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Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Report of the Secretary-General 2015*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/188 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and covers the period from September 2014 to August 2015.

The first part of the report provides an overview of human rights issues in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In particular it provides updated information on the right to life, liberty and security of the person, international abductions and separated families, freedom of expression and access to information, freedom of movement, the right to food, the right to health, children's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities and women's rights, as well as the impact of economic sanctions on United Nations assistance.

The second part of the report describes the engagement of various United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other entities to address human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In that context, it refers to the establishment of OHCHR (Seoul), the field-based structure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 25/25 to work in the area of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The report concludes with recommendations addressed to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the international community, aimed at improving the situation of human rights in the country.

* Late submission due to consultations with relevant stakeholders.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/188 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and covers the period from September 2014 to August 2015. The report provides an update on issues relating to human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, namely, the right to life, liberty and security of the person, the right to freedom of expression and access to information, children's rights, women's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights to food and to health. The negative impact of economic sanctions on United Nations assistance in the country is also examined.

2. In addition, the report provides an update on the engagement of various United Nations bodies and entities to address the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. During the reporting period, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council adopted resolutions on the human rights situation in the country and, for the first time, the Security Council extended its debate on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea beyond nuclear concerns to include human rights. Reference is also made to the establishment in Seoul of the field-based structure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 25/25.

3. The report contains recommendations addressed to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the international community, aimed at improving the situation of human rights in the country, and calls for the Government's constructive engagement in that regard.

II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

A. Right to life, liberty and security of the person, and to a fair trial

4. According to a report by the Korea Institute for National Unification published in July 2015, up to 1,400 summary executions are estimated to have been carried out in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 2000. During the period under review there were reports of executions of political dissidents or senior officials who had fallen out of grace with the leadership. For example, in June 2015, Amnesty International and the Korea Institute for National Unification reported that the Defence Minister, Hyon Yong Chol, may have been executed for "sleeping during military events and failing to follow orders". The Government has denied carrying out executions. Nonetheless, arbitrary executions remain a risk, owing to a vaguely phrased provision of the criminal code which makes any "grave offence" punishable by "life-term reform through labour or the death penalty".

5. There were no indications of changes in the use of political prison camps, as documented by the commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council to investigate violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. During the universal periodic review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in May 2014, the Government stated that some people were serving terms of reform in labour institutions, but it continued to deny the existence of political prison camps.

6. In June 2015, the authorities sentenced two citizens of the Republic of Korea, Kim Kuk-gi and Cheon Chun-gil, to an indefinite period of labour on charges of spying. Two other nationals of the Republic of Korea, Kim Jeong-wook and Joo Won-moon, and a Canadian citizen, Pastor Hyeon Soo Lim (Rim Hyon Su) remained in pretrial detention on similar charges.

7. According to testimonies given to OHCHR (Seoul) by recent escapees, torture and ill-treatment continued to be used by the authorities to threaten, punish and discourage the authors of acts considered as subversive. For example, in June 2015, an escapee described the conditions during his 10 years in prison as a “daily fight for survival”, with pervasive practices of humiliation, hard labour and beating imposed on all prisoners, and immense pressure exerted on them to show loyalty to the ruling elite. That account is consistent with patterns documented by the commission of inquiry of widespread resort to torture and degrading treatment in prisons.

B. International abductions and separated families

8. The authorities of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea allegedly continued to carry out international abductions. During its sessions in March and May 2015, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted six new cases of alleged abductions to the Government.

9. In March 2015, in his annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/28/71), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea proposed a multitrack strategy to address the issue of international abductions, enforced disappearances and related matters. During his visit to Tokyo in January 2015, he was informed that the Government of Japan was looking into 881 alleged abductions of its citizens over the decades.

10. A number of organizations continued to collect evidence on the issue of abductions by the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and to advocate for redress. OHCHR (Seoul) has been in contact with those organizations to help facilitate access to United Nations human rights protection mechanisms. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized that OHCHR (Seoul) will work to complement ongoing efforts, help consolidate findings and channel them to relevant United Nations human rights and other mechanisms.

