

26 February 2018

To: The United National Security Council Committee pursuant to [resolution 1718 \(2006\)](#)

c/o His Excellency Mr. Karel van Oosterom, [Chairperson](#)  
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**Re: Worsening humanitarian and human rights impacts of UN sanctions on the DPRK**

To Honourable Members of UN 1718 Sanctions Committee (DPRK)

This letter comes to you from the [Canadian Voice of Women for Peace](#) (VOW) and [The United Church of Canada](#), two non-governmental organizations with a long history of commitment to the peaceful resolution of the crisis on the Korean Peninsula. We are deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian and human rights impacts of UN sanctions on the DPRK. We write to urge the 1718 Committee to provide leadership in the establishment of a rapid procedure for accepting exemptions to the sanctions based on humanitarian needs, reconsideration of sanctions, and the promotion of positive engagement, constructive dialogue, and mutual cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We believe diplomacy of this nature is the only path to a long-term goal of a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

We understand that UN sanctions are aimed to “apply pressure on a State to comply with the objectives set by the Security Council without resorting to the use of [military] force when peace has been threatened and diplomatic efforts have failed.” It is increasingly evident to our organizations and others attempting to provide humanitarian aid that the range of current sanctions will have brutal consequences on the most vulnerable of the citizens of the DPRK. It is ordinary North Korean people who are experiencing hardship and suffering in these cold winter days, with restricted access to fuel for food production, heating or to medical supplies. Most vulnerable are those living in remote areas, particularly women, children and seniors. Hunger is reaching an acute level among those most at risk: UNICEF reported in January 2018 that “200,000 North Korean children suffer from acute malnutrition, including 60,000 with the most severe form that can be lethal”.<sup>1</sup>

The increasing severity of the sanctions now target the civilian economy in the DPRK and will have further negative impacts on human livelihood. Bans on textile exports will have a disproportionate effect on women workers, who make up the majority of the labour force in that sector. Bans on the dispatch of North Korean workers abroad will significantly affect the means whereby DPRK citizens earn additional resources to support their families. Recent measures restricting the DPRK's import of oil products will cause further negative impact on the well-being of the civilian population. This is documented in a report

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<sup>1</sup>[60,000 North Korean children may starve, sanctions slow aid - UNICEF](#) ; Reuters, JANUARY 30, 2018.

published in September 2017 by Peter Hayes and David von Hippel of the Nautilus Institute that analyzes the impact of Chinese energy sanctions on the DPRK in response to its missile and nuclear testing:

*“The immediate primary impacts of responses to oil and oil products cut-offs will be on welfare; people will be forced to walk or not move at all, and to push buses instead of riding in them. There will be less light in households due to less kerosene, and less on-site power generation. There will be more deforestation to produce biomass and charcoal used in gasifiers to run trucks, leading to more erosion, floods, less food crops, and more famine. There will be less diesel fuel to pump water to irrigate rice paddies, to process crops into foodstuffs, to transport food and other household necessities, and to transport agricultural products to markets before they spoil.”<sup>2</sup>*

Letters and accompanying documentation compiled in October 2017 from Mr. Tapan Mishra, the UN Humanitarian Resident Coordinator for North Korea, cite forty-two examples where sanctions have hampered humanitarian work. The UN, international organisations and NGOs working in the DPRK have for several years faced increased operational difficulties, such as the absence of international banking services through which to transfer operational funds. They have also faced delays to or prohibitions against the provision of essential medical equipment and pharmaceutical products, as well hardware for farming and water-supply systems.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in a UNSC briefing in December 2017, Sweden’s UN Ambassador Olof Skoog affirmed the “utmost importance that the humanitarian exemptions provided for under the sanctions are upheld”.<sup>4</sup>

We appreciate the statement at the open briefing of the 1718 Committee on 9 February 2018 by the Chair, His Excellency Karel van Oosterom:

*I wish to stress that the ultimate goal of the sanctions is to facilitate the achievement of a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue. In this perspective the resolutions reaffirm the Council’s support to the Six Party Talks and calling for their resumption. .... it should be underlined that the sanctions are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population of the DPRK. Nor are they intended to affect negatively or restrict activities, including economic activities and cooperation, food aid and humanitarian assistance, that are not prohibited by the resolutions.<sup>5</sup>*

We are deeply concerned that in the absence of an appropriate UNSC system to process applications for exemptions based on humanitarian grounds, these sanctions *do* “affect negatively and restrict activities” related to food aid and humanitarian assistance. Indeed, we are concerned that the sanctions violate basic

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Hayes and David von Hippel, "Sanctions on North Korean oil imports: impacts and efficacy", NAPSNet Special Reports, September 05, 2017, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/sanctions-on-north-korean-oil-imports-impacts-and-efficacy/>

<sup>3</sup> Chad O’Carroll, “Serious Concern about Sanctions’ Impact on North Korea Aid Work: UN DPRK Rep”, December 7, 2017, <https://www.nknews.org/2017/12/serious-concern-about-sanctions-impact-on-north-korea-aid-work-un-dprk-rep/>

<sup>4</sup> National Statement delivered by Ambassador Olof Skoog at the United Nations Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 11 December 2017, New York, <http://www.government.se/statements/2017/12/statement-by-sweden-at-the-uns-sc-briefing-on-the-situation-in-the-dprk/>

<sup>5</sup> Open briefing of the 1718 Committee, Statement by the Chair of the 1718 Committee, Karel J.G. van Oosterom, New York, 9 February 2018 <https://www.permanentrepresentations.nl/permanent-representations/pr-un-new-york/documents/speeches/2018/02/09/open-briefing-of-the-1718-committee>

human rights of the DPRK people: their rights to life, food, medical care, an adequate standard of living and the ability to work for economic development.

We call on the 1718 Committee to establish UNSC systems for the expedient processing of applications for sanctions exemptions submitted by the UN, IOs and NGOs as well as private companies. Such a process is needed urgently to enable humanitarian work to continue unimpeded.

We press the 1718 Committee to work towards the lifting of sanctions, which have deleterious effects on the North Korean people, and work toward the normalization of diplomatic relations, the removal of barriers to citizen-to-citizen engagement, and the strengthening of humanitarian cooperation. A “maximum pressure” campaign is not diplomacy that will lead to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, or to peace.

We urge the UN and member states to immediately engage all relevant parties in dialogue, without preconditions, to begin a process to replace the Armistice Agreement with a Korea Peace Treaty and work toward achieving a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. A Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons can only be achieved through positive engagement, constructive dialogue, and mutual cooperation.

We look forward to further dialogue.

Thank you sincerely for your consideration,



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