

# Chapter 4

## Resolving Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues

- I. Exchange between Inter-Korean Separated Families
- II. Humanitarian Assistance to the North
- III. Settlement of North Korean Refugees
- IV. Improving Human Rights and Environmental Concerns in North Korea

# Resolving Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues



# *Resolving Inter-Korean Humanitarian Issues*

## I. Exchange between Inter-Korean Separated Families

The Korean government has strived to resolve the inter-Korean separated family issue in an effort to lessen the suffering of the separated families. While confirming the fates and whereabouts of the separated family members, the Korean government, at the inter-Korean Red Cross talks and ministerial talks, has been actively urging the North's cooperation to institutionalize family reunions through regular exchange of letters, increased size of the reunions and so forth.

In the first year of the Roh Moo-hyun Administration, 2003, there were three rounds of family reunions at Mt. Geumgang on the occasions of New Year's Day, the 3rd anniversary of the 2000 South-North Summit, and the Korean Thanksgiving Day. Although family reunions have, in fact, been institutionalized with the inter-Korean agreement to regularize them and to build the Family Reunion Center at Mt. Geumgang, these projects have been delayed as inter-Korean relations have been at a standstill since the latter half of 2004.

### 1. Exchanges at the Government Level

#### A. Separated Family Reunions

Since the two Koreas agreed to settle humanitarian issues including the issue of separated families as soon as possible in the June 15 Joint Declaration issued at the end of the South-North Summit in 2000, a total of 8,045 family members have been reunited with their families and relatives in eight rounds. The first three reunions, which began in August 2000 and continued until February 2001, took place in both Seoul and Pyongyang simultaneously. Starting from the fourth round in 2002, the reunions took place at Mt. Geumgang.



Separated Family Reunions

In 2004, there were two rounds of family reunions with the ninth reunion taking place from March 29 to April 3, and the tenth reunion taking place from July 11 to 16. Through the ten rounds of family reunions, a total of 9,977 family members were reunited with their families by

the end of 2004. However, due to the cooling down of inter-Korean relations in the latter half of 2004, family reunions have unfortunately been halted.

## B. Confirming Fates and Whereabouts and Exchanging Letters

Given the advanced age of the separated family members, the Korean government started tackling the separated families issue by confirming the fates and whereabouts of separated family members. Moreover, to settle the separated family issue in a fundamental manner, the Korean government stepped up its efforts by requesting the exchange of letters, meetings among separated family members, and, finally, reunions of the separated families. Confirming the fates and whereabouts of the separated family members and exchanging letters are meaningful in that they serve as a starting point for inter-Korean reunions.

In the South, about 100,000 people have filed applications to be reunited with their family members in the North. Believing that the fates and whereabouts of family members should be confirmed in much larger numbers and at the earliest date, the South Korean government has been continuously raising the issue and urging the North through various meetings and contacts.

At the second Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks held in 2000, the South and North agreed to confirm the fates and whereabouts of separated family members on a trial basis. Since then, two trial confirmations were conducted in 2001, during which 2,267 people were able to locate their families, while 600 people, 300 from the South and 300 from the North, were able to exchange letters.

During the course of ten rounds of inter-Korean reunions of separated family members, a total of 21,679 people have confirmed the fates and whereabouts of their family members. Also, 79 people exchanged letters at the time of the family reunions. Unfortunately, however, no further progress has been made due to the North's passive stance.

### Government-level Exchanges between Separated Families

Unit: Case

Year	'85	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	Total
Fates & Whereabouts	65	792	744	261	963	681	3,506
Letter Exchanges	-	39	623	9	8	-	679
Families Reunited in the South	30	201	100	-	-	-	331
Families Reunited in the North	35	205	100	398	598	400	1,736

### C. Construction of the Family Reunion Center

After determining that the present method of reuniting separated families will not be able to accommodate larger-scale family reunions, the Korean government proposed the establishment of a family reunion center at the second Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks in 2000. At the fifth Red Cross Talks held in November 2003, the two Koreas agreed that South Korea would be solely responsible for constructing and operating the Family Reunion Center at Mt. Geumgang.

