



General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 August 2024

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Forty-seventh session
Geneva, 4–15 November 2024

National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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Introduction

1. This national report has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines for the preparation of information under the universal periodic review, as set forth in the United Nations Human Rights Council Decision 17/119, and covers the period from May, 2019 when the third cycle review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the DPRK) was held at the 33rd session of the UNHRC UPR working group to June, this year.
2. During the reporting period the DPRK, under the wise leadership of the great Workers' Party of Korea, made remarkable achievements in its efforts to create conditions for people to fully enjoy their rights in all fields of politics, the economy and culture by adopting important policy, legislative and practical measures and providing scientific and effective guidance to the process of their implementation.
3. The social system of the DPRK is a people-centred system under which working people are the masters of everything and everything in society serves them. The DPRK, regarding it as the fundamental principle of its policy making and implementation to safeguard the dignity, rights and interests of the people, consistently maintains the people-first stand that people's interests and convenience should be given highest priority in whatever work it carries out.
4. During the reporting period the DPRK, taking positive measures to ensure that people fully enjoy their political rights as the masters of the State and society, set major goals for the comprehensive development of the national economy and accomplished enormous tasks for the well-being of the people.
5. Mid-term and long-term plans were implemented to bring education, health and other (all) sectors into line with those of advanced countries, while realistic and rational work system and methods introduced for the improvement of such sectors directly linked to people's living as light industry, local industry, public service, municipal administration and public transport, with the result that tangible progress has been made in the efforts to create better conditions for rearing and educating children, provide people in the capital city and rural areas with more stabilized and cultured living environment, improve the living of local people through the rapid development of local economy, protect more satisfactorily the rights and interests of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable persons and provide people with dignified, affluent and civilized life.

I. Main contents and preparation process of the report

6. The present report highlights key legislative, administrative and practical measures adopted by the DPRK since the third cycle review, achievements made and obstacles encountered in its move towards their implementation, as well as future goals.
7. The National Committee for the Implementation of International Human Rights Instruments coordinated the preparation of this report by forming a drafting group comprising the officials from the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, Central Court, Central Public Prosecutors' Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour, Central Statistics Bureau, as well as representatives from social organizations such as Socialist Patriotic Youth League, Socialist Women's Union, Federation of Persons with Disabilities and Federation for the Protection of the Elderly, and experts from Law Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences and other academic circles.
8. The drafting group collected, in accordance with the guidelines on the 4th cycle UPR national report set forth by the Human Rights Council, data on the implementation of the human rights-related policy and legislation of the State in the sectors concerned, giving special attention to the status of implementation of the recommendations accepted at the DPRK's third cycle review. Several rounds of consultations were held among the members of the drafting group before the compilation of the draft report, which was then sent to the institutions and social organizations concerned for comments and inputs. Further rounds of consultations were held before the final version of the Report was produced.

II. Legislative measures and education in the field of human rights

A. Human rights legislation

9. The DPRK enacted and amended scores of human rights-related laws and regulations during the reporting period, thus reinforcing and perfecting the legal system for promoting people's well-being and ensuring more effective enjoyment of human rights.

10. The Law on the Rearing of Children (February 7, 2022), Law on the Protection and Promotion of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (September 27, 2023), Distance Education Law (April 12, 2020), Law on Education of Talented Children and Students (February 2, 2023), Law on Assistance to Education (December 21, 2023), Law on Medical and Pharmaceutical Products (August 7, 2022), Mental Health Law (July 4, 2020), Remuneration Law (September 25, 2020), Law on Social Insurance and Security (March 3, 2021), Law on Public Catering (December 6, 2022) etc. were enacted to provide legal foundation for enabling people to enjoy their rights to education and health care on a higher level and creating better conditions and environment for stabilized and cultured living.

11. The Law on Socialist Rural Development (September 7, 2022), Law on Town and County Development (September 29, 2021), Law on the Supply of Cement for Construction in Towns and Counties (January 28, 2022) etc. were enacted to provide a legal guarantee for further promoting the efforts to create fine living conditions for local and rural people, bringing civilization to rural area and achieving comprehensive development of the country.

12. The Law on Election of Deputies to People's Assemblies at All Levels, Law on Nursing and Upbringing of Children, General Education Law, Vocational Education Law, Library Law, Public Health Law, Law on Prevention of Infectious Diseases, Law on Medical Care, Law on Red Cross Society, Remuneration Law, Law on Labour Protection, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, Law on Complaints and Petitions, Lawyers' Law, Law on Compensation for Damage and the derivative regulations were amended, thus concretizing the legal framework to enable people to fully exercise their political, economic, social and cultural rights.

B. Human rights education

13. During the reporting period the DPRK continued with its efforts to improve the contents, form and methods of human rights education, with main emphasis placed on providing it in a way best suited to the characteristics and qualifications of different targets.

14. Law schools and academies at the higher education stage have, since 2020, included international human rights law as a stand-alone subject in their postgraduate curriculum to teach Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights conventions in an in-depth and comprehensive way so that future law workers may have a correct understanding of their requirements and contents, as well as international human rights standards. Schools at general education stage reflected diverse law materials in such subjects as the Socialist Morality and the Socialist Morality and Law in a way appropriate to the contents of the subjects and the ages and psychological features of the students so as to increase their obedience to law from their early years. Public awareness raising activities were also conducted by providing, through mass media or law information workers, explanations of laws on protection and promotion of the rights of children, women and persons with disabilities and others that incorporate the requirements of international human rights conventions, thus enabling people to be correctly aware of and fully exercise their rights and respect the rights of others.