11. During the reporting period, no reunions of separated families took place. An inter-Korean agreement reached on 25 August 2015 included a time frame for the reunion of separated families in late September and an agreement to vitalize exchanges between non-governmental organizations in various fields. The United Nations human rights system has recommended increased people-to-people contact between the two countries.

12. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the plight of separated families and at the ongoing abductions and enforced disappearances. He calls on all stakeholders in the region and beyond to strengthen efforts to monitor and follow up on those cases, with a focus on facilitating family reunions and ensuring accountability for abductions and disappearances.

C. Freedom of expression and access to information

13. The Government accepted three universal periodic review recommendations to improve the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and access to information. In particular, it agreed to consider the adoption of a series of laws and practical measures to ensure citizens' free access to information.

14. However, during the reporting period, there were no indications of improvement in the exercise of freedom of expression or access to information. There was no public debate and those few demonstrations that took place appear to have been organized by the Government for propaganda purposes.

15. All television, radio and other news providers remained State-owned and fully controlled by the Government. Access to external sources of information, especially through satellite television channels, foreign media and the Internet, was totally restricted for the general public. No international newspapers were available and any publications coming from abroad had to be declared at the airport.

16. The use of mobile phones has become widespread in Pyongyang in recent years, but the extent of their use outside the capital city is unknown. Landline and mobile phone usage by the public is limited to an in-country network and to communication within the country. Telephone communications between the local population and the expatriate community are restricted. This has created operational challenges in emergency situations and, at the request of the United Nations, the Government agreed to allow limited mobile phone communication between international staff members of international organizations/missions and selected national staff members, for emergency purposes only.

17. In 2014, the Government asked all foreign missions to limit the access to Internet services of their national staff members, except for work-related purposes. That measure has posed a serious challenge to the ability of international organizations, including the United Nations, to operate effectively. It also demonstrates the Government's persistent efforts to limit Internet access.

D. Freedom of movement

18. Citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are not allowed to leave the country without permission. Those who do so or try to do so, or their families, face severe punishment. In October 2014, the Government activated the Non-Standing National Emergency Prevention Committee to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus disease. This included measures requiring all foreigners and nationals travelling from "Ebola-affected" countries — which, according to the Government, included all African countries plus Spain and the United States of America — to be quarantined in a government-designated hotel for 21 days under medical observation. Furthermore, nationals and foreigners, including United Nations personnel, returning from "non-affected" countries, were required to remain in their residences for 21 days under medical observation. Those measures had an impact on the work of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors. While they were partially relaxed with respect to travellers coming from non-affected countries, they remain in place for those travelling from the Ebola-affected countries and neighbouring States.

E. Right to food

19. The Government has accepted nine universal periodic review recommendations pertinent to the right to food, in particular those concerning ensuring the right to food in a non-discriminatory manner and prioritizing food in its public spending. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, there were continued reports of serious violations of the right to food, with consequences for other human rights, notably the rights to life and health.

20. Despite efforts to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, food production remained insufficient to adequately meet the nutritional needs of the whole population. In its 2014 annual report, the International Food Policy Research Institute described as “serious” the country’s Global Hunger Index score of 16.

21. The most vulnerable, including children, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly, remain the most affected by malnutrition. One in three children under 5 years of age and almost half of children aged between 12 and 23 months are anaemic, and 28 per cent of pregnant women are undernourished.

22. According to the Ministry of Public Health, the proportion of low-birth-weight newborn babies decreased from 5.2 per cent in 2010 to 4.7 per cent in 2014 thanks to the provision of essential drugs to pregnant women. Also, the Government collaborated with United Nations agencies on programmes addressing the nutritional needs of children and pregnant or lactating women. That included providing funding for the production of fortified biscuits and cereals in local factories around the country. Specific programmes targeting the most vulnerable groups should be strengthened, including by allocating sufficient funding, as they have long suffered from insufficient prioritization in national nutrition policies.

23. Well below average rains from mid-April to early-July in the central and southern “food basket” provinces of the country affected the main rice and maize planting season in 2015. A detailed assessment of crop damage is not yet available, but early official estimates provided by the National Coordinating Committee indicate that only 441,562 hectares of rice crop, or 81 per cent of the planned area of 545,498 hectares, were planted. In addition, 136,245 hectares, accounting for some 31 per cent of the planted area, are reported to have been adversely affected by dry weather. In view of the reductions in the planted area and the expected reduced yields, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) tentatively forecasts the 2015 rice production at 2.3 million tons, 12 per cent below last year’s output.

