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Statement submitted by Jubilee Campaign, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

This statement by Jubilee Campaign, submitted on behalf of a worldwide coalition of organizations focused on North Korean human rights, serves to inform the United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women on the progress made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, it highlights the status of North Korean women who defect from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the dangers and exploitation that they face in the People's Republic of China. Qualitative and quantitative data have been compiled into this report to highlight both the unwillingness of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the reluctance of the government of the People's Republic of China to recognize North Korean female defectors as refugees, thereby furthering discrimination and oppression of women.

North Korean women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a serious record of human rights violations and women in North Korea face a disproportionately high rate of these abuses. A large portion of North Korean women have reported instances of domestic violence at the hands of their romantic partners, and an even greater portion have reported the prevalence of sexual abuse in the workplace, where they are victim to abuses such as groping, penetrative rape, and inappropriate body searches.

North Korean women who have defected and have been subsequently returned and detained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have perhaps faced the most egregious of violations and abuse. Sexual harassment and rape are among the violations that female inmates face during detention. For those women who have become pregnant abroad but are illegally repatriated to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, forced abortions are commonly performed to eliminate any babies of mixed race, and such abortions directly violate the State's own law that states that pregnant women should remain safe and protected.

UNICEF statistics reveal that 32 per cent of North Korean women within the reproductive age range have "poor nutritional status", 23 per cent of women within the reproductive age range are classified underweight, and 2 per cent of women above 19 years old seek higher education.

Prostitution and sex trafficking of North Korean girls and women are common. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has started building "entertainment" businesses in foreign countries where young North Korean women are employed. These businesses are masked as normal businesses, but most are brothels where these women and girls are prostituted to men. Many women are unable to escape sex slavery, as they are dependent on their procurers for a livelihood in an unfamiliar foreign nation.

North Korean priorities on women

The government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made numerous statements insisting their consideration of women's rights, however, there exists discrepancies regarding the government's claims and actions.

In their most recent CEDAW report, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated its determination to "eliminate traditional and stereotyped beliefs and attitudes" about women's roles in the family and society. Despite this claim, they fail to address domestic abuse, which accounts for the largest portion of violence against women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and North Korean escapees testified at

the Commission on the Status of Women parallel event that North Korean women have the value of a “fly”.

While in this report, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea defines sexual exploitation and states that it is of utmost concern in society, they do not report on pervasiveness of sexual harassment of women in the workplace, in the military, and in prisons. Article 6, Section 68, falsely states that “sexual exploitation is in no way a social problem in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”.

Another baseless claim by the government in Article 12 Section 192 is that 70 per cent of married women use contraceptives. However, Human Rights Watch’s survey of North Korean defectors after 2011 reveals that every survey respondent stated they received no education on safe sex practices or contraception, and therefore had not used it.

North Korean women in the People’s Republic of China

While sex-related crimes are a recurrence in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, they only account for a portion of the larger multitude of acts of discrimination and outright violence. Contrarily, in the People’s Republic of China, sex crimes are the predominant tool for subversion of women.

Although reliable statistics regarding the portion of North Korean women in neighboring countries are few and far between, it has been recorded that so far in 2019, over 1,000 North Korean defectors have resettled in the Republic of Korea, 85 per cent of whom are women. These women often seek financial stability and a secure livelihood in the Republic of Korea and the People’s Republic of China, but they come to realize that the “brokers” that promise them jobs are attempting to and often successfully sell these women into prostitution and/or sex slavery. In rural areas of China, where there is a shortage of women available and eligible to marry, many Chinese men resort to purchasing a foreign bride – more often than not from Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Statistics reveal that approximately 60 per cent of North Korean women who have entered China have either been sold or forced into prostitution. Additionally, 30 per cent were sold into marriage, and 15 per cent were placed into cybersex business. Approximately ten million prostitutes are operating in the People’s Republic of China, so it is only imaginable just how high the proportion of North Korean women make up this number due to the scarcity of single Chinese women.

For those North Korean women and girls who are not sold into prostitution, the cybersex industry is another likely reality. In this industry, women and girls are forced to perform sexual acts that are broadcasted live online to thousands of viewers. Many of these women are forcibly exposed, beaten, masturbated, and raped on camera at the request of viewers who offer to pay the abuser. Sexual abuse, however, is not the only crime associated with the cybersex industry. Often, North Korean women who are victims of cybersex trafficking are repeatedly fed drugs to create a state of dependence and starved to ensure they cannot escape.

The proportion of young girls who are forced to take part in the cybersex industry is concerning. Pedophiles from all across the globe will pay large sums to view content of these young girls. According to the KoreaFuture Initiative, one single cybersex live-stream featuring a North Korean girl aged 9–14 can cost \$60–\$110 USD, while a live-stream featuring North Korean girls and women aged 17–24 can cost up to \$90 USD.

Chinese priorities on North Korean women

In Article 6, Section 109 of the People’s Republic of China’s combined seventh and eighth periodic report to CEDAW ([CEDAW/C/CHN/7-8](#)), the Chinese

government claims they have “been paying attention to providing quality relief, rehabilitation and resettlement services rescued women and children”. However, multiple sources, including the Korea Future Initiative, revealed survey respondents never received the aid that the Chinese government so boldly claims it provides. In fact, instances in which the government repatriates North Korean women or acquiesces to them being sold into prostitution are quite commonplace.

The government uses terms such as “economic migrants” and “illegal immigrants” to describe North Korean defectors to justify the forcible repatriation, de facto refoulement, of North Korean refugee men and women back to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. This is in direct violation of Article 33 Section 1 of the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees principle of non-refoulement.

Conclusion

It is with great respect that Jubilee Campaign humbly urges the Commission on the Status of Women to take any and all steps to promote the livelihood of North Korean women, both in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and People’s Republic of China, and to eliminate discrimination, sex-trafficking, domestic abuse, and all other violations of women’s rights in these countries.

Furthermore, it is incumbent that the government of the People’s Republic of China (1) acknowledge and condemn those who participate in the sex trafficking industry and (2) acknowledge North Korean women and girls as refugees and extend legal protections to them to prevent further suffering and exploitation.
