

(check against delivery)

Statement by

H.E. Mr. KIM Bong-hyun

Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Republic of Korea

at

The 22nd Session of the United Nations

Human Rights Council

Geneva, 27 February 2013

Mr. President,

The second cycle of the UPR has shown encouraging signs. Participating countries, including my own, have presented their progress in implementing recommendations they accepted in the first cycle. We have also seen a more comprehensive range of recommendations from an increased number of fellow Member States. Such an encouraging start of the second cycle must be maintained and moved forward by ensuring the universality and effectiveness of the UPR.

The present session of the Council will adopt the report on my government's second UPR. I would like to once again acknowledge our appreciation for all of the recommendations provided to us, and reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of the recommendations which we accepted.

Mr. President,

Last year, this Council reaffirmed its leading role within the UN mechanism to address serious human rights situations, notably with regard to the events in Syria.

In spite of all the efforts by the UN and the international community, the situation in Syria remains a grave concern. Thus far more than 70 thousand people have lost their lives. Many countries shared their serious concerns over the situation in Syria at the recent open debate of the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. My Government chaired the open debate as the president of the Council for this month.

Along these lines, I urge once again the immediate end to all violence in Syria. With our continued support for the Special Envoy, Dr. Brahimi, it is our sincere hope that the Syrian-led inclusive transition process will begin without delay.

Mr. President,

This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, by which the universality and central role of human rights was reaffirmed. The Panel discussion held earlier at this session shed light on the progress achieved at both the substantive and institutional levels during the past 20 years. However, challenges still remain, including

those related specifically to violence against women. In the same spirit, I hope this Council will continue to lead in addressing such challenges.

We also celebrate another memorable 20th anniversary this year, that of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. As the Declaration acknowledges, women in situations of armed conflict are especially vulnerable to violence. It is notable that the international community has been making continuous efforts to eliminate sexual violence in armed conflict. Unfortunately, however, we continue to witness rampant and immeasurable suffering in this regard across the world.

The issue of the so-called ‘comfort women,’ victims who were forced into sexual slavery during the Second World War, is a well-known case of sexual violence in armed conflict. These instances of systematic rape and sexual slavery could constitute crimes against humanity.

In light of this, the Government of the Republic of Korea would like to urge the UN system and all Member States to make the most concerted efforts to end such crimes, not only taking all

measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict, but also to provide effective remedies and reparations for victims.

Mr. President,

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the first resolution on the human rights situation in the DPRK(Democratic People's Republic of Korea). The international community has worked to address this concern, through establishing and extending the mandate of the special rapporteur and adopting annual resolutions.

However, the human situation in the DPRK continues to deteriorate, making it among the worst in the world. Recently, the High Commissioner urged the international community to take stronger action, by raising the need for an international inquiry into the human rights situation in North Korea. She also mentioned that while the DPRK's nuclear programme and rocket launches are issues of enormous alarm, they should not be allowed to overshadow the deplorable human rights situation in the DPRK.

Mr. Marzuki Darusman, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DPRK has also proposed to establish an inquiry mechanism to investigate and document the human rights violations in the country. The DPRK is strongly urged to cooperate with the UN human rights mechanism, especially with the Special Rapporteur, the OHCHR, and the proposed inquiry mechanism, if it is established. The Government of the Republic of Korea will fully join in these efforts of the international community, including the establishment of an inquiry mechanism towards the improvement of the human rights situation in the country.

Mr. President,

We also remain deeply concerned about the issues of abductees and prisoners from the Korean War detained in the DPRK as well as the separated families between the North and South. To be both clear and frank, they have suffered long enough. I would like to call upon the DPRK to make sincere efforts to address these issues, taking into consideration their suffering. My Government is willing to do our part in this regard.

Another remaining concern centers on asylum seekers and refugees from the DPRK. They need and deserve continued help from the international community in their pursuit of new lives. In their efforts to seek basic freedoms, many of them are in danger of being arrested and forced to return to the place where they face deplorable persecution.

The Republic of Korea once again with the deepest sincerity urges all countries concerned to faithfully uphold the principle of *non-refoulement*, thereby refraining from exposing those in desperate situations to the risk of dire consequences upon return.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude my statement by expressing my deep appreciation to the Deputy High Commissioner, Madam Kyung-wha Kang, who will leave her office after six years of active and dedicated service.

Thank you.