24. In 2014, the World Food Programme and FAO were not invited to conduct a joint assessment with the Government as had been the case in previous years. Data on crops in 2014 therefore came mainly from Government sources. Despite a modest increase in cereal production of 48,700 MT, the Government reported a shortfall of almost 900,000 MT of cereal equivalent in 2014. Post-harvest losses are estimated at 15.56 per cent for rice, 16.65 per cent for maize and 16.35 per cent for wheat and barley.

25. The Government has taken some steps to address the situation. In February 2014, the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong Un, called for technical innovations in farming. Field observations by the United Nations country team appear to confirm that a new system has been rolled out on most farms, but the United Nations has

little information on its functioning. In his New Year's Day address on 1 January 2015, Kim Jong Un called for the fostering of external economic relations and the acceleration of projects for economic development zones.

26. The Government has engaged with the United Nations and international humanitarian actors to develop national strategies for disaster management. In May 2015, the Ministry of City Management made a request to the United Nations for water, sanitation and hygiene relief items for drought-affected areas in the Hwanghae Provinces.

F. Right to health

27. Among the universal periodic review recommendations accepted by the Government, at least 14 were pertinent to the right to health. For instance, the Government agreed to increase health expenditure, to strengthen health services through better training of medical personnel, to take measures to implement effectively a medium-term strategy for health, and to implement a reproductive health strategy to reduce mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

28. In the mid-term review of the Medium-term Strategic Plan for the Development of the Health Sector in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 2010-2015, conducted in 2014, the Government confirmed its political and financial commitment to health development. However, the funds allocated appear insufficient to cover basic needs, including essential drugs, good quality antenatal care, immunization and emergency assistance. The quality of care and services in health facilities does not meet international standards, with a shortage of basic life-saving services, premises and essential medical equipment. In addition, treatment protocols remain outdated and inadequate.

29. In order to tackle the insufficient training of household doctors and hospital staff, a new midwifery curriculum that meets international standards was introduced in 2014 and teachers were trained. It is hoped that the curriculum will be extended in the course of 2015 throughout the country. The Ministry of Public Health and the Commission of Education have committed themselves to increasing the number of nurses and midwives, but progress will heavily depend on additional budgetary allocation from the Government and on funding from development partners.

30. The Ministry of Public Health started publishing annual health reports to show progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The country is not on track to achieve Goal 4, given an infant mortality rate of 22/1,000 live births, an under-5 mortality rate of 27/1,000 live births and a neonatal mortality rate of 15/1,000 live births. The current rate of maternal mortality is 87/100,000 births, which is higher than the country's Millennium Development Goal target of 50/100,000.¹ The lack of essential emergency obstetric and neonatal services, coupled with the poor quality of reproductive and maternal health services, remains a challenge.

¹ United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, Report 2014: Levels and Trends in Child Mortality.

G. Rights of the child

31. The Government accepted 13 universal periodic review recommendations relating to the rights of children and access to education, and committed itself to implementing its National Action Plan for Education by 2015. The Government also made more general commitments to provide means and resources for children with disabilities to enjoy the right to education. With the support of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Government has been preparing its periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the aim of submitting it in October 2015.

32. In its national report for the second universal periodic report, in 2014, the Government indicated that, in December 2012, it had promulgated a law on the protection and promotion of children's rights, to safeguard their social life, education and health. The Government stated that the law on the nursing and upbringing of children provided for free public upbringing and education through baby homes and boarding schools, as well as for cultural and scientific rearing through educational institutions at different levels, and for developing the capacity of nursery management and kindergarten teachers. The Government referred to an ordinance on support for 12 years of free and compulsory education. However, in the absence of regular reporting and specific information, the situation of children's rights remains unclear and it is difficult to assess whether the education system meets the best interests of the child.