Except for the land and geological surveys that have to be done at the actual site, other preparations for the reunion center such as the design work have been completed. Once the discussions with North Korea for the construction are finalized, we will begin work as soon as possible in 2005 to be able to reunite more separated families at the earliest possible date.

## 2. Exchanges at the Private Level

Since the July 7 Declaration in 1988 that the South Korean government would assist North Korea to break out of its isolation, open up the North Korean regime and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean exchange visits of separated families at the private level, including confirmation of whereabouts of family members via third countries, have gradually increased. The Korean government is making efforts to increase inter-Korean reunions of family members at the private level alongside efforts to resolve the separated family issue at the government level.

Separated families are given a five-year contact eligibility for contacting family members in the North, and the first generation of separated families in the South are allowed to visit North Korea simply by notifying the government. To lessen the financial burden on separated families associated with exchanges in third countries, they are given financial support by the government in the amount of US\$800 for address checks, US\$1,800 for family reunions, and US\$400 for any additional exchanges. The financial support, which was given out in one payment only, has increased to three payments.

Due to government's active support and private efforts, inter-Korean reunions of family members have increased at a remarkable rate. From 1989, when exchanges at the civilian level began, to the end of December 2004, a total of 17,437 applications were approved for separated families in the South to contact their family members in the North, 19% or 3,322 of them were able to confirm their families' fates and whereabouts through a third country, and 1,441 families held reunions in a third country.

Individuals were allowed to visit the North at the civilian level starting in 1998, and a total of 25 individual visits were made through the end of December 2004. In 2004 alone, the fates and whereabouts of 209 families were confirmed, 776 letters were exchanged, 189 families held reunions in third countries, and 1 individual visit to the North was made.

Inter-Korean exchanges of separated families at the private level have been made possible mainly through help from relatives or close acquaintances living abroad, private intermediary agencies in South Korea, the mass media, and opinion leaders. When the exchanges first began, they took place mainly in the United States, Canada, and Japan but recently, most exchanges have been taking place in China.

### Inter-Korean Personnel Exchange

Unit: Case

Year	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	Total
Fates & Whereabouts	35	127	132	221	135	104	96	164	377	481	447	208	198	388	209	3,322
Letter Exchanges	44	93	462	948	584	571	473	772	469	637	984	579	935	961	776	9,388
Families Reunited in 3rd Countries	6	11	19	12	11	17	18	61	108	195	148	165	203	280	187	1,441
Families Reunited in the North	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	4	5	5	4	1	25

### 3. Abductees in the North and Prisoners of War

As of December 2004, the number of South Korean abductees held in the North since the military truce in 1953 is estimated to be 486. According to a statistical yearbook at that time, about 80,000 were recorded to have been abducted during the Korean War, but according to a 1956 Red Cross survey, 7,034 people were recorded as abductees.

The Ministry of Defence estimates the number of those missing during the Korean War to be 19,000 and believes that a large number of unreturned prisoners of war (POWs) are included in the number. According to the recent testimonies of POWs and North Korean refugees who recently entered the South, about 500 POWs are still alive in North Korea and among them, 48 people have left the North and returned to the South.

Through various inter-Korean dialogue channels such as the inter-Korean ministerial talks and the Red Cross talks, the Korean government has been making efforts to persuade North Korea to resolve the abductee and POW issues. Since the inauguration of the Roh Moo-hyun Administration, the government has strongly urged the North to cooperate on confirming

the fates and whereabouts of the South Korean abductees and POWs at the three rounds of inter-Korean ministerial talks and the fifth round of inter-Korean Red Cross talks held in November 2003.

Because North Korea has been denying the existence of abductees and POWs on its territory, the South Korean government has been trying to resolve the issue through a more realistic approach of including the abductees and POWs in the category of separated families. As a result of these efforts, including the 21 people of five families united during the ninth and tenth rounds of family reunion in 2004, a total of 19 families of abductees and POWs were able to meet, and the fates of 88 people were confirmed.

