



Security Council

Seventy-second year

8130th meeting

Monday, 11 December 2017, 9.30 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Bessho (Japan)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Zambrana Torrelio
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
France	Mr. Delattre
Italy	Mr. Cardi
Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Mr. Skoog
Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Mrs. Haley
Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli Frieri

Agenda

The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Letter dated 1 December 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1006)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: I give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is opposed to the Security Council's proposed consideration of the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. China has consistently opposed the Council's involvement in the human rights issues of other countries. The Charter of the United Nations has clear provisions with regard to the functions and division of labour of the main organs of the Organization. The primary responsibility of the Council is to maintain international peace and security, and its job is therefore to address threats to that. The Security Council is not the appropriate forum for debating human rights issues, nor should we allow human rights issues to be politicized.

China is committed to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to upholding peace and stability there and resolving relevant issues through dialogue and consultation. We are opposed to war and conflict on the peninsula. The current situation on the peninsula remains complex, sensitive and grave. Council members and the parties concerned should engage in seeking ways to ease tensions on the peninsula and avoid mutual provocation and words or actions that might further escalate the situation.

A discussion by the Council of human rights issues in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would run counter to the aforementioned objectives and be counterproductive. China hopes that the parties concerned will exercise restraint and keep the overall situation in mind. They should move towards rather than away from one another, implement the relevant Council resolutions comprehensively and fully, and give serious consideration to China's suspension-for-suspension initiative so as to create an environment and conditions conducive to a resumption of negotiations. China hopes that the parties concerned will honour their commitments effectively and play a constructive role in maintaining the denuclearization process and peace and stability on the peninsula.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): This issue has become a repeated problem. We continue to think that there is a separation between peace and security and human rights, and there is not. If we go back in

history, it shows that any country that does not take care of its people ends up in conflict. We have seen that in multiple cases in multiple places.

As much as the Secretary-General and the Council talk about prevention when it comes to conflict, prevention is about how a country treats its people as well. If it starts to treat its people carelessly or abuse them, it will easily abuse other countries, and that is what we are seeing happen in North Korea. So while I understand the concerns of some Council members, I think it is extremely important that if we are to stay true to our word on prevention, then we must stay true to our word that prevention also includes human rights and the ability to call out countries when they commit abuses like the ones we are seeing.

I therefore suggest that not only should we do this today, but we should be doing it more often with other countries when we see such things coming up. We have seen it in Venezuela and Syria. If we truly care about prevention, human rights have to be at the heart of it.

The President: I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1006, which contains a letter dated 1 December 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

In view of the request contained in document S/2017/1006 and the comments made by members of the Security Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote. Accordingly, I shall put it to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China and Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Egypt and Ethiopia

The President: There were 10 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 2 abstentions. The provisional agenda has been adopted.

The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Letter dated 1 December 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1006)

The President: I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have often expressed our opposition to the introduction of human rights issues into the Security Council's agenda. We believe that they are not within the Council's remit and should be considered by the specialized bodies, first and foremost the Human Rights Council. The Security Council has never been part of the United Nations toolkit for protecting and promoting human rights. It was never intended to monitor or analyse situations in the area of human rights. It has unique authority to take decisions on situations that may involve the potential use of force, among them situations that represent a threat to or a breach of peace or an act of aggression.

Given that mandate, the Council cannot be a platform for discussions of human rights situations, wherever they are. No international document on human rights assigns the Security Council authority for oversight or any other function in that area. The remit of the Security Council should be focused on issues that pose genuine threats to international peace and security, but if we regularly pad the agenda with non-core issues it will inevitably dissipate the Council's attention and strength, reduce its effectiveness and encourage future accusations that it has exceeded its mandate, become politicized and is using double standards, leading to a weakening of trust in the Security Council in general.

With regard to the potential outcome of today's meeting, the long-standing practice of the organs of the United Nations system concerning human rights is clear testament to the fact that politicized, country-specific resolutions and discussions have never yielded positive results, which can be achieved only by strengthening dialogue and interaction among countries, as has been demonstrated by attempts to discuss this issue here in the Council.

At this stage, the main goal of the Security Council is to create the conditions for resuming the negotiating process as soon as possible in the interests of arriving at political solutions to the problems of the Korean peninsula. Our priority should be on finding a peaceful resolution to this problem. The present difficult situation should not be used as a pretext to increase foreign military potential in the region. We call upon all parties to decrease tensions, avoid military rhetoric and quickly start a political process to find a way out of the impasse.

Mr. Kandeel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Everyone is aware of Egypt's position — we oppose the nuclear-weapon programme in North Korea and that country's ongoing violations of Security Council resolutions — and there is therefore no need to repeat it here. Moreover, everyone is also equally aware of Egypt's commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, among which I would mention the sovereign equality of its Members and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Egypt abstained today in the voting on the holding of a meeting concerning internal matters in North Korea. Egypt once again reiterates that the Security Council is not the relevant international forum to address internal affairs or human rights situation in countries, unless the matter concerns acts of genocide or ethnic cleansing, which have a direct impact on international peace and security and require the Council to act as one in fulfilling its tasks.

We warn that a continued determination to place internal affairs on the agenda of the Security Council, in spite of reservations on the part of a great number of Member States and contrary to the very mandate of the Council, undermines the Council's cohesion and augments polarization among its members. That effort also has a negative impact on the United Nations being able to carry out its functions, as it erodes trust, on the one hand, in the neutrality of the Organization and its bodies and, on the other, among Member States themselves.

Egypt also rejects a selective approach to human rights situations in whatever country, which does not contribute to fostering trust or providing an opportunity to respond to genuine initiatives to resolve the root causes of international crises and achieve international peace and security.

Mr. Rosselli Frieri (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As on previous occasions, Uruguay voted in favour of the holding of this meeting. Uruguay does not recognize limitations when it comes to dealing with the issue of human rights, either for reasons of the forum where it is discussed or of deference to domestic jurisdiction. Full and unconditional respect for human rights and their promotion and protection, as well as accountability when such rights are violated, are essential aspects of the foreign policy of Uruguay.

It is still quite fresh in the memory of Uruguayans that, during the military dictatorship we suffered from during the 1970s and early 1980s, international public opinion was the subject of intense pressure owing to the violations of human rights that were being committed in my country. That pressure was key in gradually breaking down the military dictatorship. We Uruguayans cannot forget the solidarity expressed by the international community in our darkest hours, and we therefore insist that there is no limitation as to where the issue of human rights can be addressed — for reasons of either forum or national jurisdiction.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Political Constitution of the State of Bolivia enshrines a broad catalogue of rights under various regional and universal instruments as they relate to the protection of human rights. In that regard, the Constitution provides that international human rights treaties and instruments have been signed, ratified or adhered to by the State that provide for more favourable rights than those set out in the Constitution shall take precedence over the latter. That is how Bolivia shows its commitment to defending human rights established at the regional and international levels.

