**Statement by Ms. Elizabeth Salmón, the new UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea**

Korean version, see below.

1 August 2022

Today, I assume the UN Human Rights Council’s mandate to act as the fourth UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). I am deeply honored and humbled by the trust placed in me to fulfil this highly important and challenging mission. I undertake this mandate with a strong sense of responsibility and commitment towards the citizens of the DPRK and in general to the protection and promotion of human rights and the advancement of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The efforts made by the three previous Special Rapporteurs have left no doubt that one of the greatest difficulties to improve the human rights situation is the scarcity or outright lack of dialogue channels with DPRK authorities or officials. Therefore, it is one of my top priorities to make the utmost effort to build opportunities and open spaces to exchange views with the Government and also to preserve and multiply the sources of information regarding the different aspects of the human rights situation in the country. These efforts must include inviting the different agencies and mandates of the UN system to engage with my mandate to diversify the opportunities to build a working rapport with the Government.

Notwithstanding this strategic priority, my mandate will remain firmly devoted to a victims-centered approach. In the past decades we have learned that victims must always be the focus of any human rights or humanitarian endeavor. Legitimacy and effectiveness of such endeavors equally depend on that approach. Therefore, my work will be strongly invested in strengthening the opportunities for unheard voices to be listened to and amplified. As the first woman appointed to this mandate, I am determined to dedicate special efforts to bring women’s and girls’ needs and adversities to the attention of the international community.

Additionally, it is well known that the human rights situation in the DPRK has become more difficult during the past two and a half years due to the severe measures taken to address the Covid-19 pandemic. North Korean people are facing new and more serious hardships. These add to decades-long abuses which must not be neglected, such as the situation in the prisons system. It is urgent to find effective ways to bring relief and humanitarian assistance and dialogue and cooperation to improve the human rights situation to the country. This will depend on the Government opening to a more constructive dialogue and also on the UN Security Council members’ approach to their policies regarding peace, security, and human rights.

To make this possible, besides approaching the DPRK’s Government and society, I will seek the cooperation of civil society organizations, victims’ groups, relevant governments and other actors who have been engaged in North Korean human rights issues, inviting all of them to join forces with my mandate. I am convinced that international solidarity is a strong resource that should be more decisively mobilized in the task of protecting human rights in North Korea.

I will also consult the invaluable resource of the outstanding work already done by my predecessors and colleagues, former Special Rapporteurs Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, and Mr. Tomás Ojea Quintana. Their reports, statements and recommendations are already a roadmap for the work that I start today.

I intend to make my first visit to the Republic of Korea as soon as possible and to devise a comprehensive workplan within the next weeks. I am planning to present my first report laying out short-term and mid-term objectives and activities to the General Assembly in October this year.

I am looking forward to meeting with many of you very soon and to working together in the same direction.

END

**Ms. Elizabeth** Salmón (Peru) is appointed as the first female Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea by the Human Rights Council on 1 August in 2022. Ms. Salmón is a Professor of International Law at the Faculty of Law of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. She is also Executive Director of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights of the same university (IDEHPUCP). She holds a PhD in International Law from the University of Seville (Spain).

Professor Salmón was a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and a Consulting Expert of the Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace. She has acted as a consultant to the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Defense of Peru, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru, the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). She also participates as a speaker in numerous seminars, conferences and events around the world and she is the author of several publications in Public International Law, International Human Rights Law, International Criminal Law, International Humanitarian Law and Transitional Justice.

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