the **discriminatory caste system** that privileges loyalty to the leadership, gender and other prohibited grounds. To address such inequalities and discrimination, the first step is to collect and openly report disaggregated data on access to basic services of marginalised populations.

Resources must be prioritised for human rights. People must be placed at the centre of any future engagement and negotiations in making peace or denuclearization deals. The SR's report provides concrete recommendations for all parties to act in coordination to fulfil economic, social and cultural rights and related SDGs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The SR explains that there is a deep, proven link between the humanitarian situation, economic, social, and cultural rights and the SDGs in the DPRK. These three are all intertwined, which is troubling. The SR has been able to identify that all these three are intertwined via the information provided directly by the DPRK itself in the UPR documentation, but the SR also draw it from the information that the DPRK submitted for its fourth UPR cycle as well as in the country core document. All information has been cross-checked and cross-referenced with various different sources and stakeholders, including of course United Nations agencies and the information the DPRK has collated.

The SR has engaged in an impartial, objective, and independent and non-politicised work that allowed her to reach the conclusion that **access to food, healthcare, education, water, and sanitation is provided on a discriminatory basis** in the DPRK and it is only intermittently available for many, which is causing great suffering to the people of the DPRK. To echo the words of the UN Secretary-General in 2018 - 'there is no development without peace, there is no peace without development, and there is neither peace nor development without full and absolute respect for all human rights.'

The **discriminatory setting** outlined by the SR coexists hand-in-hand with the **policy of extreme and rampant militarisation** in the DPRK. The militarisation of the country is the priority and comes over and above the rights of anyone, but particularly it comes over and above the rights of groups in vulnerable situations such as the elderly, women, children, and also residents of rural areas. The extreme militarisation prioritises **forced labour and exploitation of the people** of the DPRK. It also imposes a **patriarchal system** which adversely impacts in particular women and girls. Not only does this drive towards extreme militarisation reduce the space for resources to be allocated to economic, social, and cultural rights and to confronting the serious humanitarian crisis in areas such as tackling tuberculosis and providing extensive vaccine coverage. Resources which could be used for that goes into the military, but also this policy of extreme militarisation



serves as a **pretext for ramping up repression, crackdowns**, forced labour, and all of that of course then ends up in a vicious cycle in a constant feedback loop.

Finally, the United Nations and other international agencies have been prohibited from returning to the DPRK. The diplomatic community present in the DPRK is very limited. According to international law - and the DPRK is a signatory and ostensibly a believer in international law - then the state has an **obligation to use the maximum available resources, including support from the international community**, to comply with its obligations to deliver on the economic, social, and cultural rights of its people and to deliver on the SDGs.

The DPRK has an **obligation to leverage international cooperation** to that end. One cannot comply with its obligations in terms of development and economic, social, and cultural rights by slamming the door in the face of the international community, by turning one's back on the international community, and by pursuing a policy of strict isolation. The DPRK needs to allocate a significant part of its budget to investing in economic, social, and cultural rights, factoring in in particular in so doing that the of highly vulnerable groups. The **DPRK also needs to accept international cooperation** and support lent by the United Nations and other agencies, as well as directly from other states, particularly those who made recommendations to the DPRK in the framework of the UPR. Nothing described by the SR will be possible without deep-rooted reforms in the country, both legal and institutional reforms, which will pave the way for the full participation in the life of the country of everyone, men and women alike.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by the Country Concerned

The delegation of the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** informed the President of the UNHRC that it does not wish to speak in this capacity.

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Norway jointly with the Nordic-Baltic countries remain deeply concerned by the persistent, systemic and widespread human rights violations in the DPRK and extensive restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms. They are alarmed by the humanitarian consequences of prolonged border closures, leading to increased food insecurity and severely limiting access to essential medical care, disproportionately affecting persons in vulnerable situations, including women and children. The continued lack of cooperation from the DPRK authorities, especially the refusal to grant access to international human rights monitors, significantly hampers efforts towards accountability and justice for victims. They therefore urge the DPRK to cease immediately any direct or indirect assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, including the deployment of the DPRK's military forces to Russia and their use on the battlefield against Ukraine, as highlighted in the report. They are gravely concerned by accounts detailing human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions, severe malnutrition and retaliation towards family members.

The **Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter** through **Venezuela** voices its serious concern at the ongoing and growing proliferation of the presentation of parallel reports, ostensibly to assess the human rights situation in given countries, but without the due consent of the



country concerned. The Group attaches the greatest importance to the promotion and protection of all human rights, and believes that the promotion and protection thereof can only be strengthened on the basis of dialogue and cooperation. The Group rejects wholesale political motivations which have been included in this practise of country-specific reports. This approach runs directly counter to the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicisation and non-bias, as well as the very spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. The Group recalls the fact that human rights should not be weaponised nor used to promote political agendas, nor to meddle in the internal affairs of states. It also underscores that said double standards that undermine the genuine spirit of the promotion and protection of human rights. They poison what should be a harmonious working environment and they hamper progress in the sphere and weaken human rights institutions. The members of the Group congratulate the Government of the DPRK on its efforts to guarantee the well-being and the full enjoyment of human rights for their people, and call for an immediate end to the country-specific mandate which is entirely counterproductive to the promotion of human rights.