However, my delegation would also like to make it clear that the Charter of the United Nations stipulates unequivocally that the primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security — the Council not being the forum to address issues pertaining to human rights. That is why my delegation is opposed to the Council holding meetings about human rights in any United Nations Member country, in this case in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These issues do not fall under the competence of the Council, as they have their own forum for debate and analysis within the specialized bodies of the Organization, such as the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

As an elected member of the Security Council, Bolivia has never had any doubts about the need to discuss the issues of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, given its sensitivity for the international community and the threat it poses to international peace and security, and the fact that it generates instability in the region. In that context, in line with our status as a pacifist State, Bolivia has called, and always will call, for dialogue between parties. I therefore reiterate that my delegation does not agree with using this forum to address this issue, as it takes us further away from the main goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula and safeguarding international peace and security in the region.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): The human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is indeed a source of serious concern. And we understand the relevant mechanisms established within the Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur about human rights in the Democratic Republic of Korea as well as other mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review and special procedures for the Human Rights Council. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a huge responsibility for protecting the rights of its citizens. The dialogue on this issue with the relevant mechanisms I just mentioned should certainly continue with a view to improving the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country.

We also wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with Japan in connection with the abduction of its nationals. We support all efforts and discussions at the bilateral and multilateral levels to ensure the return of the abductees at the earliest possible time. This is in fact the most critical issue that made it very difficult for us to abstain in the procedural vote, because we are deeply convinced that the issue of abductees is a gross violation, which we condemn very strongly and vehemently. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take urgent positive steps on the matter.

Nevertheless, we all know that situation on the Korean peninsula is so extremely difficult and complex, and its implications for international peace and security so grave, that it is no wonder that the Council spends so much time discussing the issue and has adopted several resolutions and statements this year, thereby demonstrating the seriousness with which it has been actively seized of the matter.

Again this month, under the Japanese presidency, we will once again discuss the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issue at the highest level, following the emergency meeting we held after the latest ballistic-missile launch by that country (see S/PV.8118). Without a doubt, that test showed that we are indeed at the edge of the precipice, and any slight miscalculation, perhaps even if totally unintended, could land us into a major nuclear catastrophe on the Korean peninsula. That is why every possible diplomatic effort must be made to prevent that from happening, and time is not on our side. Therefore, we believe that the Security Council should devote all its time and energy to finding a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the situation on the Korean peninsula through dialogue and negotiation, in the light of the looming danger and its unimaginable consequences for international peace and security.

In that context, we very much welcome the visit of Under-Secretary-General Feltman to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is the first of its kind by a senior official of the United Nations since 2010. It is a small but important step in the right direction. We look forward to Mr. Feltman's briefing tomorrow on his various engagements in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The President: Since the provisional agenda was adopted, I shall suspend the meeting. We shall resume after a brief recess to continue our consideration of the agenda item.

The meeting was suspended at 10 a.m. and resumed at 10.05 a.m.

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Republic of Korea to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Al Hussein is joining today's meeting by video-conference from Paris.

The Security Council will now begin consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: Today's meeting on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is timely and again demonstrates that it is not just nuclear issues that deserve the attention and action of the international community. While it is difficult to obtain up-to-date and comprehensive information about human rights developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the information gathered reveals a continuing pattern of serious human rights violations and a lack of progress on issues such as family reunification and abductions. There are no indications that the situation has significantly improved since the 2014 report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/HRC/25/CRP.1), which revealed that crimes against humanity had been and were being committed in the country.

In keeping with its obligations under international law, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is responsible for protecting its population from crimes that are considered to be the most serious under international law. In addition, the international community has the collective responsibility to protect the population of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea if the State does not protect its own citizens, and to consider the wider implications of the reported grave human rights situation for stability in the region.

During the past year, the security environment has had a negative impact on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The country's continued nuclear and ballistic missile activities have led to its further isolation from its neighbours and the international community. The country has imposed severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, both within the country and on the border with China. People pay a heftier price and take riskier routes to leave the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and women continue to be the primary targets of human traffickers, who help them escape if they agree to be sold into the sex industry.

The plight of prisoners and foreign detainees continues to be a cause for concern, with reports of abject detention conditions in holding centres and labour camps throughout the country. In June, student Otto Warmbier died a few days after he was released from detention in Pyongyang and repatriated to the United States. His case highlighted the situation of foreign detainees who risk being cut off from the outside world and are unable to enjoy basic entitlements, such

as access to medical treatment and consular assistance. Three citizens of the United States and six citizens of the Republic of Korea remain in custody today. We continue to advocate for their release.

The past year witnessed a surge in the forced repatriation of nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in China, in particular in the months of December 2016 and April, July and November of 2017. Reports of escapees being sent back to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are regularly received by the United Nations and civil society groups. Many of those escapees are women victims of human trafficking who leave their children in China. As we speak, dozens of nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain detained in China and scheduled for refoulement to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

The United Nations has taken a number of steps this year to address the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Special Rapporteur presented his report (see A/72/394) to the General Assembly in September and the Secretary-General issued his report (A/72/279) in August. The Third Committee has agreed on a draft resolution (A/C.3/72/L.40) that is to be adopted by the General Assembly this month. In response, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has maintained its strong objections to country-specific resolutions and mandates, although it is open to non-country specific cooperation on human rights.

The pursuit of accountability continues to be an urgent priority on the human rights agenda for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In 2016, the Human Rights Council appointed a group of independent experts on accountability who recommended, in their report to the Council in March, that steps be taken to strengthen the current monitoring and analysis efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including through the recruitment of additional staff and setting up a central repository to be used in any future accountability mechanism.

While emphasis is placed on the political and security situation, the crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been forgotten on the global humanitarian agenda. An estimated 18 million people — 70 per cent of the population — are suffering from food insecurity, and 10.5 million people — 41 per cent of the population — are undernourished. The

situation is even more critical given the current lack of funding.

In response to the accelerated nuclear and ballistic-missile testing, the Security Council has strengthened its sanctions regime on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with three additional resolutions since the previous meeting. In his latest report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has alerted us to the possibility that sanctions may have a detrimental impact on livelihoods and medical care, and requested that human rights be given due consideration when drafting and assessing sanctions resolutions. Humanitarian partners operating in the country have reported increasing operational challenges, including custom clearances for life-saving items, the procurement of humanitarian supplies, the transport of goods and rising food prices, which have risen by 160 per cent since April. In addition, the banking channel for the international organizations working in the country has broken down for the third time in the past seven years.

In its latest resolution — specifically, in paragraph 26 of resolution 2375 (2017) — the Security Council reaffirms that the measures imposed by the relevant resolutions are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or to negatively affect or restrict the activities and work of international and non-governmental organizations that are carrying out assistance and relief activities for the benefit of the civilian population in the country. I take note of the communication of 8 December to all Member States from the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), offering clarifications on that point and highlighting mechanisms to seek exemptions for humanitarian activities. With that in mind, I would like to make four requests.

First, I encourage all international and non-governmental organizations that are facing operational challenges to use the established process to inform or seek the necessary guidance or exemption from the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). Doing so helps to remove ambiguity and provides reassurance for the relevant entities and partners to facilitate the work of such organizations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Secondly, I urge the 1718 Committee to continue to expeditiously review those requests to ensure that

the already fragile humanitarian situation does not deteriorate further.

