



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

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OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Volker TÜRK, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Updating the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, the High Commissioner introduces the [report](#) prepared by his Office, which details a lost decade for the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Ten years since the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry (COI) issued its findings, the human rights situation in the country has worsened.

People are silenced, watched, exploited, and every aspect of their lives is controlled. Public executions are reportedly taking place for more crimes than before, particularly for economic crimes, drug trafficking, distributing foreign media, and crimes perceived to be against the state. Many of these crimes do not meet the threshold requirement for the death penalty under international law.



Forced labour in many forms remains deeply entrenched in the country. The authorities forcibly mobilize people for work in the military, in detention facilities and prisons. People are also forced to work without pay in state-assigned jobs and in so-called shock brigades, often in hazardous conditions. OHCHR has reports of people dying during these operations which the government publicly glorifies as a sacrifice to the leader. Workers who are sent abroad to generate income for the state are subjected to **severe exploitation**. The **institutionalized labor of school children**, particularly in the agricultural sector, is very concerning.

OHCHR is monitoring including satellite imagery confirms that at least **four political prison camps** are operating where people face severe human rights violations, including enforced disappearances and forced labour. The authorities have criminalized access to unauthorized foreign information, together with linguistic expressions that do not conform with prescribed socialist ideology and culture. These actions carry severe punishments, including the death penalty.

The High Commissioner deeply regrets that there has been no progress regarding the fate of **foreign nationals forcibly disappeared** by the DPRK, including those from the Republic of Korea and Japan. Many family members are aging or have passed away without knowing the whereabouts of their loved ones. Thousands of Korean families are still forcibly separated with no possibility to meet. The DPRK has not allowed the allowed family reunions since 2018. People who are forcibly repatriated to the DPRK are subjected to serious human rights violations. Such reforms are grave breaches of international law and must stop.

The report notes some **limited improvements** in the country over the past ten years. For example, the government has reportedly reformed its laws to better ensure fair trials and protect people in detention and has made nominal improvements in detention conditions, including a slight decrease in violence by guards. Nevertheless, OHCHR continues to receive reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention.

Over 40% of the population of the DPRK is **undernourished**. The COVID-19 pandemic was particularly harsh for the people in DPRK. Between 2021 and 2023, a severe lack of food was reported, including in Pyongyang, and people starved to death. Malnutrition is passed on from parents to children, generation after generation, condemning families to a cycle of suffering and long-term consequences. Yet, the authorities continue curtailing people's ability to make a living. Informal markets, which were a means of subsistence for many, especially married women, are increasingly restricted for promoting so-called antisocial behaviour.

Education, health, and social services are officially available free of charge. However, in practice, people are required to make unaffordable financial and in-kind contributions to secure these services, essentially rendering them inaccessible for many. **Corruption** has infiltrated governance structures, leaving the poor most exposed to further violations. Discrimination, particularly based on **state-assigned social class** and birth, continues to pervade society. Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in society, in particular in state institutions and education. **Domestic violence** is widespread and under-reported due to stigma and inadequate legal protection by the government. While unauthorized travel outside the country has always been a



crime, today the authorities have imposed further restrictions by strengthening the border, increasing surveillance, and imposing severe punishments for those trying to leave.

OHCHR is not aware of any **accountability measures** taken by the DPRK for human rights violations or international crimes perpetrated during the past decade. Outside of the DPRK, important steps towards accountability have taken place. OHCHR continues to monitor and document violations and preserve information and evidence in its mandated central repository. **Victims' groups** and civil society have raised concerns with UN human rights mechanisms. They have engaged the International Criminal Court. They have launched civil cases in the Republic of Korea and Japan, and they have provided support to victims.

But the situation remains one of the **most chronic and long-standing human rights crises in the world**. A change is urgently needed to avoid another decade of suffering. International human rights law provides the roadmap for improving the human rights situation. In this regard, the High Commissioner welcomes the DPRK's increased engagement with the human rights system, including with OHCHR, the Universal Periodic Review process, and UN human rights treaty bodies. This is a step in the right direction, but it is meaningless unless it translates into real change in people's lives.

The government needs to undertake **deep institutional reform**. Some changes could build momentum and show that the government is serious about improving the situation. These include abolishing the death penalty, ending torture, closing political prison camps, restarting family connections, and addressing cases of enforced disappearance. The High Commissioner urges the government to continue to draw on OHCHR's expertise. The authorities must also investigate and prosecute individuals for international crimes.

Stressing that the **international community** has a crucial role to play, the High Commissioner urges member states to refer the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court, to pursue accountability through universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction, and to support victims in their territory. They also need to examine the unintended consequences of broad sanctions of people's human rights.

People in the DPRK are **sealed off from the rest of the world** more than ever before. This long-standing isolation fuels human rights violations and weakens regional and international peace and security. The path out of repression and misery lies in respecting human rights engagement and cooperation. The international community must work together to support the human rights of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

PANELLISTS

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

In her capacity as country-specific Special Rapporteur, Ms. Elizabeth SALMÓN welcomes the High Commissioner's comprehensive report and commends the courage of the hundreds of escapees and stakeholders who contributed to the OHCHR's work. Their voices are the backbone of every accountability effort. The SR shares with grave concern the report's conclusions. Despite isolated steps, the human rights situation in the DPRK, in many instances, **has worsened since**



2014. There is increased repression, wider surveillance, economic instability, absolute isolation, and extreme militarization. The SR complements these findings with three issues addressed throughout her mandate, while encouraging states to think collectively about how to move forward to improve the living conditions of the people on the ground.

First, human rights violations are **not confined inside of the country**. The DPRK has continued violating human rights beyond its borders. This includes international abductions and enforced disappearance of foreign nationals, forced labour of overseas workers, sophisticated cyberthreat activities, the repression of escapees, and the recent deployment of military personnel to armed conflicts abroad. While overseas workers are deployed to earn foreign currencies in harsh labour conditions, people inside the DPRK must continue to meet their payment quotas to be paid to the State. More militarization means more exploitation of labour and fewer resources allocated to protect fundamental freedoms and human rights. This places a high ‘military burden’ on the people, and disproportionately affects women and the most vulnerable.

Second, the aggravated impact that the DPRK’s **human rights violations have on women** in the DPRK. Women play a crucial role in the economic sphere, earning a living and securing food for their families. Likewise, women are often at the forefront of searching for family members who have been forcibly disappeared. Recently, the SR learned that it was mothers who anxiously sought information whether their sons in military services had been sent to fight in the **Russia-Ukraine armed conflict** when the Government had not informed the people of its participation in the war. Women comprise the vast majority of escapees. They serve as primary connection to those suffering inside the country. Their role is, hence, key for identifying the people’s needs and paving the way towards sustainable peace.