Liechtenstein is appalled by the continuously dire human rights situation in the DPRK. The almost total isolation of the country, as well as the Government's failure to allocate resources towards realising the economic, social, and cultural rights of its people, remain to be the main culprits of the awful conditions in the DPRK. The stricter border controls and tightening of information flows to and from the country have remained a serious concern. Liechtenstein urges the government of the DPRK to recognise the fundamental right to leave and enter the country and immediately halt executions of repatriated citizens. It condemns the numerous crimes committed by the authorities, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and forced disappearance, forced labour, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity.

Czechia thanks the SR for her report on the interlinkages between human rights, development, peace, and security. As stated in the report, the DPRK has a responsibility to its people to fulfil its obligations with respect to economic, social, and cultural rights as the primary duty-bearer. The decision to prioritise the nuclear programme or allocating resources to these rights is unacceptable and must be condemned. Czechia urges the DPRK to repeal laws deepening repression of the right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and the right to take part in cultural life. Czechia regrets that the majority of its recommendations made during the 47th session of UPR were not accepted, as well as the lack of cooperation with the SR on the DPRK's side. It urges the DPRK to implement the recommendations stemming from its fourth UPR cycle. Czechia calls again on the DPRK to stop facilitating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and refrain from assisting serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Luxembourg deplores the fact that the strict measures enacted by the DPRK during the COVID-19 pandemic are still in force. This contributes to the isolation of the country and jeopardises the scant progress that had been achieved previously. Drastic measures hinder international cooperation, which is a *sine qua non* for improving the human rights situation in the country. Luxembourg is also concerned by the fact that the DPRK continues to resort to forced labour with the goal of boosting its income and implementing its militarisation policy, thus significantly reducing the resources available for the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights by its people. The malnutrition caused by outdated infrastructure and the discriminatory food distribution system, as well as a lack of access to basic services, remains one of the main causes



of high levels of maternal and infant mortality in the country. It calls upon the DPRK to immediately withdraw its assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. This military support is a violation of international law; exacerbates the suffering of civilians; fuels human rights violations; and destabilises international security without in any way contributing to a fair and lasting peace.

Switzerland thanks the SR for her report and her unwavering commitment to promoting the cause of human rights in the DPRK. Respect for human rights is vital both for development as well as for peace and security, which are crucial elements for the DPRK. The systematic crackdown on human rights and the lack of rule of law fuel instability in the wider region. Even if we are beginning to see the glimmerings of a willingness to be more open in the DPRK, which seems to be rather positive, the restrictions on fundamental freedoms and a worsening humanitarian situation are to be feared, particularly given the prolonged isolation in which the country has been caught up since 2020. Switzerland believes it is vital that the DPRK allows international humanitarian organisations and human rights observers to visit the country. Switzerland is troubled by the enactment of laws which crack down on freedom of opinion and expression and it condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of a death penalty, public executions, and unfair trials. Switzerland also wishes to underscore that equitable and fair access to food, to medical care, and to safe drinking water should not be conditioned on the basis of political or social considerations or beliefs. Switzerland calls upon the DPRK to guarantee non-discriminatory access to all essential resources for the entire population.

Japan appreciates the dedicated work of the SR on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, highlighting the dire circumstances on the ground, including widespread forced labour and further restrictions on the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of movement, work, and freedom of expression and opinion. It is clear that the situation has seen little to no improvement over many years, and therefore Japan remains deeply concerned. Japan reiterates that Pyongyang must heed the calls of the international community, stop allocating its resources to ballistic missile and nuclear development, and take concrete actions to improve its human rights situation. The issue of abduction is a grave violation of fundamental human rights. The victims and their families are ageing. Mr. Akihiro Arimoto passed away in February at the age of 96 without seeing his abducted daughter again. There is no time to lose. Japan calls for the continued understanding and cooperation of the SR and the international community to ensure the immediate return of all abductees from North Korea. Japan strongly supports the SR's mandate and will provide its full cooperation for the SR's activities.

Australia thanks the SR for her sobering update and reiterates its strong support for her mandate. Australia calls for DPRK to lift entry restrictions to UN humanitarian and development workers. Australia condemns the regression of human rights in the DPRK. The 2014 Commission of Enquiry identified evidence of crimes against humanity, including torture, enforced disappearances, and murder in the form of summary executions, including in political prison camps. Australia is deeply concerned by the SR's reporting on the introduction of several laws restricting citizens' rights to freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, on the reintroduction of public executions, on the widespread use of forced labour, and on the increase in the use of the death penalty to punish citizens for minor crimes. Australia is disturbed that the DPRK continues to prioritise military expenditure over the wellbeing of its people, resulting in a lack of sanitation and inadequate food,



healthcare services, and education, particularly for women and girls. Australia calls on the DPRK to work with the international community to achieve the SDGs and human rights, including to end gender-based violence. Australia urges the DPRK to reprioritise its budget allocation, to undertake comprehensive reforms, and eliminate discrimination.