33. The education system is not fully inclusive, as orphans, children without primary caregivers and children with special needs are taught separately from the mainstream school system, in boarding and special schools, with a different curriculum and duration of schooling. The Government is encouraged to review its policy of institutionalized care for certain categories of children and to bring it into line with international practices and norms on inclusive education.

H. Rights of persons with disabilities

34. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2013, and in 2014 the Government accepted two universal periodic review recommendations to enhance the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by children with disabilities.

35. Yet, there are reports that persons with disabilities face challenges and discrimination. For example, children with sensory disabilities are educated in special schools, for 9 years, while in other schools, education is compulsory for 12 years. The curriculum of the special schools focuses on vocational skills, without any provision of career options. There are no preschools and no facilities for higher education for persons with disabilities. Also, there are no official physiotherapists trained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that can manage and deal with the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

36. The increased recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities signalled by the Government in signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides an opportunity for it to collaborate with the United Nations and other international partners to better support the most vulnerable people. The Secretary-General encourages the Government to promptly ratify the Convention, to

develop a national strategy to bring laws and policies into line with the Convention, and to establish structures to facilitate its effective implementation.

I. Rights of women

37. The Government accepted 11 universal periodic review recommendations relating to women's rights. In particular, it committed itself to taking immediate measures to ensure gender equality, encourage the increase of women's participation in public life, combat violence against women and strengthen efforts to combat human trafficking, especially of women and children.

38. According to national statistics, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has achieved significant results in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in a relatively short period of time. Gender parity would thus have been achieved in education, employment and access to health care. However, the United Nations has not seen sufficient evidence to substantiate that claim.

39. In tertiary education, the enrolment rate for women represents 17 per cent of the total number of enrolments, including in technical universities. Furthermore, women tend to be clustered in what are traditionally considered as appropriate fields of study for females, such as education, health, welfare and services. While women comprise 47.8 per cent of the work force, they generally hold less technical and more administrative functions.

40. Although women have had equal rights by law to participate in political life since 1945, only 6 out of 240 cabinet members have been women.

J. Impact of economic sanctions on the work of United Nations agencies in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

41. The United Nations and unilateral sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea clearly do not apply to humanitarian assistance, but they have had an unintended and indirect negative impact on vulnerable people. The capacity of the United Nations to deliver vital assistance in a timely and effective manner has been reduced owing to operational constraints caused by the sanctions, including delays in the procurement and transportation of essential supplies; additional documentation required for procurement; inability to import specific technical equipment or materials from certain countries; and delays in port clearance.

42. The imposition of sanctions has also had a negative impact on the United Nations ability to raise funds for lifesaving activities. The United Nations urgently needs \$111 million in 2015 to fund its humanitarian operations to address the protracted and serious needs. Financial sanctions on the Foreign Trade Bank of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in March 2013 also resulted in periods of severe cash shortage, most recently between March and September 2014, due to the suspension of banking channels. As a consequence, United Nations agencies were forced to suspend certain programmatic activities and prioritize lifesaving activities, such as the provision of essential medicines, vaccines, food and nutritional supplements.

III. United Nations engagement concerning the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

43. Despite some unprecedented signs of engagement by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the United Nations in 2014, it eventually suspended discussions on possible engagement and cooperation on human rights.

A. Intergovernmental bodies

44. During the reporting period, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council adopted resolutions on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

45. On 18 December 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/188, in which it decided to submit the report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Security Council. In particular, the Assembly encouraged the Security Council to consider referring the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court and to consider the scope of targeted sanctions against those who appeared to be responsible for acts which, according to the commission of inquiry, might constitute crimes against humanity.

46. Further to the General Assembly debate, the Security Council for the first time decided to include the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its agenda, and discussed it on 22 December 2014, paving the way for future briefings and discussions on human rights developments in the country. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights briefed the Council on that occasion.

47. On 3 March 2015, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea addressed the Human Rights Council, which was unprecedented. He reiterated his Government's objections to the commission of inquiry and to the resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On that occasion, the Minister met with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the first meeting ever between a high-level official from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and a High Commissioner.

