

The Government of the Republic of Korea

- 1. What concrete measures have you (as an individual, an organization or a State) taken to advance accountability for serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?**
- 2. What steps are you (as an individual, an organization or a State) intending to take to further advance the accountability measures for serious human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?**

### Cumulative Response

In order to ensure accountability for serious human rights violations in North Korea, the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) has taken a systematic approach to investigating and documenting the human rights situation in North Korea and is sharing the results with the international community.

In September 2016, the Ministry of Unification established the Center for North Korean Human Rights Records. The Center has been conducting a survey on the human rights situation in North Korea with defectors coming to the Republic of Korea. The survey is administered through in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The results of the survey, including the content of the violation, institutions responsible for the violation, and identity of the perpetrators are documented.

From 2017 to 2023, 3,553 defectors were surveyed and 2,177 questionnaires were delivered to the North Korea Human Rights Documentation Office under the Ministry of Justice<sup>1</sup>.

The ROK government plans to broaden the scope of the survey participants from the defectors in Hanawon to include those who have already settled in the Republic of Korea, aiming to better document human rights violations in North Korea.

Moreover, to hold perpetrators accountable, the North Korea Human Rights Documentation Office will conduct a more detailed analysis of North Korea's human rights records and build a comprehensive database. The focus will be on elements constituting crimes, including crimes against humanity.

In March 2023, the ROK government released its first human rights report on North Korea, *2023 Report on North Korean Human Rights*.

The report was written based on the testimonies of 508 defectors who have entered the Republic of Korea since 2017. The report contributed to improving people's understanding of North Korean human rights issues, both inside and outside the Republic of Korea.

Conferences were held to raise awareness on the importance of documenting the human rights situation in North Korea and having accountability mechanisms.

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<sup>1</sup> The North Korea Human Rights Documentation Office was established in October 2016 under the North Korean Human Rights Act (enacted in September 2016) to analyze and ensure accountability for various human rights violations in North Korea. The office is modeled after the Central Register of State Judicial Administrations (Die Zentrale Erfassungsstelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen) in Salzgitter, West Germany, which investigated criminal reports collected on human rights violations in East Germany.

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In 2023, the Ministry of Unification hosted eight Interactive Dialogues on North Korean Human Rights issues. In particular, the 4th Interactive Dialogue focused on the theme, "Role and Tasks of the Government and Civil Society in Investigating and Documenting the Human Rights Situation in North Korea." During this session, participants from diverse backgrounds, including scholars, experts, civil society organizations, and international organizations, deliberated on measures aimed at strengthening public-private partnerships, including enhancing access to information regarding the human rights situation in North Korea.

Following the release of the *2023 Report on North Korean Human Rights*, a conference was held to discuss with experts the importance of investigating and documenting the human rights situation in North Korea.

The ROK government is providing support for civil society activities to ensure accountability for human rights violations in North Korea and will continue to make efforts to strengthen public-private partnerships in this regard.

Civil society organizations are undertaking accountability projects. The ROK government is providing support for these projects, including capacity-building programs such as workshops and conferences for those working on North Korean human rights issues.

The ROK government is in the process of enacting domestic legislation following its accession to the *Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* on January 4, 2023. As this bill provides the basis for punishing crimes of enforced disappearance by North Korea, it will contribute to promoting accountability for the grave human rights violations in North Korea.

- 3. If some of the actions you (as an individual, an organization or a State) have been taking are guided by the recommendations made by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issued in February 2014, please specify which recommendations and explain how they have influenced your work.**

#### Cumulative Response

The recommendations made by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) have positively contributed to expanding discussions on North Korean human rights issues in the Republic of Korea and the international community.

Based on recommendation 1224, the ROK government has been providing support for the work of civil society organizations since 2023 to promote the human rights situation in North Korea.

The ROK government provided financial support of 2 billion Korean Won (KRW) to 18 organizations in 2023.

In total, 29 projects benefited from financial assistance. These projects include a capacity-building program for the next generation of activists for North Korean human rights issues, as well as cultural and artistic projects, including opera, movies and theatrical plays. Additionally, there was a conference with the Sage Group on North Korean human rights issues, featuring Justice Michael Kirby (former Chair of the

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UN COI), Marzuki Darusman (former special rapporteur on North Korean human rights issues), and other renowned experts.

In 2024, 1.8 billion KRW is allocated for funding relevant projects, and the application process is already underway.

Based on recommendations 1222, 1223, and 1225-(i), the ROK government is urging North Korea to pursue inter-Korean dialogues for exchanges, humanitarian assistance and consultations. However, the North Korean authority has not responded to these proposals, neglecting the well-being of its own people.

In September 2022, the Minister of Unification officially proposed an inter-Korean government to government dialogue on the separated family issue to the North Korean authority. The ROK government reaffirms that it stands ready to engage in a dialogue with North Korea.

In addition, the ROK government reaffirms its position that it is willing to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea irrespective of the political and military situation.

With regard to recommendation 1225-(c), the ROK government supported the establishment of the Seoul Office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 2015 and is providing support for the accountability activities of the Seoul Office.