Malta remains deeply concerned at the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the DPRK, which continues to deserve international attention. Malta remains concerned at the widespread reports of severe human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, forced labour, suppression of free expression, and denial of essential needs such as food and healthcare. The lack of adequate food for the vast majority of the DPRK population and widespread poverty lead to serious long-term harm, mostly those in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, older persons, individuals in detention, children and women and girls. The DPRK's continued isolation has exacerbated the suffering of its people. Malta calls on the DPRK to engage constructively with the international community, including by granting access to UN mechanisms and allowing humanitarian organisations to operate without undue restrictions. It also calls on the DPRK to fulfil its obligations under international human rights treaties to which it is a party and to implement the recommendations made during their UPR.

Thanking the SR for her report, **Peru** regrets the serious and deteriorating human rights situation in the DPRK. The report documents severe restrictions on the freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, as well as the promulgation of laws which would represent a violation of international law. For that reason, Peru reiterates the fact that all states have an obligation to investigate and prosecute violations of human rights. They are also required to take steps to strengthen accountability mechanisms, this in line with the regulatory frameworks in the field of human rights, whether these be domestic or international. In light of the aforementioned, Peru fully supports the proposals submitted by the SR for her consideration and her report, particularly her call upon the international community to take advantage of any opportunity to draw closer to and engage more directly with the DPRK to foster a pro-peace climate, one which would redound to the benefit of human rights.

Albania voices its deep-rooted alarm with regard to the conclusions contained in the report on the human rights situation in the DPRK, which highlights systematic and serious violations of human rights further exacerbated by the prolonged isolation of the country and the lack of international oversight. The North Korean Government continues to enact new laws which restrict fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and freedom of opinion. Public executions, arbitrary trials, and forced labour remain policies that are in place in the DPRK. In addition, the population is confronted by troubling levels of food insecurity, with more than half of its citizens suffering from malnutrition or undernutrition. Albania deplores the DPRK's lack of cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and the fact that it's impossible for humanitarian organisations to have access to the country. Given these violations and this situation, Albania remains deeply alarmed by a culture of impunity and the lack of accountability for human rights violations in North Korea that have been newly documented. It calls upon the international community to redouble its efforts to document said abuses; to put an end to impunity; and to guarantee the dignity of the victims as well as justice for them. Albania continues to advocate for an end to the suffering of the North Korean people.



Eritrea affirms its position that the UNHRC's mandate is best fulfilled through dialogue and cooperation guided by the principles of non-selectivity and objectivity rather than through inherently confrontational and selective approaches. It commends the Government of the DPRK for its sustained efforts to safeguard fundamental rights of its people. These efforts include ensuring access to work, free education, and comprehensive medical services provided without discrimination. Such initiatives reflect a commitment to improve the welfare of its citizens, often under challenging circumstances, and deserve recognition as a part of a broader conversation on human rights. However, reports generated under this mandate often rely on unverified information and lack of recognition from the government concerned. Without genuine engagement and cooperation between the relevant countries in the UNHRC, there is a significant risk of misrepresenting the realities on the ground. Selective and politically motivated approaches further erode the prospect for constructive dialogue and cooperation. True advancement in this field requires mutual respect and a willingness to address challenges collectively rather than through unilateral coercive measures (UCMs). In this context, Eritrea renews its call for the immediate lifting of UCMs imposed on the DPRK. These measures not only exasperate humanitarian challenges but also obstruct the DPRK's ability to fully realise its developmental and humanitarian rights objectives. Eritrea urges the international community to prioritise engagement over isolation by terminating this mandate, fostering an environment conducive to progress through mutual understanding and support.

Iran continuously opposes specific initiatives introduced under Agenda Item 4 of the UNHRC which do not contribute to the genuine promotion and protection of human rights. The creation of mechanisms such as the SR on the DPRK has more appeared to be confrontational and counterproductive and has even distanced the concerned country from the UNHRC. Such mechanisms that are mostly driven by a handful number of countries. They are mostly initiated and pursued for political intentions and are a piece of a bigger puzzle for imposing pressure on targeted countries. Genuine dialogue and mutual respect are fundamental requirements of human rights realisation. The UNHRC should, with its initiatives and decisions, pursue and motivate countries for cooperation and interaction. Iran therefore encourages the UNHRC to engage constructively with the Government of DPRK in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation in advancing the human rights of its people. Finally, Iran reiterates its firm position that the principles of sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in the international affairs of any country should guide the work of the UNHRC.

