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

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, **

Summary

The present report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Elizabeth Salmón, is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 58/17. In the report, the Special Rapporteur provides an update on the overall political and human rights situation, analyses the progress made in the implementation of recommendations made during the universal periodic review and proposes further monitoring.

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I. Introduction

1. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has engaged with some international human rights mechanisms to certain extent. The country has participated in four cycles of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council and has supported hundreds of recommendations. Despite those engagements with United Nations human rights mechanisms, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in 2025, assessed that the overall human rights situation over the past 10 years had showed no improvement and, in many instances, had degraded, despite some isolated steps taken.[1] In the present report, the Special Rapporteur proposes ways to better use the recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review to improve the realization of human rights of people in the State.

II. Current political and human rights situation

2. The assistance provided by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Russian Federation, including the deployment of an estimated 14,000 military personnel to the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, has further strengthened the military and economic ties between the two countries. After assuming office in June 2025, the new administration of the President of the Republic of Korea, Lee Jae Myung, suspended the loudspeakers that had been broadcasting negative messages and urged individuals to refrain from sending leaflets across the border. The President emphasized the need for reopening dialogue, pursuing "peaceful coexistence" [2] on the Korean Peninsula and placing reunification as the ultimate goal. On 28 July, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea described its stance on inter-Korean relations as follows: "there can be no change in our State's understanding of the enemy".[3] At the General Assembly in October 2025, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, criticizing military exercises conducted by Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America, stated that "we will never give up nuclear, which is our State law, national policy and sovereign power, as well as the right to existence".[4] During the visit of the President of the United States, Donald Trump, to the Republic of Korea in October 2025, a meeting with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was reportedly considered but did not take place. The new Prime Minister of Japan, Takaichi Sanae, in November 2025, stated that she had conveyed her desire to hold a summit with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to solve the abductions issue.[5] In 2025, an initiative of a group of States Members of the United Nations, the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team,[6] issued two reports, one on military cooperation[7] and the other on the cybersecurity threats posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[8]

3. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to emphasize that it is improving the living standards of its people. On food production, the law on account settlement and income distribution in farms, adopted in 2025, is focused on "raising the zeal" of farmers with the goal of incentivizing production and building trust that harvests will be fairly allocated.[9] The State media also reported in November that the planned construction of

[1] A/HRC/60/58, para. 50.
[2] See https://unikorea.go.kr/web/eng_unikorea/bbs/bbs_0000000000000167/351?cp=1&sortOrder=&sortDirection=&bcId=bbs_0000000000000167.
[3] See https://kcnawatch.xyz/newstream/1753655893-503765603/press-statement-of-kim-yo-jong-vice-department-director-of-c-c-wpk/.
[4] See https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/80/kp_en.pdf.
[5] See www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/11/03/japan/politics/takaichi-north-korea-kim-summit/.
[6] The Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team was established by 11 States, following the end of the mandate of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1874 (2009).
[7] See www.mofa.go.jp/files/100853978.pdf.
[8] See www.mofa.go.jp/files/100922716.pdf.
[9] See https://kcnawatch.xyz/newstream/1756546737-611559344/session-of-permanent-commission-of-spa-standing-committee-held/.

thousands of rural dwellings has been successfully completed in Ryanggang Province.[10] Previous such efforts involved the use of forced labour of mobilized people without safety measures or adequate rest. Strict control of the population and surveillance have continued and been further strengthened. Reportedly, since 2024, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras have been replaced with newer ones with facial recognition functions, and the rate of installation of such cameras has increased.[11] Freedom of movement remains severely restricted, and escaping from the State is nearly impossible. In 2025, only 224 escapees (198 women and 26 men) arrived in the Republic of Korea.[12] On 26 January 2026, Tokyo District Court ordered the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to compensate victims of the Paradise on Earth campaign.

4. The United Nations human rights mechanisms have continued to address human rights issues in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In July 2025, the Special Rapporteur conducted her first official visit to Japan and visited Tokyo, Niigata and Osaka. She held discussions with various actors and victims on the issue of enforced disappearances as part of the human rights violations committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that extend beyond its borders. The Special Rapporteur submitted a report to the General Assembly on transnational repression by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the historical abduction and enforced disappearances of foreign nationals, the deployment of military personnel to the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the dispatch of overseas workers and cyberthreat activities, including repression of escapees.[13] On 25 March 2025, the outcome of the review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review was adopted by the Human Rights Council.[14] On 25 September 2025, the Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue to discuss the situation of human rights over the past 10 years in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. At the dialogue, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the aggravated impact of human rights violations on women and the countless efforts made to pursue diverse forms of justice over the past 10 years. On 11 and 12 August 2025, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reviewed the initial report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea submitted pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[15] A delegation from Pyongyang, consisting of officials from the Central Committee of the Korea Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and the Ministry of Public Health, participated in a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

5. In addition, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea participated in the thirtieth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Belém, Brazil, and, in a statement made on 11 November 2025, emphasized its efforts to address natural disasters, including through forest restoration work.[16] The State also supported recommendations on climate change and on early recovery, disaster preparedness and risk mitigation emanating from the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review.[17] The State has worked on education and awareness-raising on climate change and mitigation strategies. Deforestation is one of the key causes of frequent floodings in the State, however, farmers have relied on private plots in the mountains for cultivating food for their own consumption and generating a small income. The Government has reportedly strengthened the ban on private cultivation, as part of its agricultural reform to control the production of grains and also to support the restoration of forests, however, such measures are making farmers' lives more difficult.[18]

[10] See https://kcnawatch.xyz/newstream/1763460182-109535867/rural-dwelling-houses-built-in-ryanggang-province/.
[11] See www.asiapress.org/rimjin-gang/2025/11/photo/cctv-2/.
[12] See www.unikorea.go.kr/web/eng_unikorea/contents/statistics_defectors.
[13] A/80/149.
[14] See Human Rights Council decision 58/108.
[15] CRPD/C/PRK/CO/1.
[16] See DPRKOREA_cop30cmp20cma7_HLS_FR.pdf.
[17] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.146 and 130.147.
[18] See www.asiapress.org/rimjin-gang/2025/04/society-economy/agricultural_reform-6/.

6. On 6 November 2025, the Special Rapporteur, together with four other mandate holders, sent a joint letter[19] to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a decree issued to grant amnesty to those who had been convicted of committing "crimes against the country". The mandate holders asked for details on the implementation of the decree, stating that the release of political prisoners had been continually recommended by the United Nations human rights mechanisms and that, if implemented, the decree could be a positive step.