15. Coverage of the Law Information, the Intranet homepage was expanded in 2020 to be accessible to all people, on which full texts of newly enacted or amended laws, as well as diverse compilations such as the Law Information Worker, References for Law Information Workers, Administration of Society and Law and other collections of legal common knowledge have been posted regularly to raise public legal awareness. National Exhibition

of Legal Education Materials was organized in 2023 to be conducive to establishing atmosphere of law observance in the whole society, while collections of sector-specific legal questions and answers and books like Community Life and Legal Questions and Answers and I Also Want to Know etc. were published to equip working people and students with basic legal knowledge useful for family, school and community life.

16. Explanations and treatise written by social scientists on international human rights conventions and national human rights laws such as International Human Rights Law and its Main Systems and Human Rights Mean National Sovereignty, as well as commentaries and articles of authoritative newspaper commentators were carried by mass media and other various channels, making great contribution to raising human rights awareness of the general public.

III. Achievements in promotion and protection of human rights

A. Civil and political rights

1. The right to life

17. The right to life is fully guaranteed by the Socialist Constitution, Criminal Law and other relevant laws.

18. In accordance with the Criminal Law even if a person committed a heinous murder intentionally he is, in general, sentenced to the penalty of reform through labour of not less than five to not more than ten years in view of the motive, purpose, meanness and gravity of the offence. Only those who gravely violated a person's right to life out of extremely mean motive are committed to death penalty.

19. A verdict of the court on death penalty is subject to execution only when it has gone through the review of the Central Court and obtained the approval of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly.

20. As the Criminal Procedure Law provides a person sentenced to death penalty the right to appeal, he can apply for extraordinary appeal to the Central Court through the President of the Central Court or the Prosecutor General of the Central Public Prosecutors' Office. In case the extraordinary appeal is accepted as well-grounded the President of the Central Court or the Prosecutor General of the Central Public Prosecutors' Office proposes extraordinary appeal to the Central Court to remedy the case.

2. Independence of the court

21. The Socialist Constitution stipulates in article 166 that "The court shall be independent in administering justice, and judicial proceedings shall be carried out in strict accordance with the law". This provision ensures that courts at different levels conduct judicial activities independently in strict accordance with the law free from pressure or interference of outsiders. They firmly maintain independence in dealing with cases and make it a rule to make legal conclusions in the name of the State only when the cases in question are tried and proved correctly and fairly beyond reasonable doubt. Judgements and awards made by the court whose independence is not ensured have no legal effect.

22. Independence of the court means independence of the constituted court and the latter alone is responsible for the case before the law. It is an important principle in conducting criminal proceedings that no institution including the higher courts should give directives that are designed to violate the independence of the tribunal constituted to settle the given case and fore tell the outcome of a trial.

23. It is a duty of a public prosecutor to observe whether a trial proceeds as required by the law. The public prosecutor observes a trial by attending the court sessions or reviewing the trial records, and when he/she learns of any violations of the law, he/she lays a complaint before the court for rectification according to the prescribed procedures.

3. The right to a fair trial

24. It is provided in articles 5 and 6 of the Criminal Procedure Law that respect for human rights, as well as scientific accuracy, objectivity, prudence and impartiality should be fully guaranteed in dealing with and disposing of criminal cases, that necessary conditions should be provided for people to exercise their legitimate rights and that no slightest violations of their rights should be tolerated.

25. The Law on Criminal Proceedings was amended in June, 2022 to simplify the criminal proceedings. As a result, the term of detention of the examinee and the accused was reduced, speedy resolution of cases ensured and the sense of responsibility enhanced on the part of the investigators, which all contributed to providing a legal guarantee for the examinee and the accused to exercise their right to a fair trial.

26. In order to ensure impartiality in the criminal proceedings it has been maintained as an important principle at all stages of the proceedings to investigate the facts and circumstances of a case correctly on the basis of scientific evidence, follow the legal procedures without any deviation and allow no privileges and exceptions to any person whatever position he/she may hold or whatever meritorious deeds he/she may have performed.

27. The Lawyers' Law was amended in December, 2023 to reorganize the Korea Bar Association and stipulate, in more concrete terms, the functions of the lawyers' organizations and lawyers, and matters concerning the provision of conditions for their activities. The amending of this law is of great significance in enhancing the independence and role of the lawyers in legal assistance and effectively safeguarding the legal rights and interests of the people.

28. To ensure that judicial institutions conduct trial of cases and application of penalties impartially in accordance with the prescribed principle the Central Court issued a directive to courts at all levels in January 2024, requiring them to correctly implement the judicial policy of the State, and controlled the process of its implementation through the court of second instance, extraordinary appeal and other review procedures. Starting in 2020 the Central Court organized on-line workshop for all judges across the country four times a year, so that they may be equipped with a high level of practical ability and conduct legal proceedings in strict accordance with the judicial policy of the State.

4. Freedoms of expression and access to information

29. A series of legislative and practical measures have been taken to ensure people's freedom of expression and access to information.

30. The Law on Election of Deputies to People's Assemblies at All Levels was amended in August, 2023 for further democratic improvement of election method enabling people to vote, in accordance with their own will, for those who are well qualified as representatives of the people, thus empowering them to take an active part in the conduct of public affairs and effectively safeguard their rights and interests.

31. The Law on Complaints and Petitions was amended in December, 2021 with a view to ensuring that complaints and petitions lodged by people are dealt with timely and impartially. The amended law concretized legal requirements for ensuring principled stand, scientific accuracy, objectivity and impartiality in investigating and settling complaints and petitions, as well as providing for administrative and penal responsibilities for such acts of ombudspersons as ignoring complaints of people, being irresponsible in handling them or abusing their position to put pressure on or retaliating against complainants, thus contributing to further increasing the responsibility and role of ombudspersons and safeguarding the rights and interests of the people.