Third, **accountability is essential** to achieve human rights. Victims, civil society, States, the United Nations, and the international community have pursued varied forms of accountability. Many victims shared their stories with the United Nations, governments, and civil society organizations to document human rights violations. Some brought civil litigation to domestic courts. Some victims submitted communications to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Others have pursued memorialization efforts.

Human rights violations continue. In some areas, the conditions have seriously eroded. However, one must continue to acknowledge the countless efforts made to **pursue diverse forms of justice**. The international community must not disregard that progress has been made during the past 10 years. The SR calls upon the international community to continue and strengthen engagement and accountability. The existing international human rights mechanisms offer multiple tools to support such processes. Each step taken will bring us closer to the ultimate goal of guaranteeing justice and improving the human rights of the North Korean people.

Drawing to a close on a note of hope for future generations, the SR has heard **young escapees**. Their priorities are varied, but all share the same dream - a better future. In the coming ten years, the SR strongly believes that the international community and the Government of the DPRK should give them the possibility for change - a space to openly talk about what they want and to make their own way. It is upon us to give young people the opportunity to turn that possibility into a reality.



Mr. Michael KIRBY, Chair, Former UNHRC-mandated Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in the DPRK

Mr. Michael KIRBY had the honour to serve, jointly with Mr. Marzuki DARUSMAN and Ms. Sonja BISERKO on the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on human rights violations in the DPRK. The COI was established in 2013 and delivered its final report to the UNHRC in March 2014. The report was strongly endorsed by the Council, the UNGA and was referred for the agenda of the UNSC, where it remains to this day. Nothing in his long experience as a judge in Australia could have prepared him for what the COI discovered on its inquiry. The COI concluded that ‘systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been, and are being, committed in the DPRK, its institutions and officials. [Many] constitute crimes against humanity. ... The gravity, scale and nature of the violations reveal a state that **does not have any parallel in the contemporary world.**’

The High Commissioner has now delivered a 10-year assessment to the follow-up to the report. Whereas the **COI report amounted to 400 pages**, the High Commissioner’s follow-up is confined to 15 pages. It is succinct and most timely. Welcoming the High Commissioner’s contribution to achieving effective accountability for human rights abuses in North Korea, Mr. Michael KIRBY reflects on what, if anything, has changed in the last 10 years. During the COI’s investigations, the COI called on the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Geneva. His wise words to the COI were encouraging - ‘We understand where the comrades in North Korea are coming from. But if they improve things, acknowledge their improvement and offer congratulations.’ The COI adopted that approach, wholeheartedly. Regrettably, there were few opportunities for honest felicitations. Applying the same approach 10 years later, there have been a **few improvements** that deserve acknowledgment, namely:

- The DPRK began participating more thoroughly in Universal Periodic Review before this Council in the 2019 and 2024 cycles. This was good; but it still left much to be desired;
- The DPRK engaged with the United Nations on the treatment of persons with disabilities. It even invited the UN Special Rapporteur for that purpose. But it declined visits for virtually all other human rights purposes;
- There have been reports of some improvement in the treatment of detainees in the many places of incarceration throughout the country, but the DPRK does not allow the UN or others to inspect the claims of improvement;
- There have been reports of new and stronger laws for human rights accountability. But inspection to check these claims has been denied;
- New cheaper housing has spread, but the role of forced labour in this move is reportedly rife.
- The political system is still relentlessly totalitarian. No country on earth subjects its population to such ‘unremitting propaganda’; and
- Families long divided are cruelly kept apart. The DPRK could easily afford unthreatening linkages on digital platforms. Divided prisoners of war and foreign abductees will soon run out of time for reunion with their loved ones. If it is ever to happen, family reunion must come now. At once.



A recommendation of the COI report that was implemented was for the creation of a field office of the OHCHR in Seoul. It has continued as a key element of the COI report - with personal interviews involving more than 1000 escapees; 52 reports on their predicament. These records lie in wait for the accountability for grave human rights abuses that treaties promise. And that one day will come. Twenty years before his service on the COI, Mr. Michael KIRBY served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on a similar inquiry on Cambodia. He saw a number of human rights improvement march in step with economic openness and growth. The DPRK remains most isolated. Behind their borders, essential progress will one day happen. There have been tiny improvements; but too few; too slow; too late.

The **dream of universal human rights** in the Charter; the Universal Declaration; and the core human rights treaties. It is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of Eleanor Roosevelt and Dr Herbert Vere Evatt Australia and other experts such as René Cassin. The UNHRC must find a way to secure more rapid improvement in the human rights situation in North Korea. Nothing less will fulfill the promise of the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ms. Hyo Sim MAENG, Former National of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Ms. Hyo Sim MAENG was born in Hyesan, North Korea. In 2018, at the age of seventeen, she escaped with her parents. They left behind not only their home, but also a life filled with fear, injustice, and silence. One moment changed everything for them. Her parents were running a small shop. When her mother asked a man to pay her debt, he attacked my parents with an iron stick. My father reported it to the police, but the case disappeared after a bribe was paid. The courts also ignored them. At that moment, the family realized that in North Korea, there is no justice, no protection, no hope. That was when they decided to risk their lives to find freedom.

She grew up as a loyal student. She was even a youth leader who monitored other students' clothes and hair. She truly believed North Korea was the best country in the world. But she did not know what freedom meant. She did not know what human rights were. They were told to 'keep their feet on the soil and their eyes on the world'. But in reality, **all windows to the world were sealed**, shut. The hardest part of her story is about her mother. She is disabled because of polio. In North Korea, disability is not seen with compassion but with contempt. She was discriminated because she was disabled. She could not go to university, and she was forced to pay fines for many years because she could not work. Sometimes, as a teenager, she went to construction work in her place. Still, my mother never gave up. She sewed clothes, ran a small shop, and raised Hyo with more love and courage than anyone else she knows. She is Hyo's hero.

Today, in South Korea, Hyo has learned a simple but powerful truth - Every human being has dignity. No one should be beaten for asking for justice. No child should be forced to labour instead of learning. No mother should hide her disability in shame. No government has the right to steal the freedom and voices of its people. Right now, **millions in North Korea still live in darkness**. They cannot speak, they cannot choose, and they cannot dream. But Hyo believes change is possible. 'Your attention, your voices, and your actions can bring light to that darkness'. Ms. Hyo Sim MAENG speaks before the UNHRC not only for herself, but for those who cannot stand before the Council. She asks not to forget them. Together, the Council shall be **be the voice of the voiceless**, and shall keep hope alive for the people of North Korea.



REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Hyo Sim MAENG thanks the participants for listening to her story, which can be felt as heavy and painful, while recalling that she stands before the Council not only to speak of suffering. She believes in hope. For Hyo, hope is not just a feeling. Hope is action. She strongly believes that ‘when you listen, when you speak up, when you stand with the oppressed, that is how hope becomes real.’ The people of the DPRK may never hear the Council’s voice directly, but when the world does not turn away, the people of the DPRK still receive the message, every resolution, every campaign, every word of the solidarity measures. Hyo is the only one young woman who escaped, but all together the international community has the power to make freedom possible for millions. Hyo calls on the Council to keep speaking and keep defending human rights and keep believing in change. Hyo believes that ‘the day North Korea finds freedom will not only be the joy of Hyo’s family, but the miracle created by all of us together.’

Furthermore, Hyo confesses she felt sad because certain states said the report was wrong and others asked for fairness. Listening to this made her think deeply about how humans face the truth. It is natural for humans not to believe something they have not seen with their own eyes. That is not wrong. The real problem happens when humans **hear the truth, know the facts and still choose to ignore them**. At the moment, people need to look inside their own hearts and think carefully. Addressing to those who do not believe in the report, Hyo warns that ‘today, it may seem someone else’s problem, but tomorrow it could be your own. If we close our eyes to the truth, it will come back to us as more suffering’. Hyo asks to those states not to ignore the truth, but listen to the voice of people who are suffering. This is not only a matter of conscience, but also a duty towards future generations.

Ms. Elisabeth SALMÓN, Special Rapporteur on the DPRK, stresses firstly that she fully agrees with all those who have called for dialogue with the DPRK, as it is indeed the responsibility of the state to respect, protect and guarantee the human rights of all persons under its jurisdiction. In this regard, the SR calls on the DPRK to fully comply with these obligations and to open up to international cooperation in order to alleviate, on the one hand, the enormous humanitarian needs in terms of health, food, drinking water and education, among others, but also to satisfy the demands for justice of its population and thus guarantee an immediate improvement in access to rights. In this regard, it is imperative to have independent monitoring mechanisms on the ground and to allow access to the United Nations team in the country and to the entire diplomatic and humanitarian community. Secondly, the SR emphasises that the need for dialogue and the search for agreements cannot be pursued at any cost. Any effort to reach agreements with the DPRK should be welcomed, and every opportunity should be taken to do so, for example at the next meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum to be held in the Republic of Korea. However, this dialogue must be conducted with human rights at the centre of the discussions. Failure to do so not only fails to lead to positive results but also disregards fundamental legal and ethical values. As Ms. Hyo Sim MAENG explained, one must not forget that the people of the DPRK are human beings and that we owe it to them and their desire for a better future for themselves and their country. This is the only possible approach if we seek a truly just and sustainable peace.



Ms. Nada AL-NASHIF, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, extends its gratitude to all participants, notably to the panellists for their very powerful testimonies and messages. While stressing that the human rights situation in the country is extremely concerning, she emphasizes that **change is possible**. OHCHR has documented nominal improvements in the treatment of people in detention facilities, new laws that if implemented could strengthen fair trial guarantees. The government has also been engaging with the international human rights system and with my office on human rights training. All of these efforts are steps in the right direction and this is where the focus should shift.

Turning to the **impact of sanctions** on human rights in the DPRK, the High Commissioner has explicitly expressed concern over sanctions that negatively impact the enjoyment of human rights, particularly the rights to food and health. Member states implementing sanctions continue to have human rights obligations under international law, particularly in relation of the provisions under the ICESCR. The High Commissioner has also urged the DPRK to provide access to UN agencies in order to provide **adequate and credible data** and other evidence to enable an accurate analysis of the human rights and humanitarian impact of sanctions.

One of the key messages of the report is the **extreme isolation of the country** and the need to open up and engage to improve the human rights situation. One crucial step would be to allow the United Nations and other international organizations to resume their operations in the DPRK, giving them access to reliable data and moving ahead with the development of a new UN Strategic Partnership Framework for Cooperation and Cooperation. Member states with a presence in the DPRK and other influential states can encourage the government to engage with the international community on human rights and people-to-people contact could also foster dialogue and cooperation.

The report lists a number of other steps to bring the people of DPRK into contact with the outside world including access to information and the **resumption of contacts with family members abroad**. More specifically, the High Commissioner has urged the DPRK to expand its engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms and with OHCHR. Indeed, OHCHR prioritizes engagement with the DPRK, and it is taking every opportunity to engage with state officials, including in the context of the recent UPR and the periodic review before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On **concrete actions** to be pursued to improve the human rights for people in the DPRK, the High Commissioner has specified immediate steps in this regard to build momentum and foster credibility. For the international community, a dual approach of engagement while pursuing accountability efforts offers the most promising way forward. On **engagement**, states with influence and diplomatic presence in the DPRK have a special role to play. States can support both **judicial and non-judicial accountability** in many ways including national judicial processes based on universal jurisdiction, supporting a referral of the situation to the ICC and realizing the rights of victims resident on their territories.

The international community needs to make improvement of human rights central to its efforts to secure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, including on the issue of sanctions. States must scrupulously observe the **principle of non-refoulement** and not forcibly repatriate DPRK



citizens. They have suffered years of repression and the international community has an obligation to protect them. Finally, states can support OHCHR's work in monitoring and reporting on the situation, collecting information and evidence for accountability purposes and providing technical assistance to DPRK, no other international actor plays this role. The Deputy High Commissioner urges the international community to work harder to ensure that in ten years from now, the Council will not be talking of yet another lost decade for the people of the DPRK.

VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE DPRK AS CONCERNED COUNTRY

The delegation of the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** is not present.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Regional and Cross-Regional Groups

The **European Union** remains appalled by the widespread and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, many of which may constitute crimes against humanity. The report clearly shows that the population of the DPRK continues to suffer brutal repression, fear and deprivation in violation of the country's international human rights obligations. The EU calls on the DPRK here to address the findings of the Commission of Inquiry from 2014 and the recommendations in this new report and to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, OHCHR and other human rights mechanisms and grant them access to the country. Hoping that the DPRK might end its near total isolation, resume full diplomatic engagement and allow the return of UN agencies and humanitarian actors, the EU remains committed to ensuring that the situation in the DPRK does not become a forgotten crisis and to working with partners to ensure accountability. Strongly condemning the DPRK support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU urges North Korea to immediately cease any direct or indirect assistance. Lastly, the EU would like to know what concrete actions should the international community prioritize to improve the situation of human rights in the country.