III. Participation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the universal periodic review

7. The universal periodic review, established in 2006, is an intergovernmental mechanism, and a process driven by States, through which the human rights record of all States is examined every four and a half years. The review procedure is conducted on the basis of information from various sources, including the State under review, the United Nations system, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and regional intergovernmental organizations. The review of each State results in specific recommendations by States to the State under review to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights. The State under review takes a position on each recommendation, expressing its support of them or noting (not supporting) them, in line with paragraph 32 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1.

8. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been reviewed under the universal periodic review process four times, in 2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024. In 2009, of the 167 recommendations received from 44 countries, the State initially "rejected" 50 recommendations and did not take a position on the other recommendations. In 2014, before the second cycle, the State published its position on the remaining 117 recommendations from the first cycle as an annex to its national report for the second cycle. The State "accepted 81, partially accepted 6, noted 15 and rejected 15".[20] In 2014, the State "accepted" 114 recommendations and "rejected" 153 of the 267 recommendations made by 83 countries. In 2019, the State received a total of 266 recommendations from 87 countries.[21] Of those, it "accepted" 135 and "rejected" 131 recommendations. In 2024, the State received 294 recommendations from 86 countries and "accepted" 143 recommendations, "partially accepted" 7 and "rejected" 144.[22]

IV. Monitoring and implementation of universal periodic review recommendations using the framework of human rights indicators

9. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has indicated its position on individual human rights issues through its national reports, statements made during the universal periodic review and by "accepting", "rejecting" or "partially accepting" recommendations and providing explanations. That itself provides information to the international community on what specific human rights issues the State is prioritizing. While it is regrettable that the State has "rejected" many recommendations relevant to serious human rights violations, it is

[19] See communication PRK 3.2025, available from https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.

[20] See https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Flib-docs%2FHRBodies%2FUPR%2FDocuments%2FSession19%2FKP%2FA_HRC_WG.6_19_PRK_1_DemocraticPeoplesRepublic_of_Korea_Annex_E.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

[21] A/HRC/42/10.

[22] A/HRC/58/11/Add.1.

important for the international community to continue to raise certain human rights concerns, even if they do not enjoy support from the State.[23]

10. There are challenges in monitoring the implementation of recommendations made during the universal periodic review. Firstly, when the State lacks the political will to monitor and implement recommendations or to seek international cooperation, it is challenging for the international community to assess progress. This results in repeated recommendations in multiple review cycles – in some cases because no progress has been made and in other cases because it is unclear whether the recommendations are being implemented. Secondly, some recommendations supported in the context of the universal periodic review are too generic, making it difficult to objectively monitor their implementation. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur has attempted to break down the recommendations supported by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to propose measurable benchmarks and specific actions, using human rights indicators,[24] which the State can use to monitor and report on progress in implementing the recommendations that they committed to implement. This approach can serve as a guide for other States and international organizations to track progress in a State's implementation of the supported recommendations. Thirdly, examining selected recommendations indicates contradictions in the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning specific rights. While general recommendations were supported, more specific recommendations on the same rights or issues were in most cases not supported for varying reasons. This underscores the importance of making specific and actionable recommendations to clarify their content and objective, as well as the commitments that the State under review, in this case the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commits to undertake.

11. To inform the present report, the Special Rapporteur made a call for submissions and received several submissions from civil society organizations, which have been reflected herein.[25] In section IV, the Special Rapporteur uses illustrative recommendations made during the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review, focusing on four thematic issues (the right to life, the right to freedom of movement, the right to food and the right to work) and one specific group (persons with disabilities).[26] The Special Rapporteur refers to the tables of human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.[27] The Special Rapporteur proposes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea integrate the indicators into its implementation efforts, prepare a midterm report on the implementation of recommendations and include relevant data in its national report for the fifth review cycle. The selected rights represent key human rights issues, both long-standing and more recently aggravated. Rights such as the right to life and the right to freedom of movement are rights that normally do not enjoy support from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, there are some areas where the Government is open to engagement in the areas of its supported recommendations. The right to food is a long-standing issue in which the State has consistently shown interest. The right to work has increasingly received attention from the international community, due to concerns of forced labour. The rights of persons with disabilities are group rights that the State has been relatively open to discussing, offering an important opportunity to address equality and non-discrimination in the country.

[23] Hereafter in the present report, the Special Rapporteur uses the established terminology of "support" and "note" with regard to recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review.

[24] Human rights indicators are defined as specific information on the state or condition of an object, event, activity or outcome that can be related to human rights norms and standards, that addresses and reflect human rights principles and concerns and that can be used to assess and monitor the promotion and implementation of human rights.

[25] See www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-input-sr-dprks-2026-hrc-report-upr-recommendations.

[26] Please see the matrix of recommendations from the third and fourth cycles, available from www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/kp-index.

[27] See www.ohchr.org/en/node/99915.

A. Right to life

12. To help to monitor progress towards the protection of the right to life guaranteed by article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, four key attributes can be assessed: (a) no arbitrary deprivation of life; (b) no involuntary or enforced disappearances of individuals; (c) basic health and nutrition; and (d) safeguards in the application of the death penalty. In these areas, recommendations made to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review were primarily focused on health and nutrition and the application of the death penalty.

1. No arbitrary deprivation of life

13. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea received two recommendations related to the arbitrary deprivation of life during the third cycle of the universal periodic review and two recommendations during the fourth cycle. However, it did not support any of the recommendations, including those on abolishing political prison camps and releasing all political prisoners.

14. According to the High Commissioner, several escapees reported that "they had witnessed deaths in detention primarily as a result of torture and ill-treatment, overwork, malnutrition and suicide".[28] In the context of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, therefore, the conditions of detention are relevant to the arbitrary deprivation of life. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the State supported the recommendation to grant immediate, free and unimpeded access to international humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to the most vulnerable groups, including prisoners.[29] The State's support to that recommendation was significant, as it could be interpreted as meaning that it considered prisoners among the most vulnerable groups. However, the international humanitarian organizations had to leave the country during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, owing to the related border restrictions, and there was no progress made with the recommendation.

15. Notably, during the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported two recommendations related to conditions of detention for the first time, to ensure that conditions in detention facilities are in compliance with its obligations for the humane treatment of persons and to guarantee appropriate conditions of detention for minors, ensuring that detention conditions are in line with international standards.[30]

16. The High Commissioner reported nominal improvements in the treatment of detainees over the past 10 years.[31] During the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated that a newly enacted law on the treatment of inmates in reform institutions in 2022 guaranteed the legal rights of inmates and ensured access to a library, adequate hygiene and physical exercises based on the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).[32] The Special Rapporteur takes note of such efforts and reiterates that the importance of the environmental conditions of detention, such as light, ventilation, temperature, sanitation, nutrition, drinking water, access to open air and physical exercise, personal hygiene, healthcare and adequate personal space, should be respected.[33] The delegation stated that the allegation of violence against inmates by law enforcement officials was utterly groundless, although it explained that sanctions were imposed, including confinement to their cell, if inmates broke the rules.