## II. Humanitarian Assistance to the North

The Korean government has been providing assistance to the North based on the universal value of humanitarianism and a sense of brotherhood for fellow Koreans while also trying to realize inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. Assistance to the North is significant in that it contributes not only to improving inter-Korean relations but also to relieving North Korean people's hardships, conveying our message of brotherhood, as well as to recovering a sense of national community in the long run.

The international community upholds the basic principle that humanitarian assistance should not be linked to the political situation of the country receiving assistance. With a view to improving the human rights situation in North Korea, the South Korean government, based on national consensus, has continuously provided assistance to the North within reasonable boundaries, taking into consideration the North's food situation, inter-Korean relations and assistance by the international community.

### 1. Government-level Assistance

#### A. Direct Assistance

The Korean government believes that it is desirable to provide fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, and so forth to help improve agricultural productivity in the North and thereby contribute to resolving the North Korean food crisis, as well as to improving the effectiveness and transparency of food distribution.

In 1999, the ROK government provided the North with 155,000 tons of fertilizers, which included 40,000 tons of fertilizers from the Red Cross, to help improve the North's agricultural productivity. The South Korean government provided 200,000 tons in 2000 and 2001, respectively and 300,000 tons of fertilizers in 2002 and 2003, respectively.

In 2004, the ROK government provided a total of 300,000 tons of fertilizers to the North. At the thirteenth inter-Korean Ministerial Meeting (February 3 to 6), the North requested fertilizers for use in the spring, and on February 25, the North made another request in the name of the president of the Red Cross. In response to the North's request, the Korean government decided to provide humanitarian assistance to the North. In accordance with the agreed upon procedures between the South and North's Red Crosses, the South delivered, from April until June, a total of 200,000 tons of fertilizer to the North, consisting of 160,000 tons of composite, 28,000 tons of urea, and 12,000 tons of ammonium sulfate.

Moreover, in response to North Korea's Red Cross request for fertilizers on September 1, October 4, and October 12 of that same year, the ROK government decided to deliver an additional 100,000 tons of fertilizers in accordance with the agreed upon procedures between the North and the South's Red Crosses. The actual delivery of fertilizers, consisting of 81,000 tons of composite, 14,000 tons of urea, and 5,000 tons of ammonium sulfate, was made from November to December, and North Korea's Red Cross expressed its gratitude to South Korea.

## B. Assistance to the North through International Organizations

Because of the severe deterioration of the North Korean economy due to the serious floods and drought in the mid 1990s, North Korea requested food aid from international organizations for the first time in 1995. After the South Korean government delivered 150,000 tons of rice for the first time, the government has sent grain to help North Koreans overcome their food crisis through various channels.

Upon the North's request, international organizations began to set up relief programs towards the North. From 1996 onwards, the Korean government participated in humanitarian relief activities sponsored by U.N. organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

To help the North overcome its food crisis, the ROK government began to supply the North with 100,000 tons of maize through the WFP starting in 2001. On the sacks containing maize were inscriptions in both Korean and in English that the maize was provided by the ROK government through the WFP.

Concerned that malaria patients in North Korea would reach 300,000, and that the infectious disease was spreading at an alarming rate, the South Korean government sent medicine, mosquito nets, and other materials to the North through the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001 and 2002, in efforts to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

In 2003, the Korean government delivered medicine and other goods through the WHO for treatment of 300,000 people. At the WHO Malaria Control Workshop held in Shanghai in November 2003, a North Korean participant stated that the number of Malaria patients had decreased and expressed gratitude to South Korea for its support. The Korean government continued its support for controlling the spread of malaria in 2004 by providing US\$670,000 worth of medicine and other materials to prevent malaria in North Korea through the WHO.

To address serious malnutrition among the North Korean children and to decrease the frequency of disease outbreaks, the South Korean government sent US\$500,000 to UNICEF for the supply of nutritious food and medicine to North Korean children in 2003. In 2004, the amount increased to US\$1 million.