32. Policy and legislative measures were taken to reinforce the copyright protection system, with the result that broad masses of people actively engaged in writing and the kinds and number of publications significantly increased, contributing to enhancing ideological, spiritual and cultural attainments of the people. Seminars, presentations and contests were organized in various fields every year during the reporting period to provide people with

opportunities to give full play to their creative talents, and those who proved successful in these events were widely covered by TV and newspapers.

33. The Regulations on Information Technology Service was adopted in September, 2020, by which a well-organized system of IT service was established, creating conditions to meet peoples' needs for information and cultural life. With the increase of the State investment in the development of information technology and telecommunications, and the introduction of 4G mobile communication system from 2023 notably improved conditions and environment for people to access, collect and share various kinds of information. Information service by the Intranet further improved and its coverage expanded, with the result that as of 2024 all institutions, enterprises and organizations are connected to the Intranet, and a great number of families in the capital city, as well as in the local areas also access the Intranet to receive a full range of information services.

34. The rights of people to access information are also ensured through the homepage of the Sci-tech Complex. Since its inauguration in 2016 the number of homepage users increased every year to reach over 78 million as of April, this year, while the number of information provided to them amounts to an aggregate of over 479 million and that of regular readers to hundreds of thousands. The readers can, through the homepage, freely search and use any information in any field of their choice, and for this advantage the information service at the Sci-tech Complex is very popular not only among the scientists and technicians but also working people and students.

B. Economic, social and cultural rights

35. During the reporting period the DPRK placed issues concerning people's well-being on the agenda of the sessions of the Supreme People's Assembly and other important national meetings, developed detailed mid-term and long-term plans for their solution and made valuable achievements by putting them into effect.

36. The DPRK put forward the slogan "Everything for the people and everything by relying on them!" as the fundamental principle to be adhered to in the activities of the State, ensured that top priority is given to serving the interests of people and made unsparing investment in the projects for the promotion of their welfare. All the officials from the top party and government officials to community workers firmly established the habit of making devoted efforts to do good things to meet the needs of people and bring them substantial benefit, with the result that remarkable progress has been made in the promotion and protection of people's economic, social and cultural rights.

1. The right to health

37. The DPRK set it as the main objective of the health sector in the 5-year plan for the national economic development (2021–2025) to reinforce its material and technical foundations, improve the quality of medical services and build a strong anti-epidemic infrastructure capable of coping with health crisis of any kind, and ensured that it is properly implemented according to year-by-year plans.

38. The Law on Public Health and Law on Medical Care were amended in March, 2023 to provide a legal guarantee for ensuring quality health service to people. The amended provisions provided that all preventive and treatment institutions should be equipped with quality medical facilities and apparatus as required by medical standards to create necessary environment and conditions for treatment and that institutions and enterprises concerned should supply medicine, medical facilities and apparatus on a planned basis so as to contribute to the promotion and protection of life and health of the people.

39. For the improved quality of health service the health sector set it as its major goal to bring the telemedicine system and emergency medical service system to perfection, introduce the quality control system of medical care, place Koryo therapies on a scientific basis and realize domestic production of essential medical facilities and medicine on a high level, and made proactive efforts for their realization.

40. Great efforts were made to improve the infrastructure conducive to raising the quality of health service, thus creating conditions for people to fully enjoy their right to health care. For instance, the telemedicine system that had been operating only among central level hospitals and provincial, municipality (or district) and county hospitals has been expanded in 2021 to cover specialized hospitals of hepatitis and tuberculosis. Projects are in progress to introduce technically more updated telemedicine system to medical institutions at all levels including those at the lowest level. In 2022 emergency medical care control system was introduced to the Pyongyang Municipal Hospital No.2 to be a model for all other hospitals, and they are now working to introduce this system to provincial level hospitals so that subordinate medical institutions may provide scientific and timely emergency care under the unified direction of the provincial emergency stations. In the period of 2021–22 evaluation system of the quality of medical care was introduced to central level hospitals and general hospitals in all provinces, and efforts are being made to apply them to municipal and county hospitals by 2025.

41. The health sector made efforts under detailed plans to modernize material and technical means, and create sufficient environment and conditions for medical treatment. A huge amount of State funds were invested in the reconstruction and modernization of major pharmaceutical and medical appliances factories, resulting in the reconstruction of the Pyongyang Pharmaceutical Factory, Hungnam Pharmaceutical Factory and Myohyangsan Medical Appliances Factory, as well as Phyongchon Koryo Medicine Factory and other Koryo medicine factories, the construction of Maebongsan Medical Supplies Factory, Sinuizu Anti-epidemic Supplies Factory and provincial health oxygen stations in the period of 2019–23. Efforts were also made to modernize medical institutions, so that in 2022 the Samjiyon Municipal Hospital was built as a model of the hospitals in the mountainous towns. In addition projects are underway to reconstruct and modernize all provincial, municipal and county hospitals by 2030 with the General Hospital of Kangwon Province and Jonchon County Hospital as models.

42. Proactive efforts were made to conduct diagnosis and treatment of diseases more rationally and efficiently by making medical service more AI- and IT-based through the introduction of AI medical service system to medical institutions at all levels. The year 2022 saw the development of AI- and IT-based system at the Pyongyang General Hospital and 2023 its introduction into municipal and district hospitals, which made it possible to further raise the quality of medical service with the aid of standardized methods of diagnosis and treatment and AI technology.

43. Average life expectancy of the population increased from 74.1 in 2019 to 74.7 in 2022, with men and women being 71.5 and 77.7 respectively, while mortality rate per 1000 population declined from 8.3 in 2019 to 8.2 in 2022.