Russia regrets that the UNHRC continues to be used by the collective West to multiply accusations against DPRK. Russia considers that utilising the issue of human rights in this sovereign state follows the goal of destabilising the domestic political situation and creating hindrances for the progressive development of the country. Russia believes that one of the key reasons for the problems in the DPRK is illegal Western unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), including those in the humanitarian situation. The sponsors demonstrate that they are ignoring the efforts by Pyongyang to improve the situation in the country. They are silent about the new free education system. They say nothing about a new series of laws adopted last year promoting citizens' rights, including on bringing up children, remote education and the rights of persons with disabilities. All these measures are taken by Pyongyang against the backdrop of economic and political pressure by the West against DPRK. Sanctions, including those on bringing fuel into the country, fertilisers, construction materials and textile. Russia believes that we must reject such



a politicised approach and concentrate on constructive dialogue with DPRK on the basis of historic socio-economic cultural peculiarities of that country.

China appreciates DPRK's commitment to national construction and socio-economic development, as well as its proactive measures to gradually improve the well-being of its people. China notes that DPRK has ratified a number of human rights conventions; committed to the 2030 SDGs; and has extended the strategic framework of cooperation with the UN until the end of 2025. UCMs are one of the greatest obstacles to DPRK's pursuit of its national development goals. Unfortunately, the SR's report has failed to clearly acknowledge the negative impact of such measures on the humanitarian situation in the country. China urges countries concerned to immediately lift their UCMs against DPRK and stop violating the human rights of its people. China reiterates its firm opposition to the country-specific mechanisms set up without the consent of the country concerned, as well as the use of misinformation to discredit countries of concern. Rejecting the use of human rights as a tool for interfering in the internal affairs, China urges all parties to uphold the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and non-selectivity, to cease groundless accusations against other countries, and to return as soon as possible to the correct path of dialogue and cooperation.

The **Republic of Korea** expresses its sincere appreciation to SR for her timely report which accurately emphasises once again the interlinkages between North Korea's dire human rights situation, development, and peace and security. It further elaborates on the current situation, including strengthened military cooperation between North Korea and Russia. As aptly described in her report and mentioned by many delegations, the conditions in which North Korean soldiers perform military service can constitute human rights violations. The Republic of Korea echoes the SR's view that all military personnel should be protected under international law when captured. It is equally concerned about the inhumane treatment of North Korea's escapees being forcibly and repeatedly aided. South Korea calls on all UN Member States to respect the principles of non-refoulement and underscores the recent opinion of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which stated that the deprivation of liberty of three Korean missionaries in North Korea is arbitrary. The Republic of Korea strongly urges North Korea to immediately release the three Korean missionaries and promptly resolve the issues of abductees.

Cuba states that the report on the DPRK is a reflection of the discriminatory, politicised, selective, and biased practises that have been imposed on the work of the UNHRC. This undermines cooperation with the DPRK and it minimises the fact that this country accepted 132 recommendations put to it during the third cycle of the UPR. Nothing is said about that in the report. Instead of mutual dialogue, which is the course of action that should be pursued as a way of facilitating the implementation of the recommendations accepted, the UNHRC has maintained a stance of antagonism and hostility towards the DPRK, or many have. This has squandered countless resources of the UNHRC for years now, without delivering any fruit or any results. It is abundantly clear that the UNHRC must put an end to these biased and punitive practises, which are inoffensive and ineffective. The only effective way of promoting human rights in all countries is through dialogue and cooperation, which should be based in turn on impartiality and objectivity. Cuba will continue to denounce UCMs, including those imposed against the DPRK, because UCMs violate the human rights of the people of that country.



The **Lao PDR** takes note of the SR's report and underscores the importance of respecting the sovereignty and the right of self-determination of states to freely choose their development model in accordance with their national cultural context. This is the case for the DPRK. It commends the strong commitment and continued efforts of the Government to promote human rights and SDGs under the framework of the National Social System. The Lao PDR reiterates its call on the UNHRC and its mechanism to pursue a constructive approach and engagement with the state in the promotion and protection of human rights through genuine dialogue and cooperation and adherence to the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicisation. Country-specific initiatives are confrontational and counterproductive. Therefore, it is imperative to focus on assisting states in enhancing their capacity to promote and fulfil the enjoyment of all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights and right to development.

Ireland thanks the SR for her report which demonstrates that human rights violations in the DPRK continue to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society. Ireland urges the government of the DPRK to take immediate action to cease all human rights violations. Ireland calls on the DPRK to engage constructively with human rights mechanisms and to fully implement the provisions of the human rights treaties to which it is a party. Ireland also calls on the DPRK to allow the full return of international humanitarian and development staff to the country. Ireland remains concerned by the impact of the DPRK's self-imposed isolation on the human rights of its citizens and reiterates that all human rights must be upheld without discrimination, including on the basis of age, gender or someone. It is the responsibility of the government to address development through policy changes and peaceful international engagement. Ireland is also concerned that a culture of impunity remains entrenched in the state and that prospects for accountability are severely limited. Ireland fully supports the mandate of the SR and OHCHR in their efforts to explore all avenues towards accountability.