48. On 27 March 2015, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 28/22 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in which it condemned in the strongest terms the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations and other human rights abuses committed in the country, and welcomed the Security Council's decision to add that situation to its agenda. The Human Rights Council requested the Office of the High Commissioner to present an oral update at its thirtieth session, in September 2015, and a comprehensive report at its thirty-first session, in March 2016, on the role and achievements of the Office, including the field-based structure, with respect to the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In addition, the Human Rights Council decided to convene at its thirtieth session a panel discussion on that situation,

including the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances and related matters.

B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

49. In May 2015, the Government of the Republic of Korea and OHCHR concluded an interim host country agreement for the establishment of the field-based structure of OHCHR in Seoul, hereinafter OHCHR (Seoul). The Seoul municipal government agreed to host the structure, which was inaugurated on 23 June 2015 by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

50. The establishment of OHCHR (Seoul) resulted from a recommendation contained in the report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and it was set up on the basis of paragraph 10 of Human Rights Council resolution 25/25 to follow up urgently on the recommendations made by the commission of inquiry in its report, and to provide the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with increased support.

51. OHCHR (Seoul) is specifically mandated to strengthen monitoring and documentation of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to ensure accountability, to enhance engagement and capacity-building with the Governments of all States concerned, civil society and other stakeholders, and to maintain the visibility of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through sustained communications, advocacy and outreach initiatives.

52. OHCHR (Seoul) is funded from the regular budget of the United Nations and has six staff members.

53. On the occasion of the inauguration of the office, the High Commissioner launched the official website of OHCHR (Seoul), available in English and Korean at seoul.ohchr.org. In order to raise awareness of the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to engage a broad range of actors and the wider public, OHCHR (Seoul) is engaged on a number of social media platforms. The Twitter account (@UNrightsSeoul) and the Facebook page of OHCHR (Seoul) have already attracted a lot of attention and users, including among the United Nations system, Member States and civil society organizations.

54. With the support of OHCHR (Seoul), some civil society organizations have started conducting mapping exercises to situate individual and institutional responsibilities for the grave violations that the commission of inquiry documented. Also with OHCHR assistance, global advocacy organizations have organized campaigns to raise public awareness about the findings of the commission and have helped set up a network of experts and campaigners, particularly in youth communities, who will benefit from technical support, the exchange of best practices and advocacy initiatives with OHCHR (Seoul).

55. On 17 September 2014, at a meeting with the High Commissioner, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office at Geneva expressed his Government's interest in benefiting from OHCHR technical assistance. Subsequently, OHCHR and the Permanent Mission held several working-level meetings to explore the possible scope and areas

of technical cooperation. Furthermore, OHCHR sought to regularly update the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the steps taken to implement Human Rights Council resolution 25/25.

56. However, in late December 2014, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/188 and the Security Council's meeting on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Government announced the suspension of its dialogue with OHCHR on technical assistance. The Minister for Foreign Affairs confirmed that decision to the High Commissioner in March 2015, as well as in a letter to the High Commissioner dated 24 July, in which he reiterated that his Government did not intend to cooperate with OHCHR (Seoul).

57. Furthermore, a State body, the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea, issued public statements on 27 May and 25 June 2015 threatening retaliation against OHCHR (Seoul). In a letter dated 14 July 2015, the High Commissioner expressed grave concern regarding those repeated threats and reminded the Government of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to protect the United Nations, its staff members and assets. The High Commissioner also emphasized that OHCHR (Seoul) would work with full independence, in accordance with the mandate provided by Human Rights Council resolution 25/25. He urged the Government to consider engaging with OHCHR constructively. The Secretary-General recalls that, in paragraph 10 of its resolution 69/188, the General Assembly called upon Member States to undertake to ensure that the field-based structure of the Office of the High Commissioner could function with independence, that it had sufficient resources and that it was not subjected to any reprisals or threats.

58. The Secretary-General welcomes the inauguration of OHCHR (Seoul) as it has an important role to play, including with a view to ensuring accountability, which is fundamental for achieving reconciliation and long-term security on the Korean Peninsula. The Secretary-General urges the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage with the international community to improve human rights and the living conditions of its population. In particular, the Secretary-General encourages the Government to consider positively the OHCHR offer of technical cooperation.

C. Human rights mechanisms

59. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a party to four of the major international human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In November 2014, the Government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In September 2014, the Government accepted universal periodic review recommendations to expedite the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it had signed in July 2013.