44. In response to the spread of COVID-19, a number of policies, legislative and practical measures were proactively taken to protect people's life and safety, and to ensure social and economic stability. The DPRK, upon the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, took prompt and preemptive measures, by which the sanitary and anti-epidemic system was switched to State emergency anti-epidemic system and all the routes in the land, sea and air were locked down. When the malignant disease entered and started spreading in the country in May, 2022, the State emergency anti-epidemic system was upgraded to be top-level system and all possible measures were taken to return to the stable anti-epidemic situation: household doctor system, emergency medical care system and telemedicine system operated effectively to detect fever carriers, conduct screening of all population and isolate and provide medical treatment to those infected; measures were taken at the national level to provide medicines to those in need; all drugstores were required to provide round-the-clock service. As a result, within a period of less than 3 months since the operation of top-level anti-epidemic system over 4.7million fever carriers were completely recovered, with the fatality rate being 0.0016%. Not a single malignant virus carrier has occurred in the country since August, 2022.

45. Efforts were also made to ensure the anti-epidemic security of the country. The Central Disease Prevention and Control Center was inaugurated in December, 2023 as the sanitary and anti-epidemic base of the country, making it possible to conduct the testing of pathogenic microorganism of all kinds in a standardized and scientific way, and regularly

monitor, control and manage the inflow, outbreak and spreading of diseases, and the sanitary and anti-epidemic stations in provinces, towns and counties were reorganized to be regional disease prevention and control stations.

2. The right to education

46. The DPRK put forward the policy of bringing about a radical change in the educational work to enable the younger generation to grow receiving the best education in the finest and most advanced conditions and environment, and vigorously pushed ahead with its implementation.

47. Distance Education Law, Law on Education of Talented Children and Students and Law on Assistance to Education were enacted in April, 2020, February, 2023 and December, 2023 respectively, and a number of education-related laws amended, thus reinforcing the legal system of the educational sector. The State education strategy “The Great Education Revolution: Building Educational Power, Talent Power” (2021-30) and other mid-term and long-term strategies were developed and various steps taken to bring about a fundamental change in the educational work.

48. Plans to reorganize the junior and secondary schools in such a way that advanced education may be provided and to innovate the contents and methods of education have been implemented in the main, and substantial progress has been made in creating new subjects or enriching their contents to give full play to the talents and aptitudes of students. To illustrate, the level of pre-school education has been further raised by teaching such subjects as science and art, computer and foreign language, while at the higher secondary level the universal 12-year compulsory education programme has been further improved and relevant teaching materials updated so that students may successfully receive education in humanities, sciences, arts and physical culture. To ensure that students receive education suited to their characteristics and the economic and geographical features of the particular region over a hundred vocational schools have been newly established in 2023 in 17 fields such as electronics, forestry and garment industry. As of this year a total of 600 vocational schools have been set up, where 1046 hundred students receive training in the field of their choice.

49. A lot of efforts were directed to improving contents and methods of education of the teacher training universities and to effecting a qualitative and quantitative change in the training of primary and secondary school teachers. For instance, in 2021, Kimhyongjik University of Education, Pyongyang Teacher Training College and others in different parts of the country developed new postgraduate curriculum to train teachers with good qualifications, while in-service training centers also introduced improved curriculum to successfully provide training to a great number of serving teachers and researchers.

50. A series of practical measures were taken to remove the distinctions between the central and local level, the town and countryside in the level of education. A new work system has been set up in primary and secondary education sectors, whereby central and provincial teacher training centers, town and county in-service training centers and urban schools with able staff and good teaching conditions are placed in charge of certain rural schools to provide capacity building according to yearly plans. As a result, qualifications of rural teachers have been further raised, which, in turn, led to the marked improvement of their students' educational attainments. In 2022 alone class recordings of leading primary and secondary school teachers were provided to rural schools by types of schools, subjects and grades, while instructors of in-service training centers in the town and county were sent to over 1000 rural schools to offer guidance and assistance in their educational work. The higher education sector also worked hard to improve the quality of education in such a way as placing central universities in charge of local colleges and providing capacity-building in a planned way. For instance, in 2023, hundreds of excellent teachers from central universities were sent to local colleges, vocational colleges and factory colleges to provide workshop and training to over 4 000 teachers in their major subjects, foreign language and other basic subjects, thus helping to make improvements in their teaching methodology and scientific and theoretical levels.

51. Efforts were made to provide students with better learning conditions and environment by increasing State investment in the educational sector, making education IT-based and modern and conducting a radical overhaul of educational institutions. For instance,

in 2023, a network for the exclusive use of the educational sector was built, covering all the educational institutions across the country including schools in rural and mountainous areas, with its database storing class recordings by types of schools and subjects for teachers to access in their efforts to enhance the quality of education. Over 160 schools and kindergartens in different parts of the country were built to be models for others, 14,000 classrooms were turned multi-functional and hundreds of branch schools came under Intranet coverage.

52. The Distance Education Law enacted in April, 2020 established a well-organized distance education system, fully ensuring working people their right to lifelong learning. During the reporting period, the number of university courses offering distance education increased, while sci-tech libraries have been set up at all provinces, e-libraries in the residential areas and sci-tech spaces at all factories and farms, providing people with sufficient conditions and environment for learning on the job. There are now over 120,000 working people receiving distance education in the field of their choice, who are contributing to attaining the national goal of making all the people well-versed in science and technology and to the country's prosperity.

3. The right to food

53. The DPRK set the objective of becoming self-sufficient in food in the near future by placing agricultural production on a stable track and strengthening material and technical foundations of the countryside, and took important measures for the development of the agricultural sector.