17. The Special Rapporteur proposes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea monitor and report on the progress in the implementation of the two supported

[28] A/HRC/60/58, para. 20.
[29] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.58.
[30] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.68 and 130.69.
[31] A/HRC/60/58, para. 22.
[32] See https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1s/k1siu17x8h.
[33] See rule 42 of the Nelson Mandela Rules.

recommendations and that the international community encourage the State to follow up by providing data for the following indicators:

(a) Number and proportion of law enforcement officials formally investigated for physical and non-physical abuse or crime;

(b) Number and proportion of formal investigations of law enforcement officials resulting in disciplinary action or prosecution;

(c) Number of female custodial and support staff trained in gender-sensitive and human rights standards (e.g. United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) per female inmate;

(d) Data on the adoption of regulations or official policies regarding the use of non-invasive screening methods as an alternative in places of detention;

(e) Number and proportion of detained or imprisoned persons accommodated in facilities that meet the legally stipulated standards for environmental conditions;

(f) Number of monitoring visits conducted by independent bodies, including the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to places of detention during the period from November 2024 to the fifth cycle of the universal periodic review;

(g) Number and proportion of prisoners convicted of "anti-State crimes" who have been released during the reporting period and the number remaining in detention at the end of the period;

(h) Number of deaths in custody during the reporting period attributed to malnutrition, communicable diseases and noncommunicable diseases.

2. Enforced or involuntary disappearances of individuals

18. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea received three recommendations related to enforced disappearances of individuals during the third cycle of the universal periodic review and eight recommendations during the fourth cycle, however, it did not support any of them. Enforced or involuntary disappearances constitute a series of acts and omissions representing a grave threat to life and other rights guaranteed by the Covenant. Enforced disappearances and abductions in and perpetrated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a long-standing concern well documented by the United Nations. Approximately 100,000 people from the Republic of Korea are estimated to have been kidnapped and relocated from the Republic of Korea during the Korean war, and 19,409 prisoners of war of 41,971 missing soldiers have not been repatriated, according to the Government of the Republic of Korea. A total of 93,340 ethnic Korean people living in Japan and their Japanese spouses[34] "returned" to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the basis of false promises of a better life. Hundreds of people from the Republic of Korea, Japan and other nations were also abducted and disappeared, mainly during the period between the 1960s and the 1980s. The Government of the Republic of Korea officially recognizes 516 of its citizens as post-war abductees. Eleven people who were on the Korean Air Lines flight YS-11 that was hijacked on 11 December 1969 have never been returned. Abductees from Japan also remain unaccounted for. Seven citizens of the Republic of Korea continue to be detained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

19. While the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not support recommendations on enforced disappearances, it supported recommendations on cooperation with the international community, including the recommendation to increase its engagement with the international community, particularly with United Nations bodies, human rights mechanisms and other stakeholders to further promote and protect human rights through constructive dialogue, consultation and cooperation.[35]

[34] A/HRC/25/CRP.1, para. 917.
[35] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.28, 130.30, 130.34 and 130.35.

20. One of the human rights mechanisms, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, has regularly raised concerns about enforced disappearance in and perpetrated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Government has not sent substantive responses, and currently there are 477 outstanding cases, including abductions of foreign nationals.[36] To monitor progress in increasing engagement with the human rights mechanisms, the Special Rapporteur suggests that the State provide data for the following indicators:

(a) Number of cases communicated by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances responded to by the State during the reporting period;

(b) Number of cases clarified with relevant Member States.

3. Health and nutrition

21. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported all 12 recommendations in the area of health and nutrition during the third cycle of the universal periodic review and supported all 24 recommendations during the fourth cycle. The high number of recommendations made by the States demonstrates the significant interest of the international community in the right to health and right to food in the State. It also indicates the openness of the State to engage on these rights.

22. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the State supported a recommendation on reducing infant mortality and malnutrition rates.[37] The last time that the country published infant and maternal mortality rates was in 2017,[38] supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Not publishing such data since then is itself a serious concern. The estimated infant mortality ratio generated by the United Nations in 2019 was 14.299 per 1,000 live births. Despite the support of the recommendation, the estimated infant mortality rate in 2023 increased slightly (14.536).[39] The maternal mortality ratio was estimated to be 67 per 100,000 live births in 2023, also slightly increasing, from 66 in 2020.[40]

23. During the fourth cycle, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea again supported a recommendation in this area, to reduce the preventable infant and maternal mortality ratios to less than half of the present level within the next four years.[41]

24. This is a measurable and outcome-oriented recommendation. When reporting for the next cycle, the State is encouraged to collect and report on progress made with specific data on infant and maternal mortality ratios disaggregated by province and by location in urban or rural area. To facilitate the data collection, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the State carry out a nationwide survey on social rights with the support of United Nations agencies. In its national report for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, the State reported that it had set the target of "reducing the mortality of newborns for 1,000 live births to less than 6 and that of under-5 children to less than 12".[42] These types of measurable recommendations underline the necessity for the State first to generate the current data as a baseline, then to identify the target and a road map for implementing the recommendation. These measurable recommendations also demonstrate the importance of the other States making specific recommendations so that clear targets can be identified and monitored.

[36] A/HRC/60/35, sect. III.
[37] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.164.
[38] See www.unicef.org/dprk/media/156/file/MICS.pdf.
[39] See https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef_f/?ag=UNICEF&df=GLOBAL_DATAFLOW&ver=1.0&dq=PRK.CME_MRY0.&startPeriod=1970&endPeriod=2024.
[40] Estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank Group and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat are available from https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/29f43a3d-2228-489c-b1e7-b2f28e9101ce/content.
[41] A/HRC/58/11, para. 130.130.
[42] A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1, para. 67.

25. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur proposes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea monitor and report on the process of the two supported recommendations through indicators including the following:

(a) Proportion of children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women who regularly receive nutrition supplement programmes, such as school meals and fortified blended foods;

(b) Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.1.2);

(c) Maternal mortality ratio (see also Sustainable Development Goal target 3.1);

(d) Proportion of health facilities that have available safe drinking water and adequate sanitation and hygiene (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicators 6.1.1 and 6.2.1).