Thirdly, I urge all Member States to support the life-saving activities in the country. Funding for relief activities is essential. Approximately \$114 million are required to address the critical humanitarian needs in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I echo the 1718 Committee's communication to Member States, which emphasizes the obligation of each Member State to comply with sanctions obligations and exemptions, including by clarifying to public and private-sector entities that humanitarian activities should not be unduly restricted.

Finally, I call on financial institutions to exercise their corporate and social responsibility by providing life-saving banking services to the humanitarian organizations in the country. The channel would be sent to the Security Council for approval.

The United Nations remains committed to contributing to further efforts to reach a peaceful and negotiated solution to the outstanding issues, and to ensuring genuine and meaningful improvement to the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United Nations system is ready to assist the call of the General Assembly on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to

“engage constructively with international interlocutors with a view to promoting concrete improvements in the human rights situation on the ground, including through human rights dialogues, official visits to the country that include adequate access to fully assess human rights conditions, cooperation initiatives and more people-to-people contact as a matter of priority” (*A/C.3/72/L.40, para. 20*).

To conclude, let us use all the tools at our disposal — the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the United Nations system and other international entities — to take action to build a better future for the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The President: I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Al Hussein.

Mr. Al-Hussein: This is the fourth briefing to the Council by my Office in as many years on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and I regret

that it is impossible for me to point to any significant improvement in the human rights situation.

The international security crisis regarding the actions taken by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ought not to negate our deep concerns about the human rights situation of ordinary people in the country. Security tensions seem to have deepened the extremely serious human rights violations endured by the 25 million people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Our picture of the situation is necessarily incomplete, given my staff's lack of access to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, escapees have reported to us extremely widespread violations of rights in almost every aspect of people's lives.

I will begin with the horrific conditions in the country's large network of prisons and labour camps. Testimonies collected by my Office indicate that torture is widespread in detention centres overseen by the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of People's Security, where it is used to extract information or confessions from people suspected of planning to leave the country, communicating with the outside world by using foreign telecommunications networks or engaging in smuggling activities. Detainees work in mines or infrastructure projects in conditions of severe deprivation. People held in such camps have told my staff of being beaten by prison guards or other inmates and being fed so little they barely survived. Moreover, while it has been possible to gather some information on the situation in regular prison facilities and labour camps, there is absolute secrecy when it comes to people detained in the five political prison camps that are also reportedly operational. The interviews of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with people who have left the Democratic People's Republic of Korea indicate that fear of being sent to those camps is a powerful instrument of control.

In recent months, military tensions have led to more severe controls over freedom of movement and civil and political rights. My Office continues to receive reports of new physical barriers being erected along the border. Increased surveillance by the authorities also makes escape more difficult. People who attempt to leave the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without authorization do so at great risk to their lives. It is now almost impossible to cross the border without engaging a broker or trafficker. Women, who make

up the majority of those who manage to escape the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, are frequently forced by traffickers into sexual exploitation, forced marriage or cheap bonded labour.

A number of escapees are sent back to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite the fact that monitoring by my Office indicates that anyone who leaves the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without authorization will face persecution if returned. Over the past year, OHCHR has received more than 70 reports of women, men and children who escaped to China only to be sent back to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea after the authorities found them to be economic migrants, notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence of human rights violations taking place in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Repatriated escapees are routinely subjected to multiple forms of torture and ill-treatment, including beatings, forced labour, deprivation of food and health care, and sexual violence, at detention centres located on the border with China. Women have told my staff that following their forced return, officials also subjected them to invasive body searches, using methods that may amount to rape under international law. My Office continues to receive reports of people crossing the border carrying poison in case they are caught. In July, a family of five reportedly committed collective suicide as they were about to be taken to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea border for repatriation. Anyone found to have attempted to escape to the Republic of Korea or to contact people there also receives particularly harsh treatment.

The case of Otto Warmbier, an American student who had been sentenced to 15 years in prison in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and who was returned to the United States earlier this year in a coma with extensive loss of brain tissue, is suggestive of the severe violations endured by persons deprived of their liberty in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Three other United States nationals and six nationals of the Republic of Korea are currently detained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and denied access to their families or any outside help. No progress has been made regarding cases of the international abduction or enforced disappearance of foreign nationals. Efforts to locate 12 Japanese nationals and 516 nationals of the Republic of Korea have also been hampered by the deteriorating security situation.

The people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also face severe violations of their economic,

social and cultural rights. They continue to endure chronic food insecurity, due in part to the diversion of resources to military objectives, as well as to laws and practices that make access to basic rights conditional on perceived loyalty to the Government. A failing public distribution system and pervasive corruption in the delivery of public services are forcing people to look for alternative ways to secure access to basic economic and social rights. Even very poor people must frequently pay hefty bribes to enable their children to pursue primary or higher education, engage in private business, register as overseas workers or access health care.

The humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies and others is literally a lifeline for some 13 million acutely vulnerable individuals. However, sanctions may be adversely affecting that essential help. For example, controls over international banking transfers have caused a slowdown in United Nations ground operations, affecting the delivery of food rations, health kits and other humanitarian aid. I would like to ask Council members to conduct an assessment of the human rights impact of sanctions and see that action be taken to minimize their adverse humanitarian consequences.

Above all, every effort must be made to ensure that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea makes urgently needed changes to the country's laws and policies in order to enable greater freedom and access to fundamental services and goods. My Office is implementing Human Rights Council resolution 34/24, following recommendations by the Group of Independent Experts on Accountability pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 31/18 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who urged us to strengthen monitoring efforts by recruiting criminal law experts and establishing a repository of cases to be used in future prosecutions.

The President: I thank Mr. Al Hussein for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Assistant-Secretary-General Jenča and High Commissioner Al-Hussein for their briefings. I am grateful for this discussion today, because we must tell the full story of the North Korean people. Only a few of them, some of whom are with us today, have escaped to

tell the truth about their struggle for freedom. My hope is that we will hear their stories today and add our voices to the cause of basic human rights in North Korea. The systematic human rights violations and abuses of the North Korean Government are more than the cause of its people's suffering. They are a means to a single end — keeping the Kim Jong-un regime in power. The regime is using that power to develop an unnecessary arsenal and support enormous conventional military forces that pose a grave risk to international peace and security.

Their menacing march towards building a nuclear-weapon arsenal begins with the oppression and exploitation of ordinary North Korean people. By exporting workers abroad to earn hard currency and exploiting forced labour at home, the regime uses its people to underwrite its nuclear and ballisti-missile programmes. The Government has developed a strict caste system designed to control and suppress the will of the people. The regime forces the North Korean people to work up to 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week, often with no compensation. Failure to report to an assigned job can result in imprisonment in a forced labour camp for six months to two years. Non-governmental organizations have revealed video footage of children as young as five years old forced to carry out heavy labour in dangerous conditions, including work on railroad lines and in mines. Meanwhile, the Kim regime not only builds nuclear weapons, it builds theme parks and high-rises in Pyongyang for the elite and politically obedient, where they live in relative comfort. The remaining 85 per cent of North Koreans must obtain permission to enter the city. The country is dotted with military checkpoints to ensure that everyone stays where the Government wants him or her to be.