54. The Law on Farms and the Law on Agriculture were amended in November, 2021 and July, 2023 respectively to provide such issues as operating farms in a scientific and rational way in accordance with the principle of promoting profitability, incentivizing farmers to increase production and protecting their interests through scientific and impartial assessment of their work done, granting loans to farms at low interest and providing sufficient materials and other necessary conditions for farming. The Law on Food Administration was amended in December, 2022 to provide that grain procurement should be conducted in various ways on the principle of considering both the national needs for grain and the interests of farmers.

55. Strong policy and practical measures were taken to increase the agricultural production and effectively carried into effect, with the result that the year 2019 saw the production of over 6.654 million tons of grain, which was the biggest harvest in the previous ten years, and the year 2023 saw the overfulfilment of grain production plan by 103%. Grain processing factories in all provinces, towns and counties have been modernized to raise the standard of grain processing, and food distribution system reorganized in a rational way to stabilize the food price.

56. Significant efforts were made to improve people's diet by taking positive measures and implementing them effectively. For instance, the State set the target of building large-scale, modern greenhouse farms and pushed ahead with its implementation as a project of national concern, with the result that Jungphyong greenhouse farm in north Hamgyong province, Ryonpho greenhouse farm in south Hamgyong province, a major industrial city of the country and general greenhouse in Kangdong, the suburbs of Pyongyang, were built in 2019, 2022 and 2024 respectively, which are supplying various kinds of vegetables to people every season. Kwangchon Chicken Farm was built in 2024 to be a model in the field of poultry farming, and other livestock farms, milking cow farms built in different parts of the country, contributing to improving people's diet.

57. The DPRK adopted, at the 10th session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in January, 2024, the "Local Development Policy 20 x 10" with the aim of bringing about a substantial change in solving people's food, clothing and housing problem in the coming ten years. Presently, projects are being carried out under elaborate plans to build in all towns and counties foodstuff, garment, daily necessities factories and other locally-run factories equipped with modern facilities and production processes.

4. The right to housing

58. The DPRK set the objective of bringing about a radical change in the living environment of people in the coming 20–30 years to enable them to enjoy civilization at the highest level, and developed, as the first and foremost task, a gigantic housing construction plan. The plan was launched with a target to build, during the period of 2021–25, a total of 50,000 flats, or 10,000 flats every year, in Pyongyang to basically solve the housing problems in the capital city, build rural dwellings suited to the local geographical features according to the plans of the counties, build 25,000 dwellings in Komdok area to form a modern mining town and build houses on the own accounts of towns and counties to suit their particularities.

59. In order to provide a legal guarantee to the attainment of the gigantic target of housing construction in the capital city and local areas and improving people's living environment the Law on the Development of Towns and Counties, Law on the Supply of Cement for the Construction in Towns and Counties, Law on the Socialist Rural Development and Law on the Maintenance of Dwellings were enacted in September, 2021, January, 2022, September, 2022 and October, 2023 respectively, and related laws and regulations were amended. Furthermore, a strong control system has been put in place at the central and local level to provide proper guidance to the housing construction efforts.

60. As of June, this year four streets and two residential areas with a total of 40,000 flats have been built in the capital city of Pyongyang, over 100,000 dwellings in the countryside, 20,000 houses in the mining town of Komdok and 3,000 dwellings in Samjiyon, which were all provided to people free of charge. Newly built houses in Pyongyang were provided preferentially to those with the most serious housing problems, with such ordinary people as weavers and street cleaners who rendered devoted services for the good of the country and society, scientists and educators next in order. In building houses in rural areas priority was given to replacing houses in the remotest of villages and the villages of the most backward farms, while blueprints of hundreds of styles were sent from the central level for local people to choose to suit the features of their particular areas.

61. When reconstructing areas affected by natural disasters priority was directed to building dwellings, and in carrying out new construction projects special attention was given to building houses for the employees. For instance, when disaster hit the north and south Hamgyong Provinces, Kangwon Province and south Hwanghae Province in 2021, new modern dwellings were built, before anything else, for residents, while construction projects of large-scale greenhouse farms, power stations, etc. proceeded simultaneously with the construction of dwellings of their employees.

5. The right to cultural life

62. The DPRK enacted the Law on Tourism in August, 2023 to create legal environment for people to fully enjoy highly civilized life, set the target of systematically increasing by 2030 the number of bases for cultural and leisure activities and enabling people to fully enjoy their right to cultural life by effectively implementing welfare policy such as accommodation at health resorts and holiday homes at State expense, and pushed ahead with their implementation under detailed plans.

63. Scenic spots, parks, pleasure grounds and other playing fields have been newly built or refurbished in different parts of the country, so that working people could enjoy varied cultured and leisure activities to their hearts' content. For instance, the Yangdok Hot Spring Resort was inaugurated in 2019 to be a general hot spring treatment facility and sports and culture complex, contributing to the promotion of people's civilization and health. In 2023 alone bathing resorts, water parks, folklore parks and other cultural facilities were set up or renovated in different parts of the country such as Nampho Municipality and south Phyongan Province.

C. The rights of special groups

1. Child rights

64. The DPRK, having set it as the most important national task to conduct the work for children, the future and treasure of the country, as an undertaking involving the whole country and society, adopted several legislative and practical measures.

65. The Law on the Rearing of Children was passed at the 6th session of the 14th People's Assembly in February, 2022, providing that dairy products and other nutritious food should be supplied regularly to all children free of charge through the establishment of well-organized system of production and supply and finest possible conditions for child rearing should be created. The adoption of this law provided a legal guarantee for implementing the State policy on child rearing. This law, together with the existing Law on the Nursing and Upbringing of Children and the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Child Rights constitutes a complete legislative framework for the promotion to the fullest possible extent of the child rights and interest in the fields of social life, education, health care and others.