60. The Government accepted universal periodic review recommendations to submit reports to United Nations human rights treaty bodies, notably the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Government's commitment to further engage

with the treaty bodies would complement its acceptance of a number of universal periodic review recommendations concerning the rights of children, women and persons with disabilities.

D. United Nations entities operating in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

61. As noted in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/69/639), the Government's acceptance of universal periodic review recommendations made in January 2010 and September 2014 provides important entry points for dialogue and cooperation on human rights.

62. In its 2014 universal periodic review, the Government accepted four recommendations concerning its cooperation with international organizations and committed itself to working closely with humanitarian agencies to ensure their free and unimpeded access to all populations in need and provide them with satisfactory monitoring conditions. Such an improvement in operating conditions would be essential for the United Nations to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the situation and needs in the country and to refine the programming of its activities.

63. However, during the reporting period, the United Nations system in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued to operate under significant constraints imposed by the Government. Lack of free access to most parts of the country and to the general public, including vulnerable populations, and limited ability to collect independent data have considerably hampered the work of United Nations agencies, preventing them from developing programmes commensurate with actual needs and from evaluating the impact of their work, and obstructing the delivery of assistance.

64. The Government took small steps towards improving access to data by the wider international community, including the United Nations, through ad hoc and periodic surveys and assessments, particularly regarding sociodemographic information. The Secretary-General hopes that further efforts will be made by the Government to facilitate United Nations access to information which is essential for the development and implementation of adequate programmes to improve the life of people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

65. In March 2015, the United Nations Strategic Framework Steering Committee endorsed a road map for the development of the next strategic framework (2017-2021). It affirmed the United Nations country team's role to support and advocate national priorities, including the Government's commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed norms and standards. The five programming principles of a human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development should be integrated into a joint framework tailored to the country context.

IV. Conclusions

66. The Secretary-General welcomes efforts within the United Nations to follow up on the findings of the commission of inquiry, which exposed the need for profound structural reforms in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to promote and protect the rights of the population. The Secretary-General especially welcomes the establishment of OHCHR (Seoul) and urges the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, all Member States, civil society and other stakeholders to work constructively with the United Nations to promote and protect human rights in the country. In particular, the Secretary-General strongly encourages the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume dialogue with OHCHR. The Secretary-General also welcomes the intention of the Government to submit a report on its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in October 2015, in line with its universal periodic review commitments. He encourages the Government to submit its other overdue reports to the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

67. The Secretary-General calls on the international community to make all possible and reasonable efforts to ensure that the systematic, widespread and grave human rights violations described in the report of the commission of inquiry are brought to an end, and that those responsible for crimes are held to account. Efforts to engage the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to improve the human rights situation in the country must go hand in hand with efforts to hold perpetrators of crimes accountable. In that regard, placing the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the list of issues of which the Security Council is seized constitutes a significant development.

V. Recommendations

68. The Secretary-General recommends that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea:

- (a) Translate its commitments under the universal periodic review into concrete follow-up measures, in order to improve effectively the human rights situation throughout the country;**
- (b) Accept and implement more of the recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies;**
- (c) Invite the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other independent human rights mechanisms to visit the country;**
- (d) Engage constructively with the United Nations system, including OHCHR and its office in Seoul, and seek technical assistance from OHCHR;**
- (e) Consider the findings and recommendations of the commission of inquiry and engage with the international community towards their implementation;**

(f) **Engage meaningfully with all Member States concerned for the resolution of international abductions and enforced disappearances;**

(g) **Provide unimpeded access to United Nations and humanitarian agencies to enable them to respond adequately to the needs of the population.**

69. The Secretary-General recommends that the international community:

(a) **Consider appropriate follow-up action to the report of the commission of inquiry, as called for in Human Rights Council resolutions 25/25 and 28/22, and General Assembly resolution 69/188;**

(b) **Step up the provision of adequate and sustainable funding for humanitarian assistance, especially food and medicine, with a view to improving the humanitarian conditions and the human rights situation;**

(c) **Seek to minimize the adverse humanitarian consequences of sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by extending full support to the United Nations agencies working on the ground.**