Estonia on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries states that the DPRK remains one of the most isolated countries in the world with devastating consequences for its people. The Nordic-Baltic countries are deeply concerned at the ongoing serious systematic widespread and grave human rights violations as well as crime against humanity committed in the country. OHCHR's monitoring confirms continuous operation of political prison camps, enforced disappearance, forced labor, sexual and gender based violence, summary executions and starvation. The Nordic-Baltic countries call on the DPRK to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms and fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. As highlighted by the High Commissioner, the DPRK continues to increase its military spending with heavy investment in new weapons and related technologies as well as providing soldiers to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Nordic-Baltic countries call on the DPRK to immediately stop its involvement in the warfare in Ukraine and instead to respect and invest in the human rights of its own population. In closing, they ask to the Deputy High Commissioner what can the international community do to alleviate the suffering of the people of DPRK.

The **Netherlands on behalf of the Benelux countries** thanks the High Commissioner for his report which paints a deeply alarming picture of the situation in the DPRK and over the past



decade the human rights situation in the DPRK has further deteriorated. Most of the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry remain unimplemented after ten years. Dialogue is not possible. The past seven years have been marked a significant increase in the adoption of laws and policies that provide the authorities with the legal framework for further repression. In addition, surveillance technology has increased control over the population and moreover the fate of the hundreds of thousands of disappeared persons including abducted foreign nationals remains unknown. Women are facing widespread sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, while access to justice is limited. Forced labour has increased over the last decade. It is of great concern that the use of the death penalty has expanded, including for vaguely defined anti-state crimes. Expressing deep concern over human rights developments in the DPRK, The Benelux countries urge the DPRK to implement the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry. The people of the DPRK deserve dignity. They deserve justice. Finally, the Benelux countries ask what steps should be taken to prevent the next decade from becoming another decade of suffering for the people of North Korea.

Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter expresses its deep concern over the continuing and growing proliferation of parallel reporting mechanisms and procedures to assess the human rights situation in certain states, which are based on illegal resolutions adopted without the proper consent of the countries concerned and applied against their will. The Group attaches the utmost importance to the promotion and protection of all human rights and firmly believes that the best way to promote and protect them is through dialogue and cooperation. Therefore, the Group strongly rejects politically motivated practices that echo propaganda fabricated by hostile forces against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in that country. Such actions are contrary to the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization, and non-confrontation. The Group recalls that human rights should never be used as a weapon or exploited to promote political agendas or interfere in the internal affairs of states. Finally, the Group commends the government of the DPRK for its efforts to ensure the well-being and full enjoyment of human rights by its people.

State Delegations

Australia remains deeply concerned by the continued widespread human rights violations in the DPRK including enforced disappearances, forced labor, restrictions on freedom of expression, impunity for sexual and gender based violence and the increased use of the death penalty. The High Commissioner's comprehensive report draws a clear link between heightened government control and the increased human suffering of DPRK citizens. Australia continues to be alarmed by reports of forced repatriations to the DPRK where attorneys, particularly women and girls, face a high risk of torture, arbitrary detention and other grave human rights violations. Civil society and victim survivor voices are vital to expose human rights violations. Australia urges the DPRK to allow civil society to return to ensure victim survivors are heard, and encourages states to integrate human rights concerns into all engagements with the DPRK. Australia commends efforts to explore both judicial and non-judicial accountability pathways including memorialization and education. Given the report's findings on the DPRK's intensified self-isolation and control, Australia asks which are the implications for access to independent information and the ability for individuals to exercise their human rights.



Belarus regrets to note the continued use of human rights instruments against the DPRK to exert political pressure on the country's authorities. It is essential to respect the sovereignty of the DPRK, the national characteristics chosen by the people of the country, and the path of development, as well as to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of states under the pretext of protecting human rights. The DPRK authorities are making significant efforts to protect human rights and improve the well-being of the country's citizens against the backdrop of challenges, including those caused by illegal UCMs. Belarus notes the focus on concrete and significant results in the government's work to ensure social and economic progress and social support for the population. In order to restore constructive cooperation, it is necessary to stop imposing country-specific resolutions and mechanisms. Belarus is convinced that cooperation on human rights should be based on dialogue and a non-selective, non-politicized approach. This is the key to effective and productive cooperation and real progress in the protection of human rights.

Burundi remains convinced that the best solution to the human rights situation is to appeal to all nations and must therefore be based on constructive cooperation and inclusive dialogue between states. In this regard, the specific mandate on the consent of the state concerned violates the universal principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Burundi commends the efforts made by the DPRK government to promote and protect the human rights of its people throughout its territory, as well as its cooperation and continued engagement with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. Burundi also appreciates the adoption and implementation of the local development policy aimed at enabling all the country's inhabitants to enjoy a prosperous life to the full. Burundi encourages the DPRK in its initiatives to consolidate the fundamental rights and well-being of its people and reaffirms the primacy of the responsibility of States to promote and protect human rights.

Cambodia takes note of the High Commissioner's report and encourages the DPRK to continue advancing its cooperation and engagement with relevant stakeholders, particularly with the United Nations body and mechanisms in the spirit of mutual respect, constructive dialogue and equality in order to promote human rights. Cambodia maintains that all country mandates should be established on the foundation of consent and cooperation with the country under review and that their communication with country concern is significant in ensuring objective assessment based on the entire truth on the ground. Cambodia also believes that the credibility and impact of human rights mechanisms depend on a balanced approach grounded in universality, objectivity and impartiality while fully respecting the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and noninterference as outlined in the United Nations Charter.