Worse, the North Korean Government imprisons an estimated 100,000 North Koreans, including children, in political prison camps. There, they face torture, forced labour, summary executions, starvation, sexual violence and other forms of inhumane treatment. Many of those detained are in the camps not because of anything they did but because of something a family member did. The North Korean regime's system of guilt by association allows for up to three generations of family members to be imprisoned along with the accused. Defectors have reported that all North Koreans aged 12 and older are required to attend public

executions — a graphic reminder of the consequences of disobedience to the Government.

The regime bans foreign media. Radios and televisions are fixed to State media channels. State security officials regularly raid apartment buildings in an effort to catch individuals with foreign media. Punishment for possession of a foreign DVD or SD card can include imprisonment or even execution.

And it is not just North Koreans who suffer under this system. A large number of Japanese and other citizens have been abducted by the North Korean Government over the past few decades. Many of their family members still do not know what has become of their loved ones. Nor can we overlook the terrorist acts that the North Korean Government has committed against both its own nationals and other nationals abroad, most recently in Kuala Lumpur.

But even for North Koreans trying to escape, the road to freedom is dangerous and sometimes deadly. They must survive border guards who shoot to kill. They must contend with traffickers who lure them into forced labour, sex work or forced marriages, and then they must remain undetected as they cross international borders in search of a country that will provide temporary protection. What makes these dangerous escapes even more harrowing is that many defectors do not reach freedom on their first attempt. North Koreans fleeing to neighbouring States are often caught, detained and forcibly repatriated. The regime has subjected returnees to torture, sexual violence, arbitrary detention and imprisonment. In some cases, they are killed.

The majority of asylum-seekers are women. They pay the highest price for being captured and repatriated. In addition to certain torture, hard labour and other abuses, the regime subjects returned pregnant women to forced abortions in an effort to maintain "ethnic purity". If the baby is born alive, it is killed. These details are so horrific that they are difficult to believe, so today I have invited two remarkably courageous women who were imprisoned multiple times in North Korea before escaping to China. I should like to ask these brave women — Ms. Ji Hyeon-A and Ms. Jo Yuri — to briefly stand to be recognized. Given time constraints, I would like to now share a bit of one of their stories.

Ms. Jo suffered greatly as she sought to flee the repressive North Korean regime. After serving in the

North Korean military for several years, she returned to her hometown to find that her mother had been detained and tortured for dealing with Chinese traders. When her mother was released from detention after two months, she died while Ms. Jo was carrying her home on her back. To make a living, Ms. Jo continued her mother's business working with Chinese traders and also found herself being harassed, jailed and tortured by North Korean security officials. Eventually, after a failed attempt to escape, she landed in a North Korean detention centre, where she was tortured and beaten and nearly lost her life. But she was determined to create a better life for her young daughter, so she tried again. In 2014, she escaped to China, where she was caught but was able to find a way out of detention to reach South Korea in 2015. She is now a successful entrepreneur running a small cosmetics company and works to raise awareness about the terrible conditions in North Korea.

These two amazing women have the kind of courage and persistence that few human beings can claim. I thank them and all other North Korean defectors who survived to tell their stories. They are the voice for the millions of their countrymen and countrywomen who remain trapped in a walking nightmare. The tragic reality, however, is that the North Korean regime and other enabling Member States are creating new stories like this every day.

That is why, immediately following this meeting, the United States will co-host an event on this issue, along with Australia, Canada, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, in Conference Room 1. This will be a rare chance to hear directly from Ms. Ji about her experience in detail. We will also hear from the former Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Justice Michael Kirby, and renowned North Korean human rights expert David Hawk. I urge all Council members to join us and participate in our discussion.

The two North Korean women with us here today, as well as all defectors who have lived to tell their stories, are a source of hope for millions. We must tell and retell their stories until the world knows what is going on in the black box that is North Korea. We must tell and retell their stories so that leaders inside and outside of the Council cannot plead ignorance. We have no excuse not to act. We must insist that the North Korean Government and other relevant Member States immediately implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the Secretary-General and the

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Member States must also provide safe passage or temporary protection for North Korean asylum-seekers. The forcible repatriation of these women means certain torture, sexual violence and hard labour. Too often, it is a death sentence.

During his visit to the South Korean National Assembly in November, President Trump described the obligation we all have to open our eyes to the evil of the North Korean regime and to act. He said:

“It is our responsibility and our duty to confront this danger together, because the longer we wait the greater the danger grows and the fewer the options become”.

The crisis in North Korea is one of human rights and peace and security. History will judge us on how we respond.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to thank Mr. Jenča and Mr. Al Hussein for their briefings on the situation in North Korea.

We cannot but deplore once again this year the disastrous human rights situation in the country, which has hardly changed since the publication, in February 2014, of the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The report concluded:

“The Commission finds that crimes against humanity have been committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State. These crimes against humanity are ongoing”. (*A/HRC/25/CRP.1, para. 1160*)

France condemns the massive violations of human rights carried out by the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, which, unfortunately, are still applicable.

I wish to welcome the Council's decision to hold this meeting on a specific agenda item. This seems all the more necessary given the developments in recent months. While Pyongyang, in violation of its obligations under international law and Council resolutions, continues its illegal nuclear-weapons and ballistic-

missile programmes, the situation of its population remains one of the most tragic in the world. More than half of its people, as has been noted, suffer from serious food and medical insecurity owing to the fact that the resources of the country are being drained and diverted for military programmes, at the expense of the well-being of the people and their most fundamental rights.

That is why it is crucial for the Council to maintain its full focus on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as it is inextricably linked with global peace and security. The development of its military arsenal, on the one hand, and the restrictions placed on basic freedoms, on the other, have largely the same goal. And this goal, let us be clear, is to control the people through fear and to perpetuate a beleaguered totalitarian regime. To achieve that goal, the regime uses a wide array of methods that violate international law. It is that logic, unmatched in the world, that threatens us as a collective. Having just celebrated Human Rights Day yesterday, opening celebrations of the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, our responsibility is to denounce the actions of the North Korean regime, which is locked in a totalitarian logic that clashes directly with the spirit of the Charter and the three pillars that form the basis of the United Nations and international peace.

Despite some progress intended to bring about change in the area of the rights of women or persons with disabilities, human rights violations in North Korea are serious and systematic and their perpetrators continue to enjoy intolerable impunity. The list of abuses is far too long to be exhaustive here: torture, arbitrary detentions, public executions, forced labour, rape, displacement of people, trafficking in human beings — and women in particular. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has received reports of the generalized fear in the camps for political prisoners, the camps which the regime calls "rehabilitation institutes". According to the report of the Special Rapporteur (A/72/394), the apprehension is so fierce that people assume that anyone who disappears must be detained in one of the camps, often for the mere possession of a mobile phone.

I should like to highlight three points of particular concern with implications for third countries. First, we must continue to mobilize for the victims of enforced disappearance, numerous in North Korea, but also among the nationals of neighbouring countries, in particular South Korea and Japan. Those kidnappings, both local

and international, destroy the lives of the victims and their families, who remain ignorant of the fate of their loved ones for years. France reiterates its commitment to combatting this scourge, and encourages all States to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

I would also like to mention the issue of North Korean workers abroad, who are exploited and sometimes condemned to forced labour and deprived of their freedom of movement. That is akin to trafficking in human beings. Most of their income, in foreign currency, is diverted by the North Korean regime to the benefit of nuclear weapons programmes. We are also concerned by the wave of forced repatriations over the past two years. Together, and with all the countries concerned, we must shed light on these practices so that they finally cease.

