



Briefing on the Situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 17 August 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt
Chargé d'Affaires of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President.

I thank High Commissioner Turk and Special Rapporteur Salmón for their valuable contributions. I also thank Mr Kim for his powerful and courageous testimony.

Malta recognises the inextricable link between human rights and advancing international peace and security.

We commend the work of human rights bodies and mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council, who continue to highlight the long list of human rights violations occurring within the DPRK, despite the complete lack of cooperation by state authorities.

It is almost ten years since the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK exposed systematic, widespread, and grave violations amounting to crimes against humanity.



These violations continue to persist and are inextricably linked to the threats posed by the DPRK to international peace and security. We call on the DPRK to adhere to its international obligations under Security Council resolutions. It must completely, verifiably, and irreversibly abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA safeguards. We urge the DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT.

President

Civilians in the DPRK continue to live in a climate of government-induced fear.

As we have heard today from our briefers, the humanitarian situation in the DPRK remains dire, with severe levels of food insecurity and large segments of the population enduring chronic malnutrition. Children are especially impacted by this situation. North Korean authorities must allow international humanitarian organisations rapid and unhindered assistance to the most vulnerable groups, including prisoners. We deplore reports of the regime using food as a method of State control, with the diversion of resources to military objectives that include the numerous ballistic missile launches witnessed in the past year.



The systematic restrictions of the freedoms of thought and expression and movement, are deeply troubling. Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and forced disappearances, which also impact the extended families of those accused of being “traitors”, continue through the regime’s vast use of detention centres and prisons.

President

Discrimination against women and girls due to widespread gender stereotypes and normative deficits prevent gender equality from being realised. Their low-level market activities have made them targets of regime control.

As Special Rapporteur Salmon has noted, the North Korean authorities subject women in detention to inhumane conditions that include torture, forced labour, sexual violence, and deprivation of food. We concur with her recommendation to address the patriarchal root causes of gender-based violence, to promote women’s awareness of their rights, and to engage men as part of the solution to ending violence against women.

Furthermore, reports concerning forced child labour are disturbing, despite claims by the DPRK denying such practices. Such practices are a grave violation of children’s rights.



The DPRK has also abducted foreign nationals outside its borders, many of whom remain unaccounted for. Malta calls on the DPRK to provide full information about all those kidnapped and unlawfully detained and to immediately release all abductees.

We stress that the DPRK government must be held accountable for its abhorrent practices against its own people, including the trafficking of women and girls, and the exploitation of children.

The DPRK must meaningfully cooperate with UN human rights bodies, and to initiate a dialogue with the Special Rapporteur and special procedure thematic mandate holders and invite them to carry out official country visits.

President

We further call on States to fully implement their obligations under the sanctions regime and refrain from engaging in, or assisting with, any sanctions violations.

The use of revenue generated by North Korean workers overseas to fund the DPRK's illegal weapons programme also constitutes human exploitation. We call on States to repatriate all DPRK nationals earning income in their jurisdiction in full accordance with international law.

President



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2023-2024

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In conclusion, I would like to remind the Council of our shared objective: peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Human rights are not optional, nor are they an isolated concern. They are the foundation upon which a stable and peaceful Korean Peninsula must be built.

Thank you.