China commends the DPRK's efforts to advance national construction and socio-economic development, as well as its proactive measures to progressively enhance the well-being of its people. China notes that the DPRK has ratified multiple human rights conventions, committed to advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and made significant progress in protecting the rights of specific groups such as women and persons with disabilities. Unilateral coercive measures remain one of the greatest obstacles to the DPRK's pursuit of its national development goals. It is regrettable that the relevant report by OHCHR does not explicitly mention the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the humanitarian situation within the DPRK. China urges the concerned countries to immediately lift their unilateral coercive measures against the DPRK and cease violating the human rights of its people. China reiterates its firm opposition to



establishing country-specific mechanisms without the consent of the concerned country, to smearing and defaming countries based on false information, and to interfering in other countries' internal affairs under the pretext of human rights. China urges the observance of fundamental principles such as objectivity, fairness, non-selectivity, and non-politicization, calls for an end to groundless accusations against other countries, and urges a swift return to the correct path of dialogue and cooperation.

Cuba states that the High Commissioner's report on the DPRK reflects the discriminatory and selective practices that have unfortunately been imposed on countries in the global South in the name of human rights. The resolution mandating this interactive dialogue maintains hostility and antagonism towards the DPRK. This confrontational approach has not yielded and will not yield any results, despite its high financial costs. Cuba rejects the obsolete, ineffective and interventionist punitive and biased practices against the people and government of the DPRK. Cuba will continue to oppose any mechanism that undermines the UN Charter, including respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. The only effective way to promote human rights will be through respectful dialogue and constructive cooperation based on the principles of impartiality and objectivity, without selectivity, double standards or manipulation. Cuba rejects the unilateral coercive measures imposed against the DPRK because they violate the human rights of its people.

Czechia thanks the High Commissioner for his report and the panelists for their valuable insights, and remains strongly concerned by ongoing extreme repression of the people of the DPRK by the states ruling authorities. Systemic human rights violations including widespread killings, torture, ill treatment and forced labor must come to an end. Urging the DPRK authorities to immediately release these or arbitrarily detained individuals, Czechia further calls on them to ensure access to adequate food and health care for its starving population instead of investing into weapons of mass destruction. The gravity of these violations must not be forgotten and those responsible must be held accountable. Czechia calls on the DPRK to cooperate with the UN and its human rights mechanisms to allow access to the country and its people and implement the recommendations received. Finally, it strongly urges the DPRK to immediately cease its involvement in the Russia's heinous war of aggression against Ukraine, and asks the panellists what could the Council do to empower the DPRK's people and support them in their aspirations for freedom and dignity.

Equatorial Guinea recognises the efforts made by the government of the DPRK to promote and respect human rights within its national territory by adopting a series of legislative and practical measures to promote and protect the human rights of its people and the enjoyment of those rights by all individuals in a social system that is centred on and guaranteed by the state, despite difficulties and adversities. The Human Rights Council must avoid bias against certain nations, the application of politicisation, selectivity and double standards in matters of rights, and defend the principles of objectivity and impartiality.

Eritrea reaffirms that the Council's mandate is best achieved through dialogue and cooperation guided by principles of non-selectivity and objectivity rather than through confrontational or selective approaches. Eritrea acknowledges the steps taken by the government of the DPRK including legislative and practical measures to promote and protect the human rights of its



people. Despite many difficulties and hardships efforts continue within a people-centered system aimed at ensuring rights and welfare for all. Reports prepared under this mandate often rely on unverified information and are produced without recognition from the government concerned. Without genuine engagement between the Council and the country concerned there is a serious risk of misrepresenting the reality on the ground. Selective and politically motivated approaches further undermine the possibility of constructive dialogue. Eritrea urges the Council to prioritize engagement with the DPRK over isolation by bringing this mandate to an end and fostering an environment conducive to progress through cooperation and mutual understanding.

Ethiopia remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and emphasizes that addressing human rights concerns must be done in a manner that respects the principle of non-selectivity, objectivity and respect for national sovereignty. Ethiopia believes that the approach to human rights in any country should prioritize genuine dialogue and cooperation. To this end, Ethiopia reiterates the importance of engaging with the DPRK in a constructive and non-political manner, ensuring that any dialogue or recommendations reflect the realities of the country's socioeconomic and political context. Ethiopia believes that human rights progress is most effective when it is driven by the country concerned based on the aspiration of its people and supported by national mechanisms. Ethiopia emphasizes that capacity-building, technical assistance upon country's request and the Universal Periodic Review process should be prioritized in efforts to address human rights concerns. Those efforts must be grounded in the principles of mutual respect, sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Ethiopia commends the DPRK for its continued engagement with the Universal Periodic Review process and encourages the country to implement the accepted recommendations. In addition, Ethiopia supports and encourages the DPRK to pursue its engagement with OHCHR.

Iran acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the DPRK in the promotion and protection of human rights and encourages the continuation of these efforts with renewed commitment and perseverance. Iran firmly believes that intersectional challenges including underdevelopment, unilateral coercive measures, external pressure and persistent security to create a self-perpetuating cycle of miseries that severely undermines national capacity-building and impairs genuine progress in the field of human rights. In the view of profoundly the impact of UCMs on the DPRK's ability to implement its human rights-related initiative, Iran calls upon OHCHR to explore constructive venue that would empower the DPRK in mitigating the effects of such measure with a thorough examination of the preventive and obstructive consequences of UCMs on the realization of fundamental human rights. To conclude, Iran reiterates its position that any sincere commitment to the promotion of human rights must be grounded in dialogue, mutual respects and international cooperation. In this regard, Iran underscores the counterproductive nature of selective politically motivated and nonconsensual monitoring mechanisms which compromise the integrity of human rights frameworks by prioritizing political agenda over impartial engagement.

Ireland is gravely concerned by the widespread and systematic nature of human rights violations in the DPRK which continue disproportionately to affect the most vulnerable and marginalized people in the country and take place in a pervasive culture of impunity. Condemning the ongoing curtailment of fundamental rights and freedoms and of freedom of religion or belief, Ireland remains concerned that torture and sexual and gender-based violence continue to occur in



detention facilities in the DPRK. Ireland echoes the High Commissioner's recommendation to end the system of political prison camps, guilt by association and use of the death penalty. It further expresses concern that the right to food continues to be violated with state policies exacerbating hunger. Ireland urges the government of the DPRK to cease all human rights violations, to engage with human rights mechanisms and to fully implement human rights treaties to which they are a party. Ireland calls on the DPRK to allow the full return of international humanitarian and development staff to the country and to accept technical assistance from the OHCHR on upholding human rights in detention. Ireland remains steadfast in its support of the vital work of OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur in exploring avenues towards accountability. Given the continued limited presence of international organizations, Ireland asks the Deputy High Commissioner to elaborate on what more could be done to have diplomatic and humanitarian access to the DPRK reestablished.

