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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been a member of the United Nations since 1991. Therefore it is bound to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The country is as far away from being "democratic" or a "republic" to its people than it can possibly be. Most, if not all articles of the Declaration are trampled on by the country's government. Basic elements of a democracy have been denied to North Korean people for decades.

People of North Korea are constantly exposed to the official opinion of the government. It starts at school with little children and persists till the end of somebody's life. There is one opinion – and that is the one the government offers.

Having another opinion than the government is life-threatening to North Koreans. If the government believes that a person has another opinion, it is very likely the person is sent to a camp. Although the North Korean government denies the existence of the camps, most citizens know that they exist and that they can be sent to one of them. Living in such a camp means living under the most severe conditions – torture, forced labour, food rations close to starvation.

There is no way to hide for citizens of North Korea. It is dangerous to have another opinion or a less enthusiastic one amongst friends and family. Many people don't tell their closest friends or family what they really think.

Many, if not most "opinions" or "facts" the government wants the people to repeat are mere lies. E.g. the birth place of Kim Jong Il is said to be in the North Korean mountains, where in fact it is located in Siberia. In North Korea many generations don't know the facts, but are constantly misinformed. Generations of North Koreans never learned to form an own opinion.

For freedom of opinion and expression it is necessary that people have access to media from within their own country but also from outside world. The access to media from outside the country is strongly inhibited and monitored. Public Executions are said to have taken place because of the possession of media from another country. Everyone in North Korea should be able to publish and print. At the moment, all media is produced by the government. There are no other means open for citizens of North Korea.

Article 19 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Society of threatened People calls on the Human Rights council to urge the government of North Korea to:

- Immediately implement article 19 of the universal declaration and to let its people have the full use and benefit of the freedom of opinion and expression,
- To ask for full support from UN bodies for this process.