4. Death penalty

26. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not support any of the 13 recommendations on the death penalty. During the fourth cycle, however, the State supported two of the recommendations related to the death penalty for the first time, while it did not support 11 other recommendations, including on a moratorium on application of the death penalty. It supported the recommendations to reduce the number of crimes punishable by the death penalty and to restrict the death penalty to crimes that meet the threshold of most serious crimes under international law.[43]

27. During the review by the Human Rights Committee of the State's initial report submitted pursuant to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in 2001, the Committee welcomed the reduction of the number of criminal offences punishable by the death penalty from 33 to 5, as well as the readiness further to review the issue of capital punishment with a view to its abolition in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[44] It is regrettable that the State has increased the number of criminal offences punishable by death, demonstrating regression in the implementation of its commitment to protect the right to life. Since 2020, the State has also enacted several laws imposing the death penalty for several crimes. The Criminal Law, as amended on 17 May 2022, enumerates 11 crimes carrying the death penalty: plotting to overthrow the State (art. 61), acts of terrorism (art. 62), treason against the State (art.63), insulting the dignity of the Republic (art. 64), sabotage (art. 65), acts of hostility to a foreigner (art. 69), treason against the nation (art. 70), illegal harvesting of opium poppy (art. 234), illegal manufacturing of narcotics (art. 235), smuggling or selling narcotic drugs (art. 237) and deliberate brutal murder (art. 305). On 24 December 2023, the State further amended its Criminal Law to add death penalty provisions for five additional offences: anti-State propaganda or agitation (art. 66), illegal manufacturing of weapons or ammunition (art. 80), illegal use of weapons or ammunition (art. 81), illegal manufacturing or storage of explosives (art. 117) and illegal use or transfer of explosives (art. 118). The Human Rights Committee has clarified that States Parties may not transform into a capital offence any offence that, upon ratification of the Covenant or at any time thereafter, did not entail the death penalty.[45] Therefore, adding crimes that are punishable by death after the ratification of the Covenant is a violation of a State's international commitments. There are also reports that executions have been carried out for death penally cases applied under the new articles of the Criminal Law.[46]

28. In its national report for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea indicated that only those who gravely violated a person's right to life out of extremely mean motive are committed to death penalty.[47] Some of the crimes punishable by the death penalty do not meet the criteria of "the most serious

[43] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.65 and 130.66.
[44] CCPR/CO/72/PRK, para. 4.
[45] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life, para. 34.
[46] A/HRC/60/58, para. 24.
[47] A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1, para. 18.

crimes" for which the death penalty may be applied under article 6 (2) of the Covenant. The term "the most serious crimes" must be read restrictively and applied only to crimes of extreme gravity, involving intentional killing.[48] The Special Rapporteur received information that public execution has also been reintroduced. During the dialogue with the State during the fourth cycle, the Government admitted that public execution is used in exceptional cases[49] and did not support recommendations to abolish public executions.[50] The Special Rapporteur would like to remind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that public executions are contrary to article 7 of the Covenant, which prohibits torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.[51]

29. In this context, to implement the two supported recommendations, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea monitor and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Number of criminal offences removed from crimes punishable by the death penalty, in particular those criminal offences that were not punishable by the death penalty at the time of ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in 1981, and that do not meet the criteria of "the most serious crimes" involving intentional killing;

(b) Number of convicted persons on death row, disaggregated by factors including age, sex and the crimes for which they were convicted;

(c) Number and method of executions under the death penalty disaggregated by age, gender and region.

B. Right to freedom of movement

30. To monitor progress made towards the protection of the right to freedom of movement, four key elements should be monitored, as set out in article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: (a) freedom of movement within the territory; (b) freedom to return to the country; (c) freedom to choose one's residence; and (d) freedom to leave the country.

31. During the third and fourth cycles, a few recommendations, primarily regarding freedom of movement within the territory and freedom to leave the country were made.

1. Freedom of movement within the territory and freedom to leave the country

32. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported three recommendations on freedom of movement both within the territory and to leave the country. Despite its support for those recommendations, the State further restricted movement within the country through the use of travel permits, hindering people's informal commercial activities, and further strengthened its international border control by expanding fences and guard posts, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. The practice of requiring a travel permit, administrative permission and an exit visa restricts a person's ability to freely move, which is in contravention of article 12 of the Covenant.[52]

33. Despite the retrogressive action between the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported a similar recommendation during the fourth cycle, to ensure freedom of movement for all individuals.[53] The State did not support, however, more specific recommendations, including to amend the criminal code and other legislation to remove the requirement for permission to travel abroad and within the country.[54] This demonstrates the importance of providing specific

[48] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 35.
[49] See https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1s/k1siu17x8h.
[50] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 131.21 and 131.29.
[51] Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 40.
[52] CCPR/CO/72/PRK, paras. 19 and 20.
[53] A/HRC/58/11, para. 103.85.
[54] Ibid., para. 130.87.

recommendations, as they clarify the Government's position on the right and identify where the obstacles for implementation lie.

34. To monitor progress and implementation of the supported recommendation, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea provide information on the binding order issued to the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of People's Security that no person is to be arrested or detained solely for attempting to leave the country for contacting relatives abroad. She also recommend that the State monitor and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Number of prisoners who have been forcibly repatriated from China and other countries and who have been detained as prisoners under charges of committing crimes against the State;

(b) Number of criminal offences for unauthorized movement inside the country and unauthorized exits that have been removed from the Criminal Law;

(c) Number of travel permits applied, approved and rejected and the reasons therefor, disaggregated by the region, gender and age of the requestor.

2. Freedom to choose one's residence

35. There were no recommendations made on the freedom to choose one's residence during the third or fourth cycles of the universal periodic review. People in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are not allowed to freely choose their place of residence. Forced relocation of families to rural areas is used as a coercive political tool for punishing those who are against the leadership. Freedom to choose one's residence is an important part of the right of freedom of movement and needs to be addressed.

3. Freedom to return to the country

36. There were no recommendations made regarding the freedom to return to the country during the third or fourth cycles of the universal periodic review. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, those who leave the country without authorization can be considered traitors and face severe punishment upon return. Their families are often subjected to stricter surveillance or to discriminatory treatment. As a result, those who escaped the country are not only unable to return to the country, but also unable to communicate with their family members remaining in the State. This has resulted in the second cycle of separated families, in addition to the families separated by the Korean war in 1950. It is important that recommendations on freedom to return to the country without repercussions are also suggested to highlight the issue of separated families. The reunification of families should continue to be placed at the top of the agenda in international forums.

C. Right to food

37. To monitor progress towards the realization of the right to food, the following attributes could be monitored: (a) nutrition; (b) food availability; and (c) food accessibility. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continual improvement of living conditions.

38. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported 15 recommendations on the right to food (9 on food,[55] 2 on nutrition[56] and 5 on cooperation with the international organizations on food and nutrition[57]) and noted 4. During the fourth cycle, similarly, the State supported 15 recommendations

[55] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.104, 126.151, 126.154, 126.156, 126.157, 126.158, 126.159, 126.160 and 126.161.
[56] Ibid., paras. 126.152 and 126.188.
[57] Ibid., paras. 126.63–126.66.

(8 on food,[58] 2 on nutrition[59] and 4 on international cooperation, including to strengthen cooperation with international organizations in the fields of health, education, nutrition and food security,[60]) and noted 4.[61] The recommendations on international cooperation included providing United Nations agencies with unhindered access to vulnerable populations,[62] however, they have not yet been able to return to the country.

1. Nutrition

39. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported recommendations on specific measures and actions to further reduce the infant and child mortality and malnutrition and on measures to combat food insecurity and malnutrition.[63] The implementation of Sustainable Development Goal target 3.2, on the mortality rate among children under 5 years of age, which is one of the strongest indicators to measure people's access to health services and nutrition, has not improved.[64] The Government reported on the reduction in the prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age as a "remarkable improvement".[65] The national average for stunting,[66] as estimated by the United Nations, indeed rapidly decreased, from 25.7 per cent in 2021 to 16.6 per cent in 2024,[67] which is a positive step. During the fourth cycle, the State supported recommendations on children's nutrition and disease management, including to continue taking measures to improve the management of children's nutrition and diseases.[68] The Government also reported on its efforts to improve people's diet by increasing the variety of foods.[69] The improvement in the rate of stunting and the Government's efforts to increase the variety of food is a positive sign for implementing the supported recommendations on children's nutrition. The Special Rapporteur encourages the State to monitor and report on developments in this area.

40. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should organize the next national survey focused on social rights and monitor and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Proportion of the targeted population covered by nutrition supplement programmes;

(b) Number of people provided with food and medical assistance by international organizations;

(c) Proportion of the population that was brought above the minimum level of dietary energy consumption during the reporting period;

(d) Preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age (see also Sustainable Development Goal target 3.2).

2. Food availability

41. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, no recommendations were made specifically on food availability. During the fourth cycle, the Democratic People's

[58] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.41, 130.42, 130.101 and 130.108–130.112.
[59] Ibid., paras. 130.188 and 130.189.
[60] Ibid., paras. 130.36, 130.37, 130.39 and 130.40.
[61] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.63–126.66.
[62] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 30.36, 130.37, 130.41 and 130.42.
[63] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.160, 126.164 and 126.188.
[64] The rate was 7.7 per 1,000 births in 2019 and 8 per 1,000 births in 2013.
[65] See https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/korea_dr_vnr_2021.pdf, p. 16.
[66] Stunting is impaired growth and development due to chronic malnutrition.
[67] Estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO are available at https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e612e779-ec47-44c2-a3e0-499569c3422d/content, p.112.
[68] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.118, 130.188 and 130.189.
[69] A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1, para. 56.

Republic of Korea supported a recommendation, to increase budget allocations to the agricultural sector and continue efforts to ensure sustained food security in the country.[70]

42. The prevalence of undernourishment increased, from 34.3 per cent of the population in the period 2004–2006 to 45.5 per cent in the period 2020–2022, according to United Nations estimates.[71] In its national report for the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, the Government reiterated its objective of becoming self-sufficient in food in the near future and highlighted its efforts to increase agricultural production. The progress is not clear yet and there has not been a positive report on achieving food security yet.

43. To implement the supported recommendations, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea monitor and report on indicators including the following:[72]

(a) Data on food insecurity, disaggregated by province, sex, wealth quintiles and membership in vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, older persons and prisoners;

(b) Share of public budget expenditure on strengthening domestic agricultural production;

(c) Agriculture orientation index [73] for government expenditures (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.a.1);

(d) Average income of small-scale food producers by sex (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.3.2);

(e) Proportion of per capita availability of major food items sourced through domestic production, import and food aid.

3. Food accessibility

44. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported five recommendations on food accessibility,[74] and during the fourth cycle, it supported four recommendations on food accessibility, including to ensure that access to food in the country is free from discrimination and that public distribution of food covers persons in marginalized and vulnerable situations,[75] and a recommendation to redouble efforts to ensure food.[76]

45. Between the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review, the Government, on the one hand, restricted people's informal market activities, largely carried out by women, which has resulted in lost economic accessibility to food. The Government, on the other hand, has strengthened the control of staple grains by centralizing their sales at the State-run shops. Despite the supported recommendations, the Government-led food distribution system continued to be discriminatory, and those who did not have money, particularly those in rural areas, persons with disabilities, people in detention facilities and women, struggled to gain access to food.

46. The State committed itself to providing access to food free from discrimination and to ensuring food security. To monitor and implement the supported recommendations, the Special Rapporteur encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to monitor and report on indicators including the following:

[70] A/HRC/58/11, para. 130.108.
[71] Estimates by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, available at https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1f66b67b-1e45-45d1-b003-86162fd35dab/content, p. 152.
[72] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/SDG_Indicators_Tables.pdf, table 2.
[73] The agriculture orientation index is the agriculture share of government expenditures divided by the agriculture share of gross domestic product.
[74] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.104, 126.151, 126.156, 126.159 and 126.161.
[75] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.101, 130.110, 130.41 and 130.42.
[76] Ibid., para. 130.109.

(a) Prevalence of undernourishment (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.1.1);

(b) Prevalence of stunting among children under five (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.2.1);

(c) Share of household consumption of major food items for targeted population groups met through publicly assisted programmes;

(d) Proportion of the population who can afford sufficient staple grains sold at the State-run shops, particularly in rural areas;

(e) Proportion of children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, older persons, persons with disabilities and prisoners who have been provided with sufficient and adequate food by the Government;

(f) Proportion of prisoners who have received the minimum nutritional standard for rations for every place of detention.

D. Right to work

47. To monitor progress towards the realization of the right to work and related rights, four attributes should be monitored: (a) access to decent and productive work; (b) just and safe working conditions; (c) training, upgrading skills and professional development; and (d) protection from forced labour and unemployment. Under article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, States Parties recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his or her living by work which he or she freely chooses or accepts, and should take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.