Japan expresses its sincere appreciation for the High Commissioner's dedicated efforts and report highlights that the human rights situation in the DPRK continues to deteriorate even over a decade on from the COI's report. This issue clearly remains a significant concern for the international community. The abduction of Japanese nationals by DPRK is is gravely concerning as it affects the country's sovereignty, the lives and safety of its people. Japan commends the High Commissioner's report for addressing this critical issue. The families of the abductees are now well advanced in age making this a time sensitive humanitarian issue. Considering the tremendous suffering that victims and their families have endured over the years, there is no time to waste. Japan strongly urges the DPRK to let the abduction victims return to their homes immediately. North Korea should sincerely hear the voices of the international community, the abductees, the families including those expressed in this report. It must take concrete actions towards the immediate resolution of the abduction issues and foster cooperation with the international community. Japan remains committed to collaborating closely with the countries concerned and the United Nations, including the High Commissioner, to achieve this immediate return of all abductees.

The **Lao PDR** commends the DPRK for its strong commitment and continued efforts to promote and protect human rights in the country including by strengthening the legal framework to promote the wellbeing of children, women and persons with disabilities. The Lao PDR emphasizes the adherence of the principles of universality in possibility, objectivity and selectivity and non-politicization in promoting and protecting human rights for all. Moreover, the Lao PDR affirms that the best way to enhance the enjoyment of human rights on the ground is through genius dialogue and cooperation with respect for the fundamental principle of sovereignty, independence and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states. The Lao PDR further reiterates that the country specific initiative without the concept of country concerned are counterproductive and should be considered through the constructive engagement and cooperation in order to achieve meaningful advancement of human rights of its citizens.

Liechtenstein remains deeply concerned over the human rights situation in the DPRK depicted in the High Commissioner's report. Despite the government's promise in 2012 to develop the country, the path that was chosen instead consistently led the DPRK deeper into authoritarianism and oppression which has not only resulted in a widespread deprivation of the most fundamental



human rights but also has turned the DPRK into the world's most isolated and restricted country. Liechtenstein deplores the DPRK's use of the death penalty as a means to silent dissent or sanction the distribution of media from so-called hostile nations. Executions are also carried out publicly, a clear message to the population that disobedience is severely punished. Liechtenstein is equally concerned by the pervasive surveillance, forced labour and political prison camps. More than ten years after the COI's landmark report in 2014, the situation has not only changed but has deteriorated even further. The international community must do more to hold the authorities of the DPRK accountable for crimes under international law including through a long delayed referral by the security council of the situation to the international criminal courts.

New Zealand appreciates the High Commissioner's report and commends the victims and witnesses who contributed to the report. New Zealand continues to be appalled by the dire situation in the DPRK across almost every area of basic human rights, and remains deeply concerned about reports of public executions, arbitrary detention, forced labor, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence. Condemning the failure of the DPRK to hold accountable those responsible for those grave abuses, New Zealand is particularly concerned that the application of the death penalty has significantly expanded since 2015, including for sharing foreign media. Committed to the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, New Zealand welcomes the recommendations that the DPRK end its use of the death penalty and urges the immediate halt of public executions. It also strongly condemns the DPRK's regime ongoing diversion of its limited national resources towards its illegal nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes at the direct expense of the welfare of its people. New Zealand continues to urge the DPRK to engage with the recommendations from its most recent Universal Periodic Review and encourages the DPRK to invite the High Commissioner and Special Rapporteur to visit the country. Lastly, it asks what more can be done to improve the lives of the people.

The **Republic of Korea** appreciates the High Commissioner's report which provides a comprehensive account of the human rights situation in the DPRK over the past decade since the landmark COI report being true to its title. The Republic of Korea urges the DPRK to heed the recommendations in the report and make sincere efforts to substantially improve the human rights situation for its people. South Korea calls for the DPRK to resume communication such as correspondence between separate family members and their reunions given that over 30% of surviving families are aged 90 or older. South Korea urges the prompt release of abductees, detainees and unrepatriated prisoners of war which are a matter of humanitarian concern. Taking note of the DPRK's participation in its recent CRPD review and its full cycle UPR, South Korea encourages the DPRK to continue to actively engage with the human rights mechanisms in fulfilling the recommendations made by the international community. The Republic of Korea regards substantial enhancement of human rights of the North Korean people as an important issue and remains committed to the global endeavours in this regard.

The **Russian Federation** regrets that the Council continues to be used to spread accusations against the DPRK. Russia believes that the exploitation of human rights issues in this sovereign state is aimed at destabilizing the domestic political situation and creating obstacles to the country's steady development. Russia believes that one of the main causes of the problems in the DPRK is the illegal unilateral measures applied by the West and its allies, including in the humanitarian sphere. Their authors demonstratively ignore Pyongyang's efforts to improve the



internal situation. They are silent about the fact that the country continues to operate a system of free education. In the legislative sphere, efforts are being made to promote the rights and freedoms of citizens, in particular through the adoption of laws on the education of children through distance learning and on the protection of persons with disabilities. All these measures are being implemented by Pyongyang against the backdrop of continuing economic and political pressure on the DPRK. Sanctions, including those relating to the ban on the import of fuel, fertilizers, and construction materials, primarily complicate the lives of ordinary citizens of the country. Russia urges to abandon such a politicized approach and focus on establishing constructive cooperation, taking into account the historical, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics of the country.

Slovenia thanks the High Commissioner for his report which provides a sobering update on the human rights situation in the DPRK since 2014 report of the Commission of Inquiry. The pervasive system of surveillance, arbitrary detention and torture entrenches fear and impunity leaving victims without remedies. Slovenia is particularly concerned by the persistent discrimination and suffering of women and children. Women remain exposed to gender-based violence and forced labor while children endure harsh conditions including forced child labor, lack of adequate food and health care and education marked by indoctrination rather than learning. Slovenia would like to know how could the Council best support accountability and ensure best protection for women and children who remain the most vulnerable to this systematic violations.

Sudan takes note of the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in the DPRK and the observations and recommendations contained therein. Since the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level is primarily the responsibility of the states concerned, which are best placed to determine their needs and priorities, Sudan encourages the DPRK to continue its efforts in the promotion and protection of human rights, whether economic, social and cultural or civil and political; to ratify human rights conventions; to cooperate with human rights mechanisms; and to implement the recommendations accepted at the 47th session of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. It is the responsibility of the Council to promote dialogue between States and stakeholders on human rights issues, and this approach should be maintained.