Thirdly, the fundamental right of freedom of opinion and expression remains undermined by censorship and overshadowed by propaganda. The systematic, illicit and arbitrary surveillance by fellow citizens, the persecution of dissenting or even differing voices are revolting means used by the regime to stifle freedom of opinion and expression and equal access to information. The absolute totalitarianism of Pyongyang maintains a stubborn cloak of darkness around its internal affairs, which allows it to violate the rights of its citizens with complete impunity.

The Council must remain seized of the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in all its aspects and maintain its vigilance. We hope that the Council will be united in calling on the authorities of North Korea to allow access to human rights monitoring bodies, including the Special Rapporteur, and to work with them to put an end to the violations and to fight against the impunity of their perpetrators.

It is essential to maintain strong pressure on the North Korean authorities so as to bring them to assume their responsibility to protect and promote the human rights of their citizens, and to move away from this terrible way of thinking and find their way back to the rule of law.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I should like to begin by thanking Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr. Miroslav Jenča, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for their very powerful interventions today.

We welcome the discussion today in the Council on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Serious human rights violations, such as those described by the briefers should also be seen in the broader context. A lack of respect for the human rights of one's own people is a signpost to a wider disregard for the international norms and standards that form the basis of our international community. In today's Democratic People's Republic of Korea, its leadership's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is built on the back of an unparalleled system of repression directed towards ordinary North Koreans. The links between a lack of respect for human rights, humanitarian crisis, and the threat to international peace and security is clear. Conversely, respect for human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would not only contribute to the well-being and dignity of the people of the country, but also promote security and stability in the region and beyond.

It is very difficult to obtain comprehensive information about the human rights situation in the country. However, the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, successive reports by the Secretary-General and other information, including from civil society organizations, are all consistent in describing the very serious human rights situation in the country.

The list of violations is long, and the violations are systematic, widespread and gross. Violations cut across all areas of human rights, including civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. The list includes reports and witness testimonies of public as well as extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions; torture, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence; and systematic violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion. It also includes a lack of the right to food and the right to health, leading to severe hunger and malnutrition, which is hitting women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons disproportionately hard. Sweden notes the importance of the issue of international abductions and remains very concerned at the lack of positive action by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on returning abducted Japanese and other nationals.

We must make every effort to end impunity, seek accountability and secure truth and justice for all victims. Any attempt to achieve lasting peace and stability demands justice and redress for the victims

of human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We welcome the report of the group of independent experts on accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its recommendations. We further welcome the steps identified by the group that can be taken immediately to contribute to a comprehensive approach towards accountability in the country. Despite the time that has passed since the release of the report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2014 (A/HRC/25/63), the relevance and urgency of the Commission's recommendations have not diminished, and need to be implemented.

We welcome the important work carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Seoul and the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and strongly urge the Government to grant the Special Rapporteur and other mandate-holders full, free and unimpeded access to the country. In that respect, we welcome the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a step in the right direction.

The Council has previously expressed its regret that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea diverts critical resources into expensive weapons programmes despite the fact that the humanitarian needs in the country remain enormous — not least as regards food security — as we heard this morning. The responsibility to protect and uphold the well-being of its people indisputably falls on the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The humanitarian crisis is a manifestation of its disregard for the human rights of its people.

Sweden and other parts of the international community continue to provide life-saving assistance. But more is needed, including support for the United Nations' humanitarian appeal for the country, which remains severely underfunded. Our embassy in Pyongyang has been in regular contact with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea authorities and humanitarian organizations. We understand that the ability of those organizations' ability to provide much-needed assistance has been reduced. Other reports have confirmed those worrying findings. We remind the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its obligation to provide to

humanitarian organizations the access they need to perform their work. It is of the utmost importance that the humanitarian exemptions provided for under the sanctions are upheld, as underlined by the Secretary-General through Assistant Secretary-General Jenča today. Today's meeting of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) is an important opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Sweden encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate with the international community and to engage constructively with the United Nations system, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must realize that its system of repression cannot survive indefinitely. People will always find ways to evade it, gain access to information and even escape. History has shown us that the human spirit will eventually triumph. The same will one day be true for the people of North Korea.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Senegalese delegation, to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Miroslav Jenča, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, for their respective briefings.

My delegation is of the view that each State must ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of its citizens, thereby contributing to the reinforcement of domestic and international peace and security. It is my country's conviction that the enjoyment of human rights is essential to the dignity of any human being. That is why in my country, protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms is a cardinal principle, founded in respect for the diversity of our human societies and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to create conditions conducive to strengthened international cooperation in the area of human rights, while underscoring their universal, indivisible and interdependent nature.

Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on sustaining peace, and the identical General Assembly resolution 70/262, adopted in April 2016, underscores the close link between human rights and domestic and international peace and security. We also believe that it, as independent and sovereign States, we must engage in solidarity on all issues, including human rights, on the basis of mutual respect and constructive dialogue. It is in

that spirit that we have provided special mechanisms to promote and protect human rights throughout the world. That remains a constant challenge that also constitutes one of the three pillars of the Organization. Indeed, the mechanisms established by the United Nations — the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review and other bodies established through international instruments — are complementary and relevant tools that, while always susceptible to improvement, can address human rights issues, as noted in various reports of the Secretary-General on the issue.

The information provided by today's briefers, Mr. Jenča and Mr. Al Hussein, to which the Senegalese delegation pays great heed, are strongly disconcerting and indicate that the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including that of foreigners held in detention, constitutes a threat to international peace and security. That is why we take special note of the briefing of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Senegal encourages that country to better cooperate with the relevant mechanisms on the promotion of human rights, including the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The denuclearization and stabilization of the Korean peninsula require, inter alia, an improvement of the human rights situation, including by taking better into account the humanitarian consequences of the sanctions measures imposed on the country.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, and Mr. Miroslav Jenča for their harrowing words on the dire situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Sadly, it is unsurprising that the regime maintains a stranglehold on every aspect of its citizens' lives. Like other Security Council members, the United Kingdom views the human rights situation in North Korea with deep concern and dismay. The regime's treatment of its own people is yet another example of its unashamed contempt for the international rules-based system. That is why we fully support the Security Council's wish to draw attention to the shameful living conditions of the North Korean people, as well as to North Korea's

illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which we have condemned in resolutions 2371 (2017) and 2375 (2017). We must maintain international focus on the human rights situation in North Korea, through both the United Nations in New York and the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We welcome the visit of the United Nations last week and we encourage the regime to engage in a meaningful way.

Evidence of the leadership's appalling behaviour towards its own people is impossible to ignore. People lack freedom of religion and expression. They have minimal control over their livelihoods and resources. The State controls what they see, what they consume and how they behave, using the threat of extreme punishment to keep people under its thumb. Naysayers are disappeared, jailed or publicly executed to demonstrate the price of freedom. The *Global Slavery Index* estimates that more than 1 million people are victims of modern slavery in North Korea.