The **United Kingdom (UK)** thanks the SR for her report and continued efforts to maintain international focus on the ongoing systematic human rights violations in the DPRK. The UK is pleased that the DPRK engaged with the UPR in November and encouraged them to implement recommendations and make lasting changes for the people of DPRK. The UK shares the SR's serious concerns that the implementation of laws that further restrict the freedom of movement, work and expression in the DPRK. All governments have a responsibility to uphold their obligations in line with UN conventions and international law. The UK also urges Member States to respect the principle of non-refoulement and to not forcibly return those who have escaped the DPRK where they face severe threats to their safety and human rights. The UK supports the SR's recommendation that the DPRK incorporate all sustainable development goals particularly those aimed at supporting individuals from vulnerable groups.

Once again, **Belarus** confirms its rejection of country-specific mandates of the UNHRC ignoring the positions of the countries concerned. In November 2024, the DPRK went successfully through its UPR presenting comprehensive changes to improve legislation, living standards to protect persons with disabilities, the rights of children and other vulnerable groups. Significant resources are allocated by the authorities to develop health care, education, provide free housing, support for rural areas and so forth. Belarus confirms that the use of human rights instruments to exert political pressure on the sovereign state is not acceptable. However,



providing assistance can improve the implementation of UPR recommendations to ensure human rights progress in the country.

New Zealand thanks the SR for her ongoing work and the update on the human rights situation in the DPRK. New Zealand also endorses the SR's recommendations and urges all states to support the continuation of this important mandate. New Zealand remains alarmed at the dire state of human rights in the DPRK and we commend the courageous and ongoing efforts by North Korean victims and survivors and their families to seek accountability. New Zealand is deeply concerned about reports of forced labour, arbitrary detention and sexual violence. It joins the calls made by others for accountability in addressing these and other grave human rights violations. The DPRK must allow the return of the United Nations Development Programme and other international aid agencies to support the basic needs of North Koreans and the sustainable development of the country. New Zealand urges the DPRK to engage with the recommendations of its November 2024 UPR and to recognise the important role of the SR.

Venezuela reiterates its categorical rejection of the mandates imposed against countries within the UNHRC. On this particular mandate of the DPRK, in the 20 years since it was first established, millions of dollars have been frittered away on presenting biased, politicised and politically motivated reports that are then exploiting human rights to undermine the dignity of the DPRK, deliberately ignoring its active cooperation with the UNHRC and its mechanisms, for example, to paint a one-sided picture. This mandate, along with all UNHRC mandates, will be destined to failure because it represents the rejection of genuine dialogue and cooperation, which are the fundamental pillars of the work of the UNHRC and the founding principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Despite the ongoing siege, the DPRK has implemented a raft of public policies to guarantee human rights for its people, including the implementation of the Local Development Policy and building projects for general hospitals with advanced medical services in all provinces of the country, and the construction of free housing for its people. Venezuela reiterates the importance and the need to anchor the work of this body in the principles of universality, objectivity, transparency, equality, non-selectivity and non-politicisation.

France recalls that despite the repeated appeals of the international community, North Koreans continue to suffer massive violations of their rights and fundamental freedoms. The SR's report recalls the dramatic consequences for the population, the excessive militarisation of the regime and the unfair management of resources. The SR shed light on the serious failings of the regime in the last few years, providing food, health care, education, water and sanitation. A large number of people in North Korea continue to suffer equal food insecurity, chronic food insecurity, as well as failings in all forms of services. France calls on North Korea to put an end to all violations of human rights; to immediately abide by international law and international humanitarian law; and to allow the return of diplomatic UN humanitarian personnel, vital for the 11 million people who need their support. France urges finally North Korea to respect international law and the UN Charter, stopping all direct or indirect military cooperation with Russia in this war of aggression against Ukraine. The deployment of North Korean troops is an unacceptable escalation.

South Sudan takes note of the report of the SR on the situation of human rights in the DPRK. It commends the DPRK for its constructive engagement and cooperation with OHCHR and other human mechanisms, including its participation in the last UPR cycle in November 2024. South Sudan further appreciates and applauds the DPRK by adopting the People First principle, which



prioritises and attaches great importance to ensuring people's dignity, rights and interests in all spheres of social life, with the aim to create better living conditions and more civilised living environments for the people across the country without anyone left behind. South Sudan reiterates its steadfast position that selectivity, politicisation and confrontational approaches only undermine environments favourable for genuine dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights, and the noble objectives and principles enshrined in the UN Charter should be strictly adhered to.