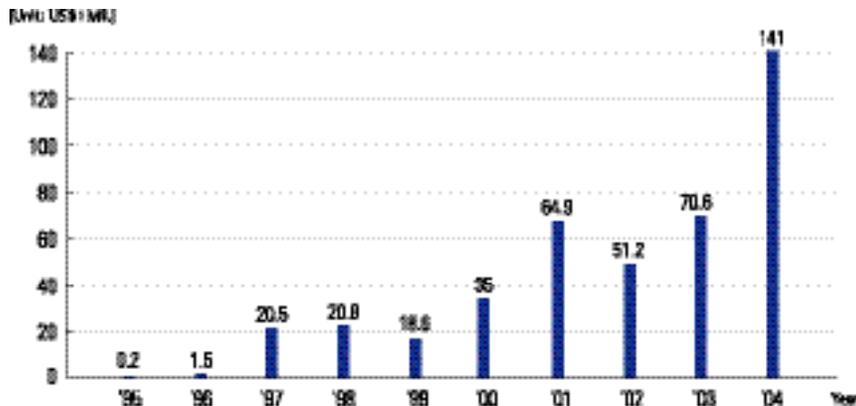
## 2. Private-level Assistance

From 1995 to the end of 2004, private aid of US\$424.77 million was sent to the North, taking up 37% of the total amount of US\$1.16 billion provided to the North for assistance. In the beginning, private assistance, in the form of donated goods from domestic private groups, was delivered by the Korean National Red Cross to the North through the International Federation of the Red Cross. Until May 1997, relief goods worth US\$4.96 million were delivered to the North in 19 occasions.

With the adoption of the first agreement at the Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks on May 26, 1997, private groups began to deliver assistance directly to the North. The Red Cross served as the only window for delivering aid. Starting in June 1997, relief goods totaling US\$38.25 million were delivered to the North through the Korean National Red Cross.

Following measures for expanding assistance to the North in 1999, designated private organizations were able to carry out relief activities on their own. When private-level assistance became active in 1999, there were 10 designated private groups but by the end of 2004, the number increased to 38.

### Private-level Assistance



From 1995 until 2004, private assistance to the North amounted to US\$424.77 million, of which US\$3.4 million (0.8%) were delivered through the International Red Cross, US\$124.46 million (29.3%) through the Korean National Red Cross, and US\$296.91 million (69.9%) delivered through private organizations directly to the North.

In 2004, private assistance totaling US\$141.08 million was sent to the North, of which US\$37.53 million were delivered through the Korean National Red Cross, and US\$103.55 million through independent private organizations.

The characteristic of assistance changed from being a one-time and food-oriented assistance to a continuous and expertise-oriented one supporting agricultural development, health and medical treatment. Supply items also became diverse to include agricultural materials, equipment, medicine, and medical supplies.

To expand assistance for health care and medical treatment for the most vulnerable, such as children, and for agricultural development, the Korean government has been providing aid through the Inter-Korea Cooperation Fund. In the course of five years from 2000 to 2004, a total of US\$24.63 million worth of assistance was provided from the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund.

The government's support to private organizations has contributed to expanding private-level assistance to the North, helping to maintain the continuous flow, promote effectiveness, and expand the size of private assistance.

### 3. Assistance for Disaster-stricken Yongcheon



Delivery of Relief Supply to the North

On April 22, 2004, there was a major explosion near the Yongcheon railway station. The following day, North Korea informed international organizations, including UNOCHA, IFRC, and WFP as well as China and foreign embassies in North Korea about the mysterious explosion in Yongcheon. Dislosing pictures and videos of the site, North Korea appealed to the international community for emergency relief aid. President Lee Yoon-ku of the

Korean National Red Cross, who was visiting North Korea at the time of the accident, received an official request from the North Korean National Red Cross for emergency aid.

Out of brotherly love and humanitarianism, South Korea treated the news of the accident as if it were its own tragedy. There was great public interest in providing relief goods to the North for its recovery from the disaster. Endless lines of people from all walks of life, including private citizens, religious figures, and businessmen donated money and goods through the automatic response service (ARS) and other organizations.

On April 26, the South notified the North by telephone about its plan to deliver emergency relief goods in the name of the president of the Korean National Red Cross. On April 28, the first delivery of emergency relief supplies including medicine, instant noodles, water, and blankets was shipped to North Korea.