Switzerland stresses that the human rights situation in the DPRK remains alarming. Serious and systematic human rights violations persist with impunity, and the humanitarian situation remains worrying. The right to freedom of expression remains severely restricted, and the population is subject to increased surveillance in all areas of life. Switzerland is deeply concerned about reports of an increase in death sentences and executions. It recalls that this constitutes a violation of the fundamental right to life. Switzerland calls on the DPRK to allow humanitarian organisations and human rights observers to visit the country and to establish independent monitoring of the human rights situation. It urges the international community to adopt a holistic response combining human rights, humanitarian assistance and security. In closing, Switzerland asks the High Commissioner how could the international community support access to the country and to reliable data collected by the Commission of Inquiry in order to better understand the current human rights situation on the ground.



Ukraine welcomes the High Commissioner's report which makes it clear that since 2014, the human rights situation has not improved in any respect in many respects and significantly deteriorated. Ukraine shares the deep concern that the DPRK continues to impose total control over its people, severely restricting fundamental freedoms and access to information, particularly alarming other expanded use of the death penalty, harsh punishment of the of those accessing foreign media and ongoing existence of political prison camps, chronic food insecurity affecting over 40% of population along with institutionalized forced labor underscores the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for international attention. Ukraine also stresses the destabilization impact of the DPRK excessive military spending, nuclear and missile programmes and most recently its transfer of munition and deployment of soldiers to Russian Federation. By supporting the Russian Federation aggression against Ukraine, the DPRK has made itself complicit in war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ukraine urges the DPRK authorities to assume their primary responsibility to safeguard the rights and interests of their own people and echoes the High Commissioner proposal as practical roadmap to gradual improvement of the human rights situation in the country.

The **United Kingdom** is grateful for the High Commissioner's report which draws attention to the DPRK's continued widespread and systematic violations of human rights. The UK is also grateful for the bravery of the 314 victims and witnesses who provided information to OHCHR. As the report makes clear, there has been no improvement in the human rights situation in the DPRK since 2014. If anything, it has got worse. The death penalty is being implemented for a wider range of acts including the sharing of foreign media. There is more pervasive surveillance and an increased use of forced labour. As the High Commissioner has pointed out, the DPRK's current extreme isolation is a major barrier to improving human rights. The UK believes that diplomacy and negotiation are the best way to secure peace on the Korean peninsula and to improve the lives of North Koreans. The UK urges the DPRK to engage meaningfully and constructively with the international community to take tangible steps to improve its human rights record and to allow UN human rights mechanisms unhindered access to the country in order to support permanent improvements for the people of the DPRK. Lastly, the UK asks to OHCHR how it conceives its joint work with member states to ensure they uphold the principle of non-refoulement of individuals to the DPRK.

Venezuela reiterates its firm rejection of mandates imposed against specific countries. In its nearly 21 years of existence, this particular mandate has squandered millions of dollars solely to produce biased, politically motivated reports that exploit human rights to undermine the dignity of the DPRK, without highlighting its active cooperation with the Council and its mechanisms. This mandate, like all others of its kind, will continue to be doomed to failure because it is a denial of genuine dialogue and cooperation. Despite constant siege, the country has implemented various public policies to guarantee the human rights of its population. Venezuela reiterates importance and necessity of basing the work of the UNHRC on the principles of universality, objectivity, transparency, equality, non-selectivity and non-politicisation

Viet Nam takes note of the High Commissioner's report and attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights in line with the UN Charter and international law. Addressing human rights should be based on dialogue and constructive cooperation with due regard to each country's priorities and circumstances. The work of the United Nations



mechanisms must remain impartial, non-politicized and non-selective. Viet Nam reaffirms its support for efforts to promote dialogue, peace, stability and development on the Korean peninsula, thereby creating favorable conditions for the enjoyment of human rights by the people of the DPRK.

Zimbabwe reiterates its firm belief that the mandate and objectives of the Human Rights Council 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 it and punish it. Country-specific mechanisms are clearly not effective in delivering on the objectives of the Council, especially when such mechanisms are imposed without jury regard to the position of the country consent. Zimbabwe urges the UNHRC to build on the positive commitments 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.

Non-Governmental Organizations

The **Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)** and **FIDH** commend the High Commissioner's ten-year assessment report and urge member states to act on its recommendation. Over the past decade, the DPRK has sealed its borders, criminalized communication, and systematically denied its people their right to information and contact with outside world in flagrant violation of international human rights law. The findings of the High Commissioner's latest report confirm that repression has deepened and victims have remained without justice or remedy. In recent years, the DPRK has also actively contributed to blatant violations of international law by deploying its soldiers to fight in Russia's war against Ukraine. A domestic human rights crisis has now evolved into a broader threat to international peace and security, one that this Council cannot afford to ignore. Ten years ago, the Commission of Inquiry's report on human rights in the DPRK was monumental. It provided undeniable evidence of crimes against humanity and placed the plight of the North Korean people firmly on the international agenda. Yet, today, that momentum requires new impetus. Therefore, NKDB and FIDH call for renewed commitment and support to truth and justice for victims of human rights violations in North Korea, both judicial measures and non-judicial mechanisms, including memorialization, truth-telling, and psychosocial support. The victims cannot wait another decade for justice. Their rights and dignity must be upheld. Their suffering must be neither forgotten or ignored.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the report of the High Commissioner, grave and widespread violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief continue in the DPRK and any DPRK citizen who expresses an opinion or belief outside the state ideology faces severe punishment, including imprisonment, torture and even execution under the anti-reactionary and Thought Law. CSW calls on the DPRK to uphold and respect the right to freedom of religion or belief and to release all persons currently detained in prison camps immediately and unconditionally. CSW also calls on China to adhere to international obligations with regards to refugees, ensuring that those who flee the DPRK are protected. Citizens who escape to China risk 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. The DPRK government backed hackers have stolen more than \$1.5 billion in cryptocurrencies this year alone. CSW calls for greater sophisticated financial sanctions aimed at targeting and seizing digital assets so they are being increasingly used to sidestep existing sanctions and fund the Kim regime. CSW is deeply concerned by excessive domestic military spending and the confirmation of North Korean soldiers fighting in Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. Such actions must be condemned and greater effort made to block continued arms transfers by the DPRK to Russia. In closing, CSW calls on all members of the international community to act on the recommendations of the COI, the Special Rapporteur and the High Commissioner to refer the DPRK situation to the International Criminal Court and ensure human rights concerns are consistently raised at every opportunity.