66. In the two years following the adoption of the Law on the Rearing of Children well-organized system for the production and supply of dairy and other nutritious food has been established: the capital city of Pyongyang, as well as all provinces, towns and counties have newly built or modernized existing production bases of dairy products to increase their production capacity, while rural ri s, the grass-roots administrative unit, also produced quality milk powder by setting up production process and improving processing technique. The State ensured adequate supply of milk powder both by promoting domestic production to the maximum amount possible and importing the lacking amount until such time that domestic production increased to meet the needs. As a result, millions of children across the country in the age group of 7 months to 6 years are provided free dairy products everyday, including holidays and Sundays. With a view to ensuring regular assessment of child growth and scientific nutritional management in an age-appropriate way an integrated IT system for child growth and development was developed in April, 2023, according to which work is underway to register and manage the growth and development status of all children in the country and bring them in line with the world standards.

67. The DPRK set the target of reducing by the year 2030 the mortality of newborns for 1000 live births to less than 6, and that of under-5 children to less than 12, and took proactive measures to protect their life through improved management of child nutrition and disease. For instance, the system of integrated management of child disease has been further improved, while ingenious operation method of newborn heart has been developed to bring the post-operation survival rate in line with the world level.

68. Mortality rate of newborns and under-5 children per 1 000 live births were 12.1 and 16.9 respectively in 2019 to decline to 11.7 and 16.4 respectively in 2022.

69. The DPRK, having set it as a national priority to provide students with uniforms and school things at the State expense, placed the issue of enhancing the quality of uniforms and providing good school things on the agenda of important national meetings and took practical measures for their realization. New stylish designs were created for the uniforms of all students from primary schools to universities in 2020, and several practical measures were taken to provide students with uniforms that fit them perfectly: guidelines were sent to all class teachers for reference in taking students' measurements; trainings were organized for teachers to take correct measurements; technical skills were imparted to uniform producers. By 2022 all provinces have set up factories specializing in the production of school uniforms, bags and shoes, and the capital city of Pyongyang built modern factories for the production of quality school things. Starting in 2022 all the fresh students at schools, colleges and universities have been provided with uniforms of new design, as well as shoes and bags- all at a price next to nothing.

70. A series of measures were taken for the upbringing and education of children without parents. Foodstuff of various kinds and daily necessities were regularly supplied according to the nutrition management standards and national foodstuff provision system to the children and students at the baby homes, children's homes and junior and secondary boarding schools.

Support for them was provided in a more concentrated way on New Year's days and other national holidays under the special attention and concern of the State and society, with the result that all children without parents are growing up healthy and strong feeling no envy at anyone. Efforts were made under the concern of the State and the whole society to improve educational conditions and environment for children without parents. For instance, state-of-the-art IT equipment were provided to the Pyongyang Secondary Boarding School in March, 2023 for use in identifying aptitudes and talents of students and offering appropriate education, and ensuring convenience and effectiveness in education to the fullest possible extent.

71. Diverse activities were organized to prepare students to be pillars of the country and to create an environment conducive to their healthy growth. For instance, the 9th National Meeting of the Korean Children's Union was convened in December, 2022 under the special attention and blessing of the whole country and entire people, where children shared their achievements and experiences in preparing themselves to be knowledgeable, morally sound and physically fit, as well as their future goals. Participants in the meeting were chosen from among the children of workers, farmers and other ordinary people, who had distinguished themselves for being good at school and good behavior. The participants had a good time, visiting different places of interest in the capital city and were given presents specially prepared by the government.

2. Women's rights

72. In the DPRK women are leading a worthwhile life as the masters of the State and society, with their rights fully guaranteed by virtue of the Socialist Constitution, sectoral laws including the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights and the policy of the State.

73. A great number of women made a great contribution to the development of the State and society by actively participating in social activities and creditably performing their duties before their families. In order to give wide publicity to the laudable deeds of women and encourage others to follow their examples, the 5th National Meeting of Mothers was convened in December, 2023, to which were invited a total of 10,000 women who distinguished themselves by bringing up their children to be able workers contributing to the prosperity and development of the country, giving birth to several children, being mother heroes, and taking good care of children without parents. The meeting introduced positive examples displayed by women and discussed tasks and ways for women to fulfil their responsibilities and role before the society and families. Various other events such as art performances, concerts, coverage by TV and newspapers of women labour innovators, scientists, teachers and other exemplary women were organized on the occasion of the international women's day, anniversary day of promulgation of the Law on Gender Equality and Mothers' Day, which served to building up women's pride and self-confidence and establishing social atmosphere of respecting women.

74. Measures were taken for women to learn to their hearts' content under the study-while-you-work system. Distance education faculties have been organized in leading universities of the country, sci-tech learning spaces set up at all institutions, enterprises and farms and e-libraries built in all communities, making it possible for women to learn without limit of time and place and win qualifications in the field of their choice. For instance, almost all women at Kim Jong Suk Pyongyang Textile Factory and others that are predominantly of female composition receive education through the distance education system at the universities and courses that agree to their wishes and aptitudes. As of June, 2024 women account for more than 60% of over 120,000 working people on the distance education system.

75. The DPRK set the target of reducing maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births to 40 and providing delivery assistance by health workers by 100%. Maternal health is fully guaranteed through the granting of the 240-day maternity leave and the provision by the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital of collective diagnosis and treatment measures to the provincial maternity hospitals through the telemedicine system. In-service training and workshop were organized every year from 2019 for household doctors and ob/gyn doctors at the primary medical institutions to give lectures on early registration and health care of

pregnant women and practical measures to prevent congenital anomalies and obstetrical infection in particular.