In the meantime, an inter-Korean working-level meeting was convened on April 27 to consult on providing relief goods to the disaster-stricken area. At the meeting, North Korea claimed that its need for emergency relief supplies was more or less being satisfied by those from the international community. The North asked the South to provide them with materials and equipment for rehabilitation, such as steel rods, cement, and construction materials. After the meeting, South Korea's relief activities were carried out with emphasis on sending construction materials and equipment.

Emergency relief supplies worth US\$9.62 million were delivered to the North over 10 shipments via regular sea route between Incheon and Nampo and via air route to Sunan Airport in Pyongyang. Construction materials and equipment worth US\$20.6 million were delivered to the North, employing diverse methods of transportation for delivery depending on the nature of the

items. For example, some were delivered to Gaeseong via land routes, some to Nampo via sea routes, and some to Dandong, China via sea routes and then to Sinuiju by land.

North Korea expressed its gratitude for the support given to the disaster-stricken area and notified the South on the distribution of supplies. The President of the Korean National Red Cross and members of the International Federation of Red Cross visited the North from June 5 to 8 to assess the extent of the damage in the Yongcheon area. They were also able to confirm that the supplies from the South were, indeed, distributed to the people.

The amount of public donations amounted to US\$14.16 million, which consisted of US\$10.83 million worth of emergency supplies, and US\$2.49 million worth of materials and equipment for rehabilitation. Cash and other goods were all used in support of the North, and the government-supplied goods worth US\$2.58 million from the Inter-Korea Cooperation Fund. Apart from the government, private organizations delivered medicine, basic necessities and other items worth US\$23.58 million.

### III. Settlement of North Korean Refugees

The emphasis of the government's settlement support for North Korean refugees has been on facilitating their adjustment in becoming independent, self-sufficient, and responsible citizens of South Korea. The government is providing institutional support, while private organizations are also engaged in activities in assisting them towards this goal. After conducting a public survey, the Ministry of Unification created a new term "Saetomin" (literally new-settlers) to replace the Korean legal term "Talbukja" (refugees), which had a negative connotation, in 2004.

#### 1. North Korean Refugees in South Korea

In the early 1990s, about 10 North Korean refugees entered South Korea every year, but since 1999, the number has increased dramatically until 2003 when the number showed a slight decrease. In 2004, 1,894 refugees entered the South, an increase of 47.5% from the previous year. There are now more than 6,000 North Korean refugees living in South Korea.

## 2. Settlement Support

Believing that successful settlement of North Korean refugees in South Korea will be the touchstone in establishing an inter-Korean community, the Korean government has introduced and implemented various policies under the Protection and Settlement Support of North Korean Refugees Act in support of their early settlement.

In the case of North Korean refugees residing in a third country who file an application for protection, the South Korean government will provide temporary protection through its consulate in the third country and assist them in entering South Korea. Upon entry into South Korea, the government will decide on his/her protection based on the results of a joint investigation by relevant government agencies.

Under the protection of the government, North Korean refugees receive training at Hanawon for social adjustment. They also receive initial support necessary in the early stages of settlement, including a permanent residency status, monetary assistance, housing recommendations and more to ensure their independence and self-sufficiency.

Post-settlement protection, which is divided into two categories of settlement support and personal protection, begins after refugees enter the South Korean society. The central and local governments, Association of Supporters for the Settlement of Refugees, and civic and religious groups work in cooperation to provide various types of settlement support such as job training, connection to job opportunities, school admission, as well as introduction to various social and support organizations. The police are put in charge of providing personal protection for the refugees.

### A. Social Adaptation Training

To facilitate settlement of the newly arriving refugees as democratic citizens of South Korea, the government has established Hanawon – a settlement support facility for North Korean refugees – to provide training for social adjustment. Hanawon's facilities, which are divided into main and branch offices, can accommodate up to 400 people at a time and offer protection and education for 2,400 refugees every year. While improving the content of the education, especially in areas of Korean national history and world history, Hanawon also extended the length of the education period from two months to three months to help refugees better adjust to life in South Korea.