Zimbabwe commends the continued engagement by the DPRK in the UNHRC and its mechanisms, and its commitment to promote and protect the human rights of its people under the framework of its people-centred social system. Zimbabwe reiterates its firm belief that the objectives of the UNHRC are better achieved when its work is conducted in an open and transparent manner, based on mutually respectful dialogue and engagement that is conceived to support the efforts of each country rather than to condemn and punish it. Country-specific mechanisms are not effective in delivering the objectives of the UNHRC, especially when such mechanisms are imposed without due regard for the position of the country concerned. Zimbabwe urges the UNHRC to build on the positive commitment and constructive dialogue and cooperation with the Government of the DPRK in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Such cooperation would be in the best interest towards the promotion and protection of human rights in the DPRK.

Burundi remains convinced that improving the human rights situation is dear to all nations and must, therefore, be built on constructive cooperation and inclusive dialogue between States. In this respect, this country-specific mandate, without the consent of the country concerned, violates the universal principles enshrined in the UN Charter and, sadly, leads to politicisation of the work of the UNHRC. Burundi commends the efforts deployed by the Government of the DPRK aimed at promoting and protecting the human rights of their people, as well as their cooperation and active engagement with the UNHRC and its mechanisms. Burundi congratulates the DPRK on its fourth UPR cycle and the presentation of its periodic report before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Burundi highly appreciates the deployment of a local development policy allowing everyone living in the country to enjoy a prosperous life.

Taking note of the SR's report, **Sudan** notes her observations and recommendations. The DPRK has gone through its UOR which contributed to putting in place a policy in the area of people with disabilities, healthcare and a five-year economic development plan. The human development indexes have improved as well as the subsistence minimum. The mortality rate amongst infants was driven down. As regards human rights across the nation, the state has the foremost responsibility in this area and this is why Sudan encourages the country considered to continue its efforts to protect and promote human rights. These include socio-economic and cultural rights but also civil and political rights.

Equatorial Guinea reiterates its unconditional support for the DPRK and congratulates the latter for the steps taken to promote and protect human rights on the basis of impartiality and objectivity, pursuing its goals via dialogue and cooperation. Equatorial Guinea is of the view that the DPRK has adopted a raft of practical and legislative measures to protect and promote the human rights of its people. The enjoyment of human rights of all people is guaranteed in a social system that is human-centred and they have achieved this despite the difficulties and lack of



resources which are higher in this country than they have been at any recent point in history. North Korea also had to grapple with the challenges and threats from the surrounding region. It is an objective fact that some countries have imposed specific mandates targeting this country without the consent of the country in question and they have used country-specific mandates to interfere in internal affairs of states or to undermine their political, economic, and social systems and their national and cultural traits. Equatorial Guinea supports the DPRK and encourages the latter to continue on its path of promoting respect for human rights for the well-being of their people. It calls upon the DPRK to do all in its power to implement the recommendations it supported.

Ethiopia believes that multilateral forums including the UNHRC play a vital role in fostering collaboration among states to fulfil their human rights obligations. It believes that the approach to human rights in any country should prioritise genuine dialogue and cooperation. To this end, Ethiopia reiterates the importance of engaging with countries including the DPRK in a constructive and non-politicised manner. Ethiopia also believes that human rights progress is most effective when it is driven by the country concerned based on the aspirations of its people and supported by national mechanisms. It emphasises that capacity building and technical assistance upon countries' requests and universal periodic review mechanisms should be prioritised in their efforts to address human rights concerns. Ethiopia commends the DPRK for its continued engagement in the UPR process and encourages the country to implement the accepted recommendations. In conclusion, Ethiopia emphasises that human rights concerns must be addressed in a manner that respects the principle of universality, non-selectivity, objectivity, and respect for national sovereignty.

Ukraine welcomes the report of the SR and shares the concern over the human rights situation in the DPRK. It is particularly alarmed by the extreme militarisation, growing repression of fundamental freedoms, and systematic violation of labour rights. The widespread use of forced labour not only sustains the regime military sector but also generates revenue at the cost of human dignity. Despite acknowledging food shortages, economic decline, and widespread poverty, the DPRK leadership prioritises military expansion over its people well-being. Between 2020 and 2022, an estimated 45.5 percent of the population suffered from undernourishment. Instead of addressing this humanitarian crisis, the DPRK delivers resources to support Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, providing artillery shells, ballistic missiles, and military personnel to assist in Russia's unlawful invasion. By supplying arms and munitions to Russia in violation of the UN Security Council resolution, the DPRK has become complicit in Russia's war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine. Such actions not only violate international law but also contribute to further destabilisation of global security, including on the Korean Peninsula. Ukraine urges the SR to closely examine the DPRK's actions that lead to human rights violations beyond its borders.