76. A number of measures were taken by the State to provide more benefits to women who gave birth to several children. The title of labour hero and other State commendations were conferred in April, 2023 on 3 751 women who gave birth to several children and brought them up to be respectable persons. Women who gave birth to several children are given preferential treatment in the provision of food and medical care, as well as good housing. Families with three or more children are granted special allowance by the State until they finish secondary school, while their mothers receive old-age pension from the State irrespective of the length of service at institutions, enterprises and organizations.

3. The rights of persons with disabilities

77. The Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed at the 10th session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in September, 2023, which served as an important occasion in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities on a higher level and raising social concern for their protection.

78. The DPRK renamed the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities enacted on June 18, 2003 the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adding new chapters on the promotion of the socio-political, personal and property rights of persons with disabilities to specify the relevant rights and duties and amending important issues concerning the promotion of rights in education, health care, employment and cultural life. This law served to provide a legal guarantee for fully protecting the rights and interests of persons with disabilities and thoroughly implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to which the DPRK is a State party.

79. The DPRK specified the targets for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the sectoral plans for education, health care, employment and construction for the implementation of the 5-year Strategy for the National Economic Development (2021-25) and the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019-30), and pushed ahead with the efforts for their implementation. The Korean Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities developed the Plan for the Improvement of Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2019-20) and other short-term and mid-term action plans, general and sectoral plans, containing such issues as rehabilitation, education, employment, cultural life, barrier-free environment, specialized organizations of persons with disabilities, etc., which were all successfully carried into effect. In order to ensure full implementation of the disability-related policy and legislation the central and local committees for the protection of the persons with disabilities, each consisting of the heads of government institutions and social organizations of the area concerned, held regular meetings every year, in which the annual plan for the protection of persons with disabilities were discussed, their implementations evaluated and follow-up measures taken.

80. In order to create a social climate of respecting the personality and dignity of persons with disabilities and provide favourable environment for their participation in social activities, a State directive was issued in 2020 to the effect that "the blind" and "the deaf and dumb" should be replaced with "persons with visual impairments" and "persons with hearing impairments", while wide coverage by TV, radio and other media was given to the patriotic deeds of the persons with disabilities, celebrations of the Day of Persons with Disabilities, table tennis tournament of persons with disabilities and amateurs, their literary and art works, etc.

81. Various measures were taken to ensure that children with disabilities enjoy the same right to education as others. The Ministry of Education issued a directive in August, 2020, requiring education departments of the people's committees at all levels to enrol all the school-age children with disabilities in schools. Pursuant to the directive the education departments made an exhaustive list of school-age children with disabilities in the area under their control by the type of disabilities and made, in consideration of their physical conditions, arrangements for them to pursue learning either in the ordinary schools or special needs schools. The Ministry of Education also made successful efforts, in cooperation with the people's committees at all levels, to provide quality education to children with disabilities:

curriculum of schools for children with visual or hearing impairments were revised to increase the proportion of practical education and textbooks newly compiled to enable them to acquire more than one skill; automatic translation program of sign language and the relevant equipment were developed and put to use in class; good teaching methods and experiences were spread through the homepage for persons with disabilities on the education Intranet; projects were carried out via the distance education system to improve teachers' qualifications.

82. The Korea Rehabilitation Center for Children with Disabilities played an important role in the rehabilitation and education of preschool-age children with disabilities. They registered the children with disabilities in Pyongyang according to the early registration system and provided them with necessary technical consultations and rehabilitative services. Simultaneously they organized regular workshop for their parents or caretakers to impart to them elementary rehabilitative and education methods and skills. They also developed disability assessment guidelines for distribution to nursery carers and kindergarten teachers so that they could identify disabilities in good time and use appropriate methods of nursing and upbringing. The opening ceremony of the school year and the activities of the rehabilitation center, devoted efforts of the nurses and teachers for the children with disabilities were given wide coverage by TV and other media, evoking a big response among the public, which in turn led to a greater concern for their protection.

83. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to conduct activities for the realization of their rights and interests associations of women with disabilities under the Korea Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities which had been active in only four provinces since 2011 were organized in all other provinces in 2019. These associations conducted, under the guidance of the Korea Association of Women with Disabilities, efforts to acquaint themselves with the actual situation and needs of women in counties, ri s and other grass-roots areas and to find out about their thoughts and aspirations and include them in their action plans, thus ensuring that work with women with disabilities meet their demands and needs and bring them substantial benefits.

84. With a view to creating convenient living conditions and environment for persons with disabilities, a series of workshop and seminar of diverse themes were organized to raise awareness of those working for persons with disabilities, among which a typical example is the workshop organized by the central committee of the Korea Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities for architectural designers, builders and city management workers under the theme of building barrier-free environment in the construction field. As a result of these efforts, barrier-free facilities have been set up in the Pyongyang General Hospital, Yangdok Hotspring Resort, apartment blocks in Hwasong Street etc. that have been newly built during the reporting period. For persons with visual impairments program for converting Korean written language into braille was developed in 2019 to be provided to them free of cost, books in braille periodically published and program for Korean letter recognition and conversion into sounds further improved for them to use with convenience. In addition Korean language captions or subtitles were provided to science and education films, feature films and other diverse forms of videos for persons with hearing impairment to enjoy on Intranet terminals or mobile network.

4. The rights of the elderly

85. A series of achievements have been made in the efforts to protect the rights and interests of the elderly persons and provide them more cultured and happy life.