48. During the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review, the State did not support the majority of recommendations related to the right to work. It did not support two structural recommendations, to join the International Labour Organization and to ratify its conventions. It also did not support six recommendations related to the protection of forced labour. However, during the fourth cycle, it indicated an openness to consider the possibility of joining the International Labour Organization, by its support of two relevant recommendations.[77]

1. Access to decent and productive work

49. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported one recommendation on strengthening its legislation to amend discriminatory provisions against women, in particular on access to employment.[78] During the fourth cycle, no similar recommendation was suggested by States. In the State, married women are exempt from State-assigned jobs, which enables them to engage in informal markets to earn a living. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, women have not been able to make money in the further restricted markets and have been prevented from equally and fully participating in the formal labour system. The principle of equal access to decent and productive work should be applied to everyone, regardless of their family background, including women, persons with disabilities and farmers.

2. Just and safe working conditions

50. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not support a recommendation to end inadequately paid labour.[79] During the fourth cycle, however, the State supported one recommendation concerning just and safe working conditions, to take appropriate legal measures to ensure that all workers,

[77] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.21 and 130.22.
[78] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.180.
[79] Ibid., para. 127.27.

both within and outside the country, have access to a legal framework that provides fair and safe working conditions in accordance with international human rights standards.[80]

51. In the State, most of the State-assigned jobs do not pay salaries, rations or in-kind support. Even when renumeration is provided, it is usually insufficient to sustain a family. In October 2023, the Government increased workers' salaries, however, even after the increase, salaries remained insufficient, particularly with rising food prices. This is also related to the control of grain sales, as the Government reportedly pays salaries through payment cards and obliges workers to purchase food only at State-owned grain shops.

52. On 29 May 2025, the State adopted the Labour Management Act and consolidated the rules of labour management system by which the State determines the labour needs and assigns all citizens to workplaces. The Act stipulates that institutions, enterprises and organizations that use mobilized labour are to guarantee conditions of work, living conditions and conditions of labour protection according to regulations, pay remuneration to their employees based on work performance and guarantee medical treatment (arts 22 and 23). While improvement of labour conditions has not yet been reported, the State is encouraged to monitor and report on the implementation of such laws including through the following indicators:

(a) Proportion of employees who receive remuneration according to the pay scale, as provided for in articles 37 and 38 of the Labour Law, disaggregated by sex and age;

(b) Amendments to the system of State-assigned jobs whereby working people may choose occupations in accordance with their wishes and talents, as provided for in article 5 of the Labour Law.

3. Training, upgrading skills and professional development

53. There have been no relevant recommendations suggested in this area. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea reported that, to ensure that students received education suited to their characteristics and the economic and geographical features of the particular region, over 100 vocational schools had been newly established, in 2023, in 17 fields, such as electronics, forestry and the garment industry.[81] This is a positive development step, however, the Special Rapporteur is concerned that students continue to receive educations suited to the economic and geographical features of the particular region and not based on an individual's free choice. This could reinforce disparities and discrimination among the population based on the regions in which they reside. The State is encouraged to report on how such vocational training contributes to an individual's right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen occupation without discrimination.

4. Protection from forced labour and unemployment

54. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not support any recommendation on forced labour, but it supported one recommendation on child labour.[82] More recommendations were suggested in this area during the fourth cycle: 10 recommendations to end all instances of forced labour. None of those recommendations were supported by the Government, which considered all allegations of forced labour to be "conspiratorial propaganda"[83] and mentioned that child labour was "strictly forbidden" by the Constitution.[84] To support its claim on forced labour and child labour, the State is strongly recommended to report the details of how it has ensured free choice and acceptance, the scale of remuneration, including of overseas workers, labour in detention, non-military related labour during military conscription and the work mobilization of both adults and children.

[80] A/HRC/58/11, para. 130.92.
[81] See A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1.
[82] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.188.
[83] A/HRC/58/11, para. 78.
[84] Ibid., para. 82.

E. Rights of persons with disabilities

55. To monitor progress towards the fulfilment of the rights of persons with disabilities, monitoring four elements thereof will be useful: (a) equality before the law and protection of person; (b) direct or indirect discrimination by public and private actors nullifying or impairing access to adequate standard of living, health or education; (c) direct or indirect discrimination by public and private actors nullifying or impairing equality of livelihood opportunities; (d) special measures, including for participation in decision-making. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016.

56. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the State supported a total of 17 recommendations related to the rights of persons with disabilities. Four of them were structural recommendations to incorporate the principles and requirements of the Convention into its legislation and policies and to develop collaboration between the National Committee for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and the relevant national institutions of other countries in the region.[85] During the fourth cycle, the State supported a total of 27 recommendations related to the rights of persons with disabilities, a significantly higher number of recommendations, as well as a higher acceptance rate compared with other rights. It supported six structural recommendations on continuing to improve legislation to ensure the protection of the rights of socially vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities,[86] and two recommendations on deepening international exchanges and cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[87] It supported a further eight general recommendations on continuing efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.[88] The high acceptance rate during both cycles reflects the Government's openness to work on issues on the rights of persons with disabilities. However, the Government noted a recommendation calling for revising the legal terminology on persons with disabilities to address discrimination.

1. Equality before the law and protection of person

57. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported recommendations to protect the rights of persons with disabilities[89] and expand the measures designed to uplift the well-being of persons with disabilities.[90] During the fourth cycle, the State supported two recommendations in this area including to further increase attention and input in support of specific groups including persons with disabilities, older persons and children.[91]

58. The Constitution and article 4 of the Labour Law mandate that "able-bodied citizens" participate in social labour according to their abilities as a contribution to the State. Persons with disabilities tend to be considered not to be able to fully contribute to the State and face stigma and discrimination.

59. To monitor and implement the supported recommendations, the Special Rapporteur encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to carry out and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Number of close consultations conducted with persons with disabilities, and the proportion of them involved in consultation, including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and persons of short stature, in all stages of the design, implementation and monitoring of disability-related laws and policies;[92]

[85] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.72, 126.77, 126.85 and 126.194.
[86] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.199–130.201, 130.203 and 130.205.
[87] Ibid., paras. 130.200 and 130.202.
[88] Ibid, paras. 130.166, 130.167, 130.199–130.203 and 130.205.
[89] A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.105, 126.106 and 126.197.
[90] Ibid., para. 126.107.
[91] A/HRC/58/11, para. 130.192.
[92] CRPD/C/PRK/CO/1, para. 6 (d).

(b) Number of complaints received on cases of direct and indirect discrimination against persons with disabilities and the number of complaints investigated and adjudicated.