Yet, we know from defector testimonies that despite the fear instilled in every North Korean, there are many brave individuals who would rather take their chances fleeing than remain gagged and bound by the regime, such as the soldier who recently defected across the Demilitarized Zone. His daring escape was an act of desperation, as well as of hope. His starved physical condition speaks volumes about the standards of health and welfare in a country that professes to put the military first, thereby speaking to how the regime treats those who are most vulnerable. We urge all members not to return defectors back to such a miserable situation, which would send a message that we condone the behaviour of the regime. We also urge all members not to profit from the North Korean people's misery by employing North Korean nationals who are sent abroad to generate foreign currency, which is used by the regime to fund its illegal missile programmes, as stated in resolution 2321 (2016).

The systematic violations of human rights by the regime go beyond its own citizens or borders. The death of United States citizen Otto Warmbier following his detention, the abduction of 17 Japanese nationals by the regime and the assassination of Kim Jong-nam in Malaysia are all examples of the North Korean regime's contempt for the international rules-based system. Such contempt is further exemplified by the regime's denial of access to independent observers of the human rights situation, its refusal to engage in meaningful dialogue and its lack of action on the 2014

commission of inquiry's report, which highlighted wide-ranging and ongoing crimes against humanity. The regime has rejected draft resolution A/C.3/72/L.40 of the Third Committee, which calls upon it to respect the basic rights of its people. Today, I repeat the United Kingdom's call on North Korea to allow human rights actors immediate and unhindered access to assess the human rights situation in the country.

Our message to the regime must be clear and united. We must use all of the diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal to deliver that message. There is a very different path that is still open to the regime. That path leads to security and prosperity. It leads to improved lives for its citizens. All of the members of the Council and beyond must work together to persuade the North Korean leadership to pursue that path. In order to do so, it must end illegal missile tests. It must genuinely engage with the international community. It must take serious steps to improve the human right situation for all of its citizens. Real, positive change to the livelihoods of the North Korean people will not happen overnight, but it will not happen at all for as long as North Korea pursues its current course.

We are committed to working with partners on the Council and beyond to tackle that challenge. The world looks to us all and, above all, to the North Korean regime to support a change for the better.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank the Japanese presidency for the timely and important topic suggested for consideration in the Security Council. My special thanks go to Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein for their substantive briefings.

Today, the Council meets for the fourth time to discuss the situation of human rights in North Korea. We reiterate our strong support for the idea of holding such meetings. We do not share the position that human rights are the exclusive purview of the Human Rights Council.

Ukraine reaffirms its stance that systematic and consistent gross human rights violations are a clear early-warning sign and indication of a credible threat to international peace and security, the maintenance of which is the primary responsibility of the Security Council.

Regrettably, the human rights situation in North Korea over the past year has not changed for better. It

still remains dire. Ukraine welcomes the first visit since 1995 to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 1995 of a special procedure mandate-holder, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the strategic framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the Government for the period 2017-2021, launched in January 2017.

Yet the facts mentioned today by the briefers and by previous speakers prove that the human rights situation in North Korea continues to deteriorate. Urgent steps must be taken by the international community to reverse the targeted policy of systematic human rights violations by the North Korean regime.

The latest report of the Secretary-General highlights that

“serious and widespread violations of the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right to a fair trial remain of concern” (A/72/279, para. 4).

Indeed, even George Orwell, who thought he described the extreme stage of totalitarianism, would be surprised by the findings of that report.

We are deeply disturbed by the continuous reports regarding grave violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; rape; extrajudicial, summary, arbitrary and public executions; extrajudicial and arbitrary detention; the absence of due process and the rule of law, including fair trial guarantees and an independent judiciary; the imposition of the death penalty for political and religious reasons; collective punishments extending up to three generations; and many others.

I would like to mention in particular the issue of the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea. Twelve Japanese citizens abducted in the 1970s and 1980s are still missing; no clarification of their fate has been provided to date. In that regard, we fully support the call of the Secretary-General to all stakeholders to take all steps necessary to resolve the issue of family separation, promote accountability for cases of enforced disappearance and ensure that mechanisms are in place for relatives in the two countries to remain in touch and reunite.

We all know that the North Korean regime continues to build up its military arsenal at the

expense of its own people and uses the country's limited resources to support prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. The impact of diverting resources, including earnings generated by nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea working abroad, has already provoked a steady deterioration in the quality of life of ordinary citizens, which is a matter of particular concern to us.

We commend and fully support the establishment of the group of independent experts on accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Moreover, we advocate imposing further pressure on those responsible for human rights violations that may constitute crimes against humanity. We also support the initiative of the group to consider the scope for establishing an ad hoc international tribunal for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The engagement of a broad range of actors — Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society — is important for effective synergy of diplomatic strategies and actions, including the vigorous implementation of existing sanctions, to push the North Korean leadership towards changes not only in the sphere of protecting human rights but also in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We call on the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully cooperate with the international community and to ensure safe and unfettered access to the territory of the country for United Nations monitoring mechanisms to fulfil their mandates, in particular for the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Seoul and other independent human rights mechanisms.

Mr. Rosselli Frieri (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Miroslav Jenča, and the United Nations High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, for their briefings today.

For Uruguay, there is a clear, intimate link between the systematic violation of human rights and the generation of conflicts, and the potential for conflicts to become threats to international peace and security.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a cause of major concern, especially given the context in which it occurs. The North Korean population is hostage to will of the authorities, without the most basic freedoms or guarantees provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The violations committed by the North Korean Government of the rights to life, to freedom in the broadest possible sense, and to the security of its people cannot and should not be permitted in the twenty-first century. The very existence of concentration camps and the lack of fair-trial guarantees fundamentally violate all the freedoms of the civilian population of North Korea.

We are furthermore concerned about the extreme poverty affecting the North Korean people. Uruguay therefore condemns the production of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, which has a detrimental effect on the well-being of the population, whose massive needs go unmet. The diversion of resources for nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes has a direct negative impact on the humanitarian and human rights situation of the citizens of North Korea, who suffer major material deprivation and hunger.

Unfortunately, there are many other Governments that commit constant violations and abuses to the human rights of their populations and are not on the Security Council's agenda. However, the situation of Democratic People's Republic of Korea occurs against a particular backdrop that not only threatens to destabilize the Korean peninsula but also threatens international peace and security.

We acknowledge that the Government of North Korea has devoted modest effort to follow up on the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry into the human rights situation in the country. Also, we welcome the launch of the strategic framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic Of Korea for the period 2017-2021, entitled "Towards Sustainable and Resilient Human Development". However, while those are steps in the correct direction, there is still a long way to go.

Last month, the international community expressed its concern about the human rights situation in North Korea once again with the adoption by consensus of the annual draft resolution of the Third Committee on the topic.

I should like to conclude by noting that a solution to the tensions on the Korean Peninsula can be found only through dialogue, negotiations and political commitment. We therefore stress once again the importance of the implementation of the provisions of the numerous resolutions of the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the resumption of the Six-Party Talks to contribute to a lasting political solution.

Mr. Cardì (Italy): At the outset, I wish to thank the Japanese presidency of the Security Council for organizing this meeting. The intimate link between violations of human rights and the repercussions for the maintenance of international peace and security cannot be denied. This is particularly evident in the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as highlighted by resolutions 2371 (2017) and 2375 (2017). Hence we believe that the present meeting fully falls within the scope and the mandate of the Security Council.