Human Rights Watch thanks the Commissioner for his comprehensive report spotlighting the worsening human rights situation in the DPRK. Over the past decade, the government has started control of virtually every aspect of people's lives, surveillance, indoctrination and severe punishment for economic crimes and watching authorized media. Over the last decade, the DPRK expanded its use of public execution during the COVID-19 pandemic and use of the death penalty including for human trafficking, pornography, drug related crimes and distribution of unauthorized media. Economic, social and cultural rights have also deteriorated. State policies restricting movement and markets combined with self-imposed isolation since 2020 have exacerbated hunger, a cost and future of many North Korean lives in the past decade. Meanwhile, most of the 2014 Commission of Inquiry recommendations remain unimplemented. Civil society groups outside the country are crucial in exposing these violations enabling the High Commissioner and concerned governments to respond. Yet, many are now struggling due to the recent government funding cuts. Human Rights Watch urges member states to reaffirm the urgency of justice and accountability, including exploring referral to the International Criminal Court, and strengthening UN documentation for future accountability processes; ensure nonrefoulement of escapees from the country; increase financial and political support for North Korean civil society groups abroad; and ensure all engagement with, or policies regarding, North Korea integrates human rights concerns. Inaction is inexcusable. States need to work together to press the DPRK government during the suffocating restrictions and systemic hunger imposed on its people.

The **Centre for Global Non-Killing (CGNK)**, conveying to everyone greetings of peaceful human rights, emphasizes that peace is mandatory. Peace is mandatory because of the conscience of humanity for our future history and for the dignity of every person. Peace is mandatory since the inception of the United Nations charter 80 years ago because of the spirit of the charter article 226/33 and so forth. Peace operation and self-defence should only be the exception rare not the norm. Peace is mandatory because it is almost costless. Peace can be considered mandatory because it is enshrined in article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and peace can be considered mandatory because of the 1953 Armistice Agreement ending the Korean war which calls for a peace conference and a political solution for the Korean peninsula. For the sake of the people and of peace, CGNK calls on the signatories of the armistice the United Nations and the Koreas to revive the spirit of the armistice and to convene the proposed peace conference.



United Nations Watch (UN Watch) states that last week, OHCHR released the 10-year assessment on the DPRK following the 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry that described it as a state without parallel. The report's conclusion is devastating. No other population is under such restrictions in today's world. Political prison camps still operate. Public executions continue, including those who watch K-dramas. Families including my own are denied even a phone call or Zoom access as the darkest nation blocks Internet access. Forced labour expands. Starvation persists with 40% of the population on the Northeast. Meanwhile, munitions and troops are sent to support Russia's illegal war against Ukraine. And China continues to forcibly repatriate North Korean escapees sending them to good luck, torture, even executions. UN Watch's speaker is among the few who survived through multiple escapes and imprisonment in China and North DPRK before finally settling in the UK. The speaker has witnessed before his eyes public executions, prisoners dying under torture and children starving to death. Those are not history. They are happening today. In closing, UN Watch asks how many more years must my people endure suffering, persecution and injustice under such oppressive rule when it has already lasted for over 75 years.

Ingénieurs du Monde is deeply alarmed by the High Commissioner's report on human rights in the DPRK. Last year, the DPRK's delegate claimed legislative changes aimed at correcting unjust trial practices, but make no mistake, with 99% of political cases resulting in convictions, the people of the DPRK are not receiving fair trials. Once they are sentenced, they face years of torment in labour camps. Survivors of these camps describe 15-hour work days starved and rape. In the harshest facilities, annual death rates have reached up to 25%. These prisoners are not only robbed of human rights, they are seen as subhuman. Today, the DPRK's propensity for human rights has made its way past the country's borders. Its quote, special alliance of trust and friendship with Russia has allowed both countries to disregard international law. By supplying 1.2 million artillery shells and at least 11,000 troops since 2023, the DPRK is enabling Russia to end Russia's war in Ukraine and prolonging the suffering of civilians. This alliance forms part of a troubling trend of collaboration between Russia, DPRK and the Islamic Republic of Iran in which they trample international law and shield each other from the consequences. Ingénieurs du Monde calls upon the Council to take action for the victims of the DPRK's abuses, both within and beyond its borders.

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)** is deeply concerned by the entrenched system of state organized forced labour in the DPRK which the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights clearly highlights in their latest report. Thousands of people are routinely compelled to work long hours in agriculture, construction and manufacturing under the guise of voluntary mobilization campaigns. Particularly troubling are the reports on orphans and street children who without family protection are forced to be placed in state run facilities such as farms or mines where they work in dangerous conditions with little or no pay and with a high risk of death. These practices amount to contemporary forms of slavery. They are incompatible with the DPRK's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the worst forms of child labour convention. IBAHRI is also alarmed by credible evidence that DPRK nationals including minors are sent abroad under coercive arrangements in sectors such as fishing, hospitality and construction with wages diverted to the regime. The Council cannot ignore such abuses. IBAHRI urges member states to establish regular reporting and dedicated debates on



forced labour and the exploitation of children in the DPRK building on the High Commissioner's findings; strengthen independent monitoring and transparency mechanisms on DPRK's labour export and its links to global supply chains; back measures that guarantee survivors and their families can safely provide testimony and take part in decision making on matters that impact their lives; and implement all recommendations from the High Commissioner's report and the 2014 report of the Commission of Inquiry.

Amnesty International welcomes the High Commissioner's report. A decade after the conclusion of the COI's work, many of its concerns remain unresolved. Political prison camps are still in operation with detainees enduring inhumane and extremely harsh conditions. Reports of torture and other ill treatment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance has persisted. Despite greater visibility on the diplomatic stage, the DPRK remains for the vast majority of its people sealed off from the world. Borders are tightly controlled and permission to leave is granted only in the rarest cases. Severe restrictions on freedom of expression including access to information have left people cut off from the wider world. The Internet is not available to the general population. Amnesty International shares the High Commissioner's assessment that the DPRK's extreme isolation represents an anomaly. The presentation of this report not only reinforces long-standing concerns and the need for ongoing attention to them by the Council, it should also reinvigorate efforts to identify a way forward. Sustaining international engagement, credible processes for evidence gathering and accountability and a victim-cantered approach are all essential. The OHCHR's sole office plays a vital role in this work and it must receive the Council's full support. Amnesty urges the DPRK to uphold its international human rights obligations to engage genuinely with UN mechanisms and grant full and unfettered access to UN human rights experts and mechanisms, including the High Commissioner and the Special Rapporteur.

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