2. Access to adequate standards of living, health and education

60. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported all recommendations in this area, including on ensuring the accessibility of essential services for all, including those with disabilities,[93] on well-being,[94] on education, food and health[95] and on access to housing.[96] During the fourth cycle, the State supported 10 recommendations that related specifically to this area. They included three on enhancing access to healthcare and nutrition,[97] including to guarantee access to appropriate and affordable healthcare, particularly for children, persons with disabilities, women and prisoners, especially in rural areas, and to enhance access to free and quality basic education and to address malnutrition, particularly among marginalized groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities, four on enhancing access to quality education,[98] and one on enhancing the provision of government facilities and services for persons with disabilities, to continue to enhance the provision of government facilities and services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities.[99]

61. In the State, the forced relocation of persons with certain disabilities by the State to remote areas and the institutionalization of persons with intellectual disabilities continue to be reported. Most of infrastructure, in particular in remote areas, is not accessible for persons with disabilities. There are a limited number of specialized schools, but they are focused on providing vocational training.

62. To monitor and implement the supported recommendations, the Special Rapporteur encourages the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to monitor and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Proportion of public buildings with facilities for persons with physical disabilities;

(b) Proportion of health facilities that have a core set of relevant essential medicines available and affordable on a sustainable basis (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.b.3);

(c) Proportion of persons with disabilities with access to assistive devices;

(d) Number of government-funded programmes covering medical treatment, therapy, assistive devices and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities and the proportion of coverage.

63. Regarding access to quality education for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education launched pilot programmes, which is a positive step. Building on the pilot programmes, the Special Rapporteur encourages the State to report on indicators including the following:

(a) Gross enrolment ratio for secondary and higher education among persons with disabilities;

(b) Number of inclusive education pilot classrooms, including for children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities;

(c) Number of training programmes on inclusive education for teachers;

(d) Number of nationwide inclusive awareness-raising campaigns, including on the available welfare and health services for persons and children with disabilities.

[93] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.155.
[94] Ibid., paras. 126.107 and 126.102.
[95] Ibid., paras. 126.157, 126.193 and 126.196.
[96] Ibid., para. 126.198.
[97] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.127, 130,128 and 130.143.
[98] Ibid., paras. 130.135, 130.142, 130.144 and 130.205.
[99] Ibid., para. 130.191.

3. Equality of livelihood opportunities

64. During the third and fourth cycles of the universal periodic review, there were no recommendations directly addressing this issue. This is concerning, as persons with disabilities are assigned to special "light labour" workplaces on the basis of their level of disability and capacity, which does not provide them with a choice of livelihood opportunities. This system prevents integration and further strengthens stigmatization.

4. Special measures, including for participation in decision-making

65. During the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported two recommendations in this area, to enable the inclusion of persons with disabilities in devising and implementing strategies to mitigate climate change[100] and to adopt measures to allow for their wider participation in society.[101] During the fourth cycle, it supported four recommendations on participation in public activities, including to continue to take measures to provide persons with disabilities with an environment and conditions conducive to their participation in public activities,[102] and two recommendations to support mobility, including to guarantee the social inclusion of persons with disabilities by providing adequate assistive or mobility devices and ensuring accessibility to all necessary services.[103]

66. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed its concern that there is no information on persons with disabilities who hold decision-making positions or public office.[104] There is also no information that meaningful consultations are held with the representatives of the diversity of persons with disabilities, including intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, in making decisions on issues relevant to persons with disabilities.

67. In order to implement the supported recommendations, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is encouraged to monitor and report on indicators including the following:

(a) Number and proportion of persons with disabilities with access to positive action or preferential treatment measures to facilitate their participation in public activities, such as financial assistance, mobility assistance and training;

(b) Number and proportion of community-based services and accessible public transport passes that remove permit-based barriers to local movement.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

68. **By the nature of the universal periodic review, as well as the principles of international human rights law, the State has the primary responsibility to implement the recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review. All States are accountable for progress or lack thereof in implementing those recommendations. There are several human rights areas that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has committed to improving by supporting the related recommendations. For instance, the State could review the application of the death penalty and report on the progress to reduce the number of crimes punishable by death. It can also conduct a thorough review of what constitutes crimes against State, including cases involving individuals forcibly repatriated from third countries, and release prisoners charged with crimes against the State in a phased manner.**

69. **The United Nations, and particularly the United Nations country team and agencies operating in the State, can play a key role in assisting in the implementation of the recommendations, through capacity-building, technical assistance and material support, in consultation with the Government. For example, the Government is encouraged to further work towards improving the treatment of detainees and the**

[100] A/HRC/42/10, para. 126.112.
[101] Ibid., para. 126.199.
[102] A/HRC/58/11, paras. 130.193–130.196.
[103] Ibid., paras. 130.198 and 130.206.
[104] CRPD/C/PRK/CO/1, para. 56 (a).

conditions of detention, including through technical assistance from the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports thereon. Despite efforts made by the Government on agriculture, food production and distribution, people continue to face extreme difficulties in access to nutritious food. This can be an area where the United Nations country team can work together with the State, including through supplemental nutrition and medical assistance programmes, as well as the provision of technical assistance on agricultural production and equal distribution practices. Many of the indicators related to the right to food and health are also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has committed to implement. The State can also apply for financial and technical assistance through Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review.[105] The Special Rapporteur recommends that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea immediately facilitate the return of the international staff of United Nations agencies to the country and provide access to the country. The United Nations and other actors are encouraged to use the universal periodic review recommendations in developing their strategic planning framework for sustainable development and their country programmes. United Nations agencies and programmes must ensure that human rights are central to humanitarian and development cooperation programmes in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

70. **The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has accepted only one visit from a special procedure mandate holder, namely the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2017. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided several recommendations in 2025, yet no significant progress in the area of the rights of persons with disabilities has been reported. In the absence of independent national human rights institutions or civil society, no independent monitoring has taken place since 2017. The Special Rapporteur strongly encourages the State to demonstrate a good gesture of engagement by extending an invitation to experts from United Nations human rights bodies, ideally at least one mandate holder per year, to monitor its human rights issues on a regular basis. On efforts to improve human rights and implement recommendations supported during the universal periodic review, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea use the human rights indicators suggested in the present report to track its progress and report on the development through a midterm report and in its national report for the fifth cycle of the universal periodic review. Selected recommendations and indicators are compiled in the annex to the present report. The Special Rapporteur recommends that other States take any opportunity to follow up on the universal periodic review recommendations in their engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through sharing technical support and lessons learned. She also encourages States to make specific recommendations in the context of the universal periodic review and to continue to monitor progress in those areas.**

[105] See www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/trust-fund-implementation.