I also wish to thank Mr. Jenča and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their briefings. I look forward to Mr. Feltman's upcoming briefing on his recent visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Italy expresses its gravest concern about the human rights situation and the lack of accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The North Korean regime continues to deny its citizens even the most basic of rights and liberties enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights conventions and instruments. In particular, we have noted with great concern the reported surge in arbitrary detentions, unsolved cases of abductions and enforced disappearances and widespread torture, as well as forced repatriations and numerous other gross human rights violations that continue to affect North Korean people in different ways, some of which can be rightly considered as crimes against humanity.

Social and political repression is a distinctive feature of the protracted isolation in which North Koreans are forced to live. The systematic suppression of such rights is among the regime's top priorities as it suffocates any form of dissent in order to ensure its own survival. We must not forget the tens of thousands of political prisoners who continue to be subjected to the harshest forms of abuse in the regime's network of camps.

Full accountability for those flagrant violations of international norms and conventions must be ensured, including through International Criminal Court referrals. While regretting that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Ojea Quintana, has not yet been allowed to visit the country, we paid close attention to his visit to the Republic of Korea in July.

We are gravely concerned in particular by the issue of abductions of Japanese citizens and other nationals. In that regard, we firmly call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea authorities to show genuine commitment and make concrete steps to address the issue and to resume full investigations on what happened.

We also strongly condemn the exploitation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its own national workers abroad, whose revenues are forcibly employed by the Government to fund its illegal programmes and activities. The Security Council took a firm stance on this issue in resolution 2375 (2017) by prohibiting the issuance of permits for North Korean workers in connection with admission to their respective territories. We urge all Member States to ensure the full and effective implementation of that provision.

Moreover, we remain deeply concerned about the consequences of the protracted, entrenched humanitarian situation in the country, where well over half of the population suffers from major insecurity in food and medical care. That falls within the context of direct responsibility of the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which diverges essential resources away from the population's needs to fund its nuclear programme. We therefore wish to reiterate our call on the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take action on the accepted recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and those of the Commission of Inquiry as a matter of priority. We also call upon the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to seriously enact constructive engagement with international interlocutors, particularly in the field of human rights, in order to promote dialogue and explore possibilities of cooperation.

Throughout our Security Council mandate in 2017, we have closely monitored the evolution of the overall situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We believe that the protection of human rights should

be central to any policy of rapprochement and dialogue with Pyongyang authorities in order to ensure the welfare and dignity of people in the country. As Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) this year, Italy has made its best efforts, in close cooperation with other Council members, to ensure that human rights and humanitarian concerns are given primary consideration.

Allow me to recall that Security Council resolutions clearly state that the Committee may, on a case-by-case basis, exempt any activity from the measures imposed by the Council if the Committee determines that such an exemption is necessary to facilitate the work of such organizations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In that spirit, this afternoon the 1718 Committee will hear a briefing by Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on United Nations operations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and how humanitarian activities can be carried out without being affected or hindered by the strengthening of the sanctions regime.

I would also like to recall that, in the framework of the General Assembly Third Committee, as a member of the European Union, together with Japan we have been among the main sponsors of the draft resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adopted by consensus a few weeks ago.

Allow me to conclude by underscoring that the two aims of pursuing accountability for human rights violations and promoting engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to address the situation reinforce rather than undermine one another, as highlighted also by Mr. Ojea Quintana in his latest report (see A/72/394).

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and High Commissioner Al Hussein for their briefings on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We supported the proposal to discuss this item in the Chamber based on the understanding and vision that all issues — even those that are the most sensitive, difficult and complex — should be addressed through constructive dialogue in a balanced and equitable manner with all Member States.

At the same time, while the political and security situation has a direct impact on human rights, as in the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

we believe that the Human Rights Council is a more appropriate platform to discuss country-specific human rights issues. The mechanisms and procedures of the Human Rights Council, as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, play a key role in monitoring human rights in all countries and have the appropriate mandate and experience to address them. We also reiterate that human rights must be seen in an impartial and objective way, in keeping with the accepted principles of international law, and should be realized through diplomacy, mediation, inclusive dialogue and capacity-building.

We have taken note of some positive developments, such as to include a human rights-based approach in the strategic framework between the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United Nations for the period 2017-2021. We also see that the recommendations of the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in relation to humanitarian support and the rights of women and children, as well as to health care and education, are being implemented. Another step forward has been the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

We encourage Pyongyang to continue substantive and constructive engagement with the United Nations human rights system to effectively follow the guidance and directives of international human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies. We also call on North Korea to resume negotiations with Japan to bring the issue of Japanese abductees to a close.

In addition, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to allocate more resources for development goals, including overcoming food shortages and malnutrition and providing decent basic social services to its population, instead of spending more on developing its nuclear programme.

Once again, we encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to hear the message of humankind and seek the path of prudence and dialogue. We hope that, in response to the concrete steps that Pyongyang takes in implementing the United Nations recommendations, the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will ease. That will allow the much-needed sustainable international funding to be channelled into humanitarian assistance, therefore improving overall conditions in the country.

Kazakhstan joins the international community in working for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

To achieve that goal, we must redouble our efforts to introduce confidence-building measures and revitalize and conduct meaningful, sincere dialogue to create a balance between accountability and engagement in order to improve the human rights and living standards of people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča and to High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein for their briefings.

For the past three years, the Security Council has taken up the issue of systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations in North Korea. However, we have not yet seen tangible improvements. In resolutions 2371 (2017) and 2375 (2017), which were unanimously adopted this year, the Security Council reiterates its deep concern about the grave hardship to which the people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are subjected.

The Security Council also condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for pursuing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles instead of the welfare of its people, while the people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have great unmet needs. According to recent United Nations findings, significantly more than half of the people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea suffer from major food insecurity and lack of medical care, including a very large number of pregnant and lactating women, and children under five years of age, who are at risk of malnutrition, and nearly a quarter of its total population is suffering from chronic malnutrition.

However, instead of addressing those urgent issues, North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests and launched 40 ballistic missiles since January 2016. Not only is the quantity outrageous, but the qualitative advancements are also deeply alarming. Just two weeks ago, for the third time, a ballistic missile with an intercontinental range was launched. North Korea claims that that missile can strike anywhere within the United States mainland. It is essential for the international community to maximize pressure on North Korea, including through the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and make North Korea change its policies. North Korea has consistently ignored the obligations under the relevant

Security Council resolutions, and challenged regional stability, as well as international peace and security, while violating the human rights of its people. The Security Council must continue to address this agenda item within its mandate.

I also wish to highlight the issue of North Korean workers abroad. In its resolution 2371 (2017), the Council expressed concern regarding situations in which North Korean nationals often work abroad for the purpose of generating foreign currency that North Korea subsequently uses to support its prohibited nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. Japan, together with the European Union, pointed out in the General Assembly resolution 71/202 that workers sent abroad are exploited by North Korea. That is another stark example of the close link between the human rights situation and the pursuit of nuclear and missile development by North Korea.

