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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

UN Human Rights Council
58th session
24 February – 4 April 2025

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the Special Rapporteur's report and the report of the High Commissioner, which recognize the DPRK's severe restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and access to information. The criminalization of consuming foreign media, harsh penalties for "South Korean-style" speech and pervasive surveillance perpetuate a climate of fear and repression. These policies silence dissent and isolate people in North Korea from the outside world as well as from one another.

We acknowledge the DPRK's recent engagement with UN mechanisms, including its participation in the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and its acceptance of a limited number of recommendations related to the right to freedom of expression. Both the UPR and the report of the High Commissioner set out the litany of restrictions to the right to freedom of expression and the concrete steps that must be taken to guarantee it—such as repealing repressive laws, ending arbitrary detention and dismantling mass surveillance. The government must take action by allowing independent media, lifting restrictions on foreign content, and ceasing the criminalization of "South Korean-style" expressions.

As the Special Rapporteur's report highlights, the restrictive environment in the DPRK extends beyond civil and political rights. Access to independent information is a fundamental right that is also essential for food security, public health, scientific progress and economic survival. The DPRK's near-absolute control over information denies its people the ability to make informed choices, aggravating the humanitarian crisis in the country. Without access to independent information, people are left with incomplete or false narratives, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation and harm.

Amid shifting geopolitical dynamics, the human rights situation in North Korea must not fade from the international agenda. We call on the DPRK to allow independent monitors, engage constructively with Special Procedures and treaty bodies and implement with transparency recommendations it has received. We urge the Human Rights Council to ensure sustained monitoring and accountability.

Finally, we emphasize the crucial role of the UN Human Rights Office in Seoul in monitoring

and documenting serious human rights violations, including potential crimes under international law in the DPRK and amplifying the voices of victims and survivors. Strengthening and adequately resourcing this work is essential for advancing justice, truth and reparation.

We call on the DPRK to take steps toward reform and urge the Council to remain resolute in focusing its attention on human rights in the country.

Thank you.