86. The Korea Federation for the Protection of Elderly Persons adopted a Strategy for the Protection of the Elderly (2020-25) and conducted activities for the promotion of their health, creation of environment and conditions for their cultural life and social activities, public awareness raising of the elderly issues and research and survey. The federation also carried out publicity and advocacy activities for the protection of the rights and interests of the elderly persons through its internal and external homepage titled For the Benefit of the Elderly.

87. State investment in the field of the elderly protection increased, resulting in the promoted welfare of the elderly persons. For instance, nursing homes with accommodation

capacity of 150–200 persons and good living conditions have been built in all provinces in the period of April, 2018 to October, 2020, their food provision standard further raised and clothing and daily necessities provided to the inmates regularly. Two health complexes, a general service facility for the elderly, have been set up in Hwasong Street in 2023, providing conditions for recreation, physical exercises, personal hygiene and reading. The Korea Federation for the Protection of the Elderly organized a practical training for the staff of the complexes to ensure that services tailored to the age, psychological and physical characteristics of the elderly are provided.

88. Efforts were made to foster respect for the elderly persons and create environment and conditions for them to participate in social activities. A TV program series Respectable Elderly Persons showing fine traits and aspects of life of elderly persons, exemplary deeds of citizens in helping and caring them etc. were aired, establishing an atmosphere of respecting, warmly treating and promoting their welfare. National measures were also taken to enable elderly persons to use their knowledge and experience through participation in social and productive activities according to their wishes and abilities and to receive accurate payments for the work done.

D. International cooperation in the field of human rights

89. The DPRK has been encouraging and further developing international exchange and collaboration in the human rights field as motivated by its consistent stand to contribute to the international community's efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights through constructive dialogue and cooperation.

90. Such efforts continued even in the face of the adverse conditions and environment caused by global health crisis of the past five years. For instance the DPRK delegation participated in the UN Human Rights Council at its 41st to 55th sessions and other human rights-related international meetings to share with the international community the achievements, experiences, obstacles and challenges in its efforts for the protection of human rights and to clarify its principled stand in promoting genuine human rights. The DPRK submitted in November, 2023 its replies to the list of questions of the UN committee on the rights of persons with disabilities concerning its initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and provided, from the perspective of sincere cooperation, replies to the questions frequently raised by the UN organizations and human rights treaty bodies. It submitted its Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development in June, 2021, hosted the visit to the country of the chief and deputy chief of the east Asia and Pacific Office of the UN Children's Fund in July and August, 2019 to have an in-depth discussion on the protection of the rights and promotion of health of women and children.

91. The DPRK will continue to make efforts for dialogue and cooperation, based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, impartiality, objectivity and mutual benefit as stipulated in the UN Charter. However, it will strongly oppose and reject, with no tolerance, any act of politicization, selectivity and double standard designed to abuse human rights issues for ulterior political motives.

IV. Challenges and future goals

A. Obstacles and challenges

92. Efforts of the DPRK for the promotion and protection of human rights are confronted with serious obstacles and challenges, which are increasing with the passage of time.

93. The ongoing moves of isolation, stifling, military threats, blockade and pressure that have been perpetrated by the hostile forces against the DPRK for centuries constitute the most serious challenge, the biggest obstacle to the sovereignty and developmental interests of the DPRK, as well as the rights of people to peaceful life. The United States has, from the very inception of the DPRK, persistently pursued a hostile policy against it, interfering in its

internal affairs in all fields of politics, the economy, military affairs, culture and others, and made desperate attempts to bring down the socialist system of our people's own choice. Joining these moves are other hostile forces such as Japan and Republic of Korea. Japan, in particular, having inflicted irreparable harm on the Korean people by committing such heinous crimes against humanity as forcible drafting and abduction, massacre of millions of Koreans and drafting of women as sex slaves for Japanese imperial army in its 40-year military invasion of Korea, has not yet liquidated its past crimes and is persistently pursuing a hostile policy against the DPRK. The Republic of Korea is, even at this moment, introducing US nuclear strategic assets into the Korean peninsula and staging war drills of all kinds together with the United States and Japan, which pose a constant threat to the security of the DPRK and constitute great impediments to its economic development and the improvement of the people's living.

94. The anti-DPRK "human rights resolution" forcibly adopted every year from 2003 at the UNGA and HRC as a result of conspiracy of the United States, EU, Japan, ROK and other hostile forces remains the most hostile, politicized means aiming at tarnishing the image of the dignified State of ours and overthrowing its socialist system. And this is laying serious obstacles to the enjoyment by the people of their human rights, as well as the efforts of the DPRK and its enthusiasm for international cooperation.

95. Any attempt to bring down the socialist system of the DPRK for simple reason that it pursues an ideology and ideals different from theirs constitutes in itself an infringement on the human rights of our people, as well as an insult to their dignity. The anti-DPRK "human rights resolution" incites confrontation, not cooperation, and instigates war, not peace. Confrontation and dialogue, war and cooperation are incompatible.

B. Future goals

96. The DPRK, regarding the protection of the rights and interests of people and promotion of their well-being as the supreme principle of its activities, will continuously strive to further improve people's living through the sustainable economic development and achieve the comprehensive development of the country.

97. The DPRK will reinforce and perfect the legal system for the promotion and protection of human rights in keeping with the international human rights trends and actual situation in the country, ensure, to the fullest possible extent, the legal rights and interests of the people and collaborate with international community in its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development in close combination with the National Development Goals.

98. The DPRK will faithfully fulfill its obligations under international human rights instruments to which it is a State party such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and further promote international exchange and collaboration in the human rights field.