Let me now touch upon the issue of the abduction of foreign nationals, including Japanese nationals. As the report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea states,

“the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has engaged in the systematic abduction, denial of repatriation and subsequent enforced disappearance of persons from other countries on a large scale and as a matter of State policy.”(*A/HRC/25/63, para. 64*)

Abduction is a grave issue concerning the sovereignty of countries involved and the lives and safety of their citizens, and it undoubtedly poses a threat to international peace and security. In the past, North Korean agents infiltrated Japan and abducted a number of Japanese citizens, including a girl as young as 13-years-old.

Abductees' futures have been stolen, and their families torn apart. Even now, at this very moment, many abductees are being deprived of freedom and waiting to be rescued. As the abductees and their families grow older, that issue can afford no further delay. Some family members have passed away, without ever seeing their loved ones again. There is no time to waste in resolving the issue. I sincerely hope that the international community will work closely together to realize the immediate return of all abductees.

In March, the Group of Independent Experts on Accountability for Human Rights Violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea submitted a

report to the Human Rights Council that emphasizes the importance of ensuring accountability for North Korea's grave human rights violations, including the country's abduction of foreign nationals. For the implementation of the relevant recommendations made in the report, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including its field-based structure in Seoul. Japan intends to continue to actively cooperate with the activities of the Office in that regard.

Today I strongly urge North Korea to heed the messages from the Security Council, the General Assembly and the report of the commission of inquiry. It must start taking concrete steps towards resolving all outstanding issues of serious human rights violations, stop its acts of provocation and cease its nuclear and missile development programmes, which pose a threat to international peace and security. The Council should continue to hold meeting on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan intends to continue to participate.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): Let me first express my gratitude to you, Sir, for convening today's meeting on the human rights situation in North Korea. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important meeting. I also thank Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for their informative and comprehensive briefings.

One year ago in this Chamber, I made my first statement (see S/PV.7830) as Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea on this issue of great significance for the future of our divided nation. I did so with a heavy heart and an earnest desire to see a genuine improvement in the human rights situation in the northern half of the Korean peninsula, but no progress has been made during the past year, which is indeed a source of profound disappointment and regret.

Even at this very moment, systematic, widespread and grave human rights violations are being committed somewhere in North Korea, and many North Koreans

continue to risk their lives to cross the border in search of freedom and a dignified life as human beings. Last month, we even witnessed with our own eyes a North Korean soldier being shot by his fellow soldiers during his dramatic escape from the north. Fortunately, he was brought back to life from the brink of death thanks to the soldiers in the south who took a measured response with sound judgement in a situation in which sharp tensions could have triggered a military clash.

At long last, he was given a priceless opportunity to live the new life for which he had desperately yearned. More than 30,000 defectors, including that soldier, have escaped from North Korea and settled in the south over the past decades. That simple fact is an eloquent testimony to how grave and dire the human rights situation in North Korea is today. Words cannot describe the pain and suffering of those who, for whatever reasons, were forced to be sent back to North Korea after attempting to escape from the north.

The report of the Secretary-General on the human rights situation in North Korea (see A/72/279) submitted to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly this year states that the North Koreans repatriated to their country are constantly at risk of torture and ill-treatment and that some women are even subject to unimaginable human rights violations, such as forced abortion.

The root cause of those human rights abuses suffered by the North Korean people is the preoccupation of the North Korean regime with its own security, for which it is ready to employ whatever means available, including through the development of nuclear weapons, while completely ignoring the basic human rights of its own people and turning a blind eye to their livelihoods. This year, yet again, North Korea conducted a nuclear test and 15 ballistic missile launches. A huge amount of money, which should have been invested in the well-being of its people, has been squandered on developing weapons of mass destruction. Such irresponsible behaviour threatens the very survival and the dignified life of its people, who are already at risk.

Resolution 2375 (2017) also expresses deep concern over North Korea's massive diversion of its scarce resources towards the development of nuclear weapons and missile programmes and the grave hardship that it has brought to its people. The reason that the Security Council has been discussing the North Korean human rights situation for four consecutive years is also

because it views this matter not only as a human rights issue but also as an issue that poses a serious threat to international peace and security. The North Korean nuclear and human rights problems are two sides of the same coin. Seeking to improve the human rights situation in North Korea without addressing the root causes behind the deterioration of the situation is as irrational as climbing a tree to catch a fish.

North Korea should abandon its nuclear and missile programmes, abide by international norms and recommendations, including all the relevant Security Council resolutions, and invest more of its resources in the livelihood and welfare of its people. The international community, for its part, must continue to raise its voice of concern and compassion so that North Korea changes its course and makes substantial improvement in protecting and promoting the human rights of its own people.

While I was listening to the briefings on the human rights situation in North Korea earlier this morning, I was overwhelmed by deep sorrow and painfully realized anew that our brothers and sisters in the North are living such strikingly different lives from our own. Such human suffering, caused by the division of our nation, however, is not confined only to those of our compatriots in the North.

Most of those who suffered from the separation of their families due to the Korean War seven decades ago have already passed away, and those who survived are now over the age of 80. To the Koreans, the anguish of that family separation is the most urgent humanitarian and human rights problem, which needs to be addressed without further delay. It is my earnest desire that, sooner than later, those Koreans who were separated from their families against their will and have longed for reunion with them their entire lives can rejoice in being united with their loved ones, hugging and caressing each other's cheeks.

In his address in Berlin last July, President Moon Jae-in stated: "Before more members of separated families leave us behind, we must wipe their tears." Once again, we urge the North Korean authorities to respond immediately to our proposal for the resumption of family reunions.

The Third Committee draft resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea, adopted on 14 November, refers to another significant humanitarian issue, that is, the human rights problem of so-called

non-Democratic People's Republic of Korea citizens detained in North Korea, including six South Koreans. The families of those detainees are struggling day and night with anxiety and worry, as they have no idea whatsoever where and how their lost families are living. The North Korean authorities should provide them with adequate protection, allow them to contact their families and immediately take the necessary measures for them to return to their beloved families as soon as possible. That is an imperative humanitarian call.

I believe that only when the people of North Korea can enjoy a normal life as ordinary citizens like the rest of us, pursuing their dreams and visions and having the opportunity to realize their potential as human beings, will peace on the Korean peninsula be sustainable. In that regard, the endeavours of the international community to improve the human rights situation in North Korea are also linked to the establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula, including through the resolution of the North Korean issue. More opportunities should therefore be provided for North Koreans to communicate and to interact with the outside world so that they can pursue a normal, dignified life, enjoying their basic human rights.

As was seen by the recent visit to North Korea by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, North Korea has been showing an interest in working with the United Nations human rights mechanism, albeit in a limited way, and that has drawn due attention from the international community. We urge the North Korean authorities to further expand their cooperation with the international community with a view to making progress in protecting the human rights of their people. The international community will wholeheartedly welcome North Korea sincerely heeding its call.

I have a firm conviction that the day will definitely come when all Koreans, on both sides of the divide, will live in a unified country together as compatriots sharing the same blood. I sincerely hope and expect that the international community will continue to watch the human rights situation in North Korea until all its people, including in particular the children who will take part in building our shared future, can enjoy a dignified, healthy and happy life.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.