Annex

The right to life

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
	No arbitrary deprivation of life	
130.68	Ensure that conditions in detention facilities are in compliance with its obligations for the humane treatment of persons.	Number and proportion of law enforcement officials formally investigated for physical and non-physical abuse or crime. Number and proportion of formal investigations of law enforcement officials resulting in disciplinary action or prosecution. Number of female custodial and support staff trained in gender-sensitive and human rights standards (e.g. "United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules") per female inmates.
130.69	Guarantee appropriate conditions of detention for minors, ensuring that detention conditions are in line with international standards.	Data on the adoption of regulation or official policies regarding the use of non-invasive screening methods as an alternative in places of detention. Number and proportion of detained or imprisoned persons accommodated in facilities that meet the legally stipulated standards for environmental conditions. Number of monitoring visits conducted by independent bodies, including the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to places of detention during the period from November 2024 to the fifth cycle of the universal periodic review. Number and proportion of prisoners convicted of "anti-State crimes" who have been released during the reporting period, and the number remaining in detention at the end of the period. Number of deaths in custody during the reporting period attributed to malnutrition, communicable diseases, and non-communicable diseases.
	Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of individuals	
130.30	Increase its engagement with the international community, particularly with United Nations bodies, human rights mechanisms and other stakeholders to further promote and protect human rights through constructive dialogue, consultation and cooperation.	Number of cases communicated by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances responded to by the State during the reporting period. Number of cases clarified with relevant Member States.
	Health and nutrition	
130.130	Reduce the preventable infant and maternal mortality ratios to less than half of the present level within the next four years.	Proportion of children under 5 years of age, and pregnant and lactating women who regularly receive nutrition supplement programmes such as school meals and fortified blended foods.

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
		Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.1.2).
		Maternal mortality ratio (see also Sustainable Development Goal target 3.1).
		Proportion of health facilities that have available safe drinking water and adequate sanitation and hygiene (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicators 6.1.1 and 6.2.1).
	Death penalty	
130.65	Reduce the number of crimes punishable by the death penalty.	Number of criminal offences removed from crimes punishable by the death penalty, in particular those criminal offences that were not punishable by the death penalty at the time of ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1981 and that do not meet the criteria of "the most serious crimes" involving intentional killing.
130.66	Restrict the death penalty to crimes that meet the threshold of most serious crimes under international law.	Number of convicted persons on death row disaggregated by factors including age, sex and the crimes for which they were convicted.
		Number and methods of executions under the death penalty disaggregated by age, gender and region.

The right to freedom of movement

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
	Freedom of movement within the territory and to leave the country	
130.85	Ensure freedom of movement for all individuals.	Number of prisoners who have been forcibly repatriated from China and other countries and who have been detained as prisoners under charges of committing crimes against the State.
		Number of criminal offences for unauthorized movement inside the country and unauthorized exits that have been removed from the Criminal Law.
		Number of travel permits applied, approved and rejected and the reasons therefor, disaggregated by the regions, gender and age of the requestor.
	Nutrition	
130.118	Continue taking measures to improve the management of children's nutrition and diseases.	Proportion of the targeted population covered by nutrition supplement programmes.
		Number of people provided with food and medical assistance by international organizations.
		Proportion of the population that was brought above the minimum level of dietary energy consumption during the reporting period.
130.40	Strengthen cooperation with international organizations in the fields of health, education, nutrition and food security.	Preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age (see also Sustainable Development Goal target 3.2).

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
	Food availability	
130.108	Increase budget allocations to the agricultural sector and continue efforts to ensure sustained food security in the country.	Data on food insecurity disaggregated by provinces, sex, wealth quintiles and membership in vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, older persons and prisoners. Share of public budget expenditure on strengthening domestic agricultural production. Agriculture orientation index for government expenditures (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.a.1). Average income of small-scale food producers by sex (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.3.2). Proportion of per capita availability of major food items sourced through domestic production, import and food aid.
	Food accessibility	
130.110	Ensure that access to food in the country is free from discrimination and that public distribution of food covers persons in marginalized and vulnerable situations.	Prevalence of undernourishment (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.1.1). Prevalence of stunting among children under five (see also Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 2.2.1). Share of household consumption of major food items for targeted population groups met through publicly assisted programmes. Proportion of the population who can afford sufficient staple grains sold at the State-run shops particularly in rural areas. Proportion of children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, older persons, persons with disabilities and prisoners who have been provided with sufficient and adequate food by the Government. Proportion of prisoners who have received the minimum nutritional standards for rations for every place of detention.

The right to work

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
	Just and safe working conditions	
130.92	Take appropriate legal measures to ensure that all workers, both within and outside the country, have access to a legal framework that provides fair and safe working conditions in accordance with international human rights standards.	Proportion of employees who receive remuneration according to the pay scale as provided for in articles 37 and 38 of the Labour Law disaggregated by sex and age. Amendments to the system of State-assigned jobs whereby “working people may choose occupations in accordance with their wishes and talents,” as provided for in article 5 of the Labour Law.

The rights of persons with disabilities

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
	Equality before the law and protection of person	
130.192	Further increase attention and input in support of specific groups including persons with disabilities, older persons and children.	Number of close consultations conducted with persons with disabilities, and the proportion of them involved in consultation, including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and persons of short stature, in all stages of the design, implementation and monitoring of disability-related laws and policies. Number of complaints received on cases of direct and indirect discrimination against persons with disabilities and the number of complaints investigated and adjudicated.
	Access to adequate standard of living, health and education	
130.128	Guarantee access to appropriate and affordable healthcare, particularly for children, persons with disabilities, women and prisoners, especially in rural areas.	Proportion of public buildings with facilities for persons with physical disabilities. Proportion of health facilities that have a core set of relevant essential medicines available and affordable on a sustainable basis (see also Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.b.3). Proportion of persons with disabilities with access to assistive devices. Number of government-funded programmes covering medical treatment, therapy, assistive devices and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities and the proportion of coverage.
130.191	Continue to enhance the provision of government facilities and services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities.	
130.143	Enhance access to free and quality basic education, and address malnutrition, particularly among marginalized groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities.	Gross enrolment ratio for secondary and higher education among persons with disabilities. Number of pilot classrooms of inclusive education, including for children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Number of training programmes on inclusive education for teachers. Number of nationwide inclusive awareness-raising campaigns, including on the available welfare and health services for persons and children with disabilities.
	Special measures, including for participation in decision making	
130.194	Continue to take measures to provide persons with disabilities with an environment and conditions conducive to their participation in public activities.	Number and proportion of persons with disabilities accessing positive action or preferential treatment measures to facilitate their participation in public activities such as financial assistance, mobility assistance and training. Number of proportion of community-based services, accessible public transport passes that remove permit-based barriers to local movement.

No.	*Recommendation*	*Indicators*
130.198	Guarantee the social inclusion of persons with disabilities by providing adequate assistive or mobility devices and ensuring accessibility to all necessary services.	