Views Expressed by intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union (EU)** remains appalled by the widespread and systematic human rights violations in the DPRK, some of which may constitute crimes against humanity. The EU welcomes the focus on the rights to adequate food, health, education and water and sanitation. The EU is strongly concerned about the dire consequences of extreme militarisation and misallocation of resources on these rights. The EU completely concurs with the report's conclusions that the



DPRK needs to initiate comprehensive institutional, legal and policy reforms to improve the situation of human rights and achieve the SDGs. The EU calls on the DPRK to address the findings of the Commission of Enquiry from 2014 concerning its serious human rights violations and abuses and to engage meaningfully with the new human rights system. It urges the DPRK to implement the recommendations stemming from the fourth UPR cycle. The EU further calls on the DPRK to end their near total isolation and re-engage with an international community, including to the full return of the diplomatic, UN and humanitarian personnel. The EU urges the DPRK to cease any direct or indirect involvement in conflicts and wars, including against Ukraine.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) and FIDH commend the SR's latest report and urge UN Member States to act decisively in response to the grave and systematic violations outlined. The DPRK continues to repress fundamental freedoms while its humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by border closures and the lack of international monitoring, leading to chronic malnutrition and inadequate healthcare, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly. They urge the DPRK to allow international humanitarian access to uphold economic, social, and cultural rights. They also highlight the plight of North Korean escapees, particularly those forcibly repatriated from China. Returnees face severe punishment, including torture and forced labour. They urge all states to protect North Korean escapees in compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. They are gravely concerned by the DPRK's violation of international law in deploying North Korean soldiers as part of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Reports of heavy casualties highlight the dire conditions and inhumane treatment of the forcibly conscripted North Korean soldiers. The DPRK must be held accountable for its role in fuelling global instability. Lastly, they emphasise the connections between human rights, peace, and security. Without tangible improvements in human rights, sustainable peace in the Korean Peninsula remains elusive. They urge the UNHRC to maintain North Korean human rights as a priority and take meaningful steps towards justice for victims of the Government's abuses.

The **International Career Support Association** addresses serious human rights violations committed by the DPRK that threaten regional security and violate individual rights and dignity. The DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile development has escalated tensions, particularly with Japan. Despite its people suffering in poverty, the DPRK has been spending fortune for weapons and launching ballistic missiles towards Japan, subjecting Japanese citizens to evacuation each time, violating our rights to security. Additionally, from 1977, the DPRK has forcibly abducted 17 Japanese citizens to make them spies, which the DPRK admitted, 12 of whom still remain missing. Some of the victims' families have passed away without seeing their loved ones. The Association hopes the DPRK prosecutes the criminals who ordered the abduction of Japanese innocent citizens. The DPRK has also spread baseless claims that Japan, Fukushima, allows treated water discharge, undermining the IAEA, and violating Japan's rights to manage its affairs. The Association recommends the DPRK (1) stop its nuclear weapons development and dismantle the nuclear arsenal; (2) cease missile launches towards Japan and comprise UN Security Council resolutions; and (3) expedite the return of all abducted Japanese citizens and cease baseless criticism against Japan.

People for Successful Korean Reunification explains that while DPRK's crimes against humanity go unpunished, the country's human rights situation has worsened to the point where



North Korean soldiers are being deployed illegally as cannon fodder on Russia's frontlines in Ukraine, posing a threat to global security. DPRK has sustained itself by exploiting the labour of its people through the terror of political prison camps and indoctrination under absolute leader worship. The DPRK's military system is essentially a form of slavery where soldiers are forcibly conscripted for 10 years, cut off from their families and subjected to arduous labour without any compensation. Soldiers captured on the battlefield are treated as traitors and are coerced into committing suicide. Therefore, North Korean troops at Russia's frontlines should be withdrawn immediately. The situation in DPRK must be urgently referred to the ICC to hold the regime accountable for crimes against humanity, including its system of slavery.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) thanks the SR for her report and remains deeply concerned by grave and widespread violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Any DPRK citizen and their families who expresses an opinion or belief outside the state ideology faces severe punishment, including imprisonment, torture and even execution in line with changes to the anti-reactionary thought law. CSW calls on the DPRK to uphold and respect the right to freedom of religion or belief and to release all prisoners currently detained in prison camps immediately and unconditionally. It also calls for the immediate unconditional release of three imprisoned South Korean missionaries. CSW remains concerned about the DPRK's continued restrictions on freedom of movement. Citizens who escaped to China risk forcible repatriation, which contravenes China's obligations under international refugee law. Repatriated individuals found to have had contact with Christians are known to face particularly harsh punishment. CSW calls on China to adhere to international obligations with regard to refugees, ensuring that those who flee the DPRK are protected. CSW is also concerned about recent reports of widespread starvation and food insecurity, particularly against the backdrop of excessive domestic military spending and DPRK's involvement in Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. CSW calls on the DPRK to redirect the resources towards addressing chronic food insecurity. CSW urges UN member states to consistently raise the human rights situation in the DPRK separately from the question of nuclear non-proliferation until all human rights in the DPRK are fully upheld and protected.

Human Rights Watch thanks the SR for her comprehensive report outlining the DPRK's ongoing rights violations and their linkages to development, peace and security. For years, the DPRK's Government has sought to maintain effectively a black hole of information for the population, restricting independent reporting while escalating repression. As the report highlights, the DPRK has further restricted movement, work and expression. Civil society groups outside the country play a crucial role in exposing these violations, ensuring that concerned governments and international actors can respond. Yet groups working on North Korean human rights are now struggling due to recent funding cuts. Human Rights Watch recently reported on increased repression since COVID-19 based on interviews we did with people who had escaped from the DPRK. Abuses included heightened surveillance and fear, intensified crackdowns on media access and worsening economic conditions due to government restrictions. The SR also reported that in November 2024, mandate holders raised concerns over the reported public trial of 11 forcibly returned women. Two were reportedly executed the same day and the rest sentenced to life imprisonment. Human Rights Watch therefore urges states to increase support for organisations monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, enhance efforts to hold rights abusers accountable, support the UNHRC resolution on the DPRK and renew the mandate of the



SR and investigate the nexus between security, development and human rights, particularly regarding forced labour and weapons development.

The **World Jewish Congress** welcomes the SR's report and commends her unwavering dedication. The World Jewish Congress remains alarmed by the persistent human rights violations in North Korea, notably the continued operation and recent expansion of political prison camps. The 2014 Commission of Enquiry meticulously documented the unspeakable atrocities committed within these camps, including deliberate starvation, forced labour, executions, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, acts that constitute crimes against humanity. These violations persist unabated as evidenced by recent reports and testimonies. In 2024, North Korea admitted to conducting public executions, a stark acknowledgement of its ongoing brutal practises. Beyond the camps, the broader human rights landscape remains dire. Torture and ill-treatment are pervasive and systematic. Freedom of expression is stifled. Fundamental freedoms, including those of movement, religion and expression, are severely restricted or non-existent. Corruption is rampant at all levels of the state apparatus, exacerbated by a lack of due process, judicial independence, government transparency and accountability. As noted by a defector, the whole country is a prison. The World Jewish Congress calls upon the Government of North Korea to abolish all political prison camps immediately and implement all the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The people of North Korea deserve to live with dignity, freedom and hope.

Ingénieurs du Monde takes the floor through Ms. Lisa Yasko, a member of the Parliament of Ukraine. She asks the UNHRC to strongly condemn human rights violations that North Koreans are committing in cooperation with Russia's aggression against Ukraine. When in 2024, North Korea openly joined Russian forces to commit crimes against humanity on Ukrainian land and in the war against Ukraine, Ukrainians were sure that the world's reactions would be very strong. But in fact, this was not the case. And because there is no proper reaction, North Korea is continuing helping Russia immensely. Most ammunition Russia is actually receiving comes from North Korea. No one is giving so many ballistic missiles to Russia as North Korea. For North Koreans, this cooperation with Russia is actually very progressive. They like the idea that they are gaining military experience in committing more and more war crimes. They are gaining technologies that will allow them to have more wars to start more wars in the future. Ms. Lisa Yasko appeals to everyone to raise one's voice and condemn North Korea.

The **Centre for Global Non-Killing** stresses the need of peace by the people. We can envision, design, create and implement the world civilisations in which peace prevails. This is the purpose of the United Nations and of the pact for the future. We can ask the most reasonable persons if they want peace. They will rarely say no. Between these two political levels, the person and the United Nations, are nation-states the cause of war? Clearly not. Most countries respect and care for peaceful relations among themselves and are capable of seeing the good in the human person, including in other countries. Peace often comes from the people. The Centre has two questions or queries for the future. First, is the SR aware of programmes in the DPRK besides criminal law meant to reduce violence? Secondly, is the SR aware of procedures like mediation available to the people there to solve the conflict peacefully? Every life counts. May peace prevail.



Amnesty International welcomes the SR's report which outlines the DPRK's severe restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and access to information. The criminalisation of consuming foreign media, harsh penalties for South Korean style speech and pervasive surveillance perpetuate a climate of fear and repression. These policies silence, dissent, and isolate people in the DPRK from the outside world as well as from one another. As the SR's report highlights, the restrictive environment in the DPRK extends beyond civil and political rights. Access to independent information is a fundamental right that is also essential for food security, public health, scientific progress, and economic survival. The DPRK's near absolute control over information denies its people the ability to make informed choices, aggravating the humanitarian crisis in the country. Without access to independent information, people are left with incomplete or false narratives which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and harm. Amnesty emphasises the crucial role of the UN Human Rights Office in Seoul in monitoring and documenting serious human rights violations including potential crimes and international law in the DPRK and amplifying the voices of victims and survivors. Strengthening and adequately resourcing this work is essential for advancing justice, truth, and reparation. Finally, Amnesty calls on the DPRK to take steps towards reform and urges the UNHRC to remain resolute in focussing its attention on human rights in the country.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

31 State Delegations

1 Inter-Governmental Organization

9 Non-Governmental Organizations