The focus of education is primarily on promoting psychological and emotional stability for refugees who have experienced hardships in the process of leaving North Korea and hiding in

third countries, helping them reorient their outlook and relieving the anxieties brought on by the new environment. While concentrating on helping them overcome the culture shock due to the lack of understanding of liberal democracy and capitalism as well as differences in language, thinking, life-styles, etc., the education program also offers career counseling that facilitates learning through practical experiences to familiarize them with the day-to-day living and smooth transition into the job environment.

A separate education program is offered for women at the Seongnam branch of Hanawon. Children can receive elementary school education in a nearby public school during their stay at Hanawon. Teenagers are provided with a separate tutorial program Hanadul (literally one-two) School within Hanawon.

Since the establishment of Hanawon in July 1999, a total of 5,151 refugees have entered Hanawon and 4,703 people have successfully completed the program and entered society as of December 2004.

## B. Initial Settlement Support

The South Korean government is providing various types of assistance to the refugees for a certain period of time to facilitate their independence and settlement and to help them live as ordinary citizens in the society.

First, to help refugees become self-sufficient, the Korean government assists them financially in the early stages of settlement. Initial living expense assistance is divided into basic, supplementary, and incentive assistance, and it is provided within the limit of 200 times the monthly minimum wage. Basic assistance is provided based on the number of people in the family. Supplementary assistance is provided to the elderly and physically challenged, and the incentive assistance is given to each refugee who manages to become independent through job training and subsequent employment.

Aside from the above-mentioned assistance, refugees are also provided with government housing and living allowance. The amount of the living allowance is determined according to the number of people in the family, and additional financial subsidy is given to refugees willing to reside in provincial regions in an effort to encourage settlement in areas outside of the capital region.

### C. Post-settlement Support

The Korean government is also making efforts to provide job training and employment opportunities for refugees. The Korean government has established an employment assistance office and designated employment promotion officers in order to help refugees in finding jobs. The government is facilitating employment in various ways, such as introducing refugees to job training offices and businesses in need of employees. Also, in order to increase their participation in training programs and to help them become focused on training, the Korean government also provides them with monetary incentives. As a result, about 1,000 refugees have received the government job training.

Starting from the year 2000, the Korean government began providing a financial subsidy to employers who hire refugees. Employers are given half of the wages to be paid to refugees for two years. This assistance has proven effective in facilitating stable employment. In 2004 alone, US\$825,000 was given to 218 businesses, and since assistance began in 2000, a total of US\$3.9 million has been provided.

For refugees attending public middle and high schools or universities, the government gives full assistance from admission to tuition payments. Moreover, the government recognizes academic achievements and licenses obtained in North Korea, contributing to strengthening the basis for refugees' independence. In 2004, 420 refugees received government tuition assistance totaling 574 million won.

Upon entering society, depending on their income and personal assets, refugees will be designated to be eligible for medical benefits and exempted from all medical fees. For the physically challenged and those with no means of income, the government assigns them as welfare recipients. Since August 1, 1999, local municipalities have designated officials in an effort to strengthen settlement support activities and for protecting and supporting refugees residing in their jurisdictions. These officials will provide administrative support and consultation to help refugees better assimilate into the local society.



Public Hearing on Refugee Settlement Support

## D. Connecting Refugees with Private Support Organizations

Aside from the government, various private social and religious organizations are providing specialized support. These support systems include counseling on day-to-day affairs, employment opportunities, and connecting the refugees with other support groups to facilitate their adjustment into society.

Starting from 2001, the North Korean Refugee Regional Consultation Support Group, consisting of local governments and private support organizations, have been active in 13 regions. Regional consultation groups are engaged in various local activities, such as offering social adjustment programs, information on the local society and adjustment support, arranging job training and increasing job opportunities, and offering various social welfare services of the general welfare office.

In particular, starting in 2005, a settlement support system consisting of volunteer assistants from private organizations was introduced. These assistants help refugees during the early stages of settlement by providing information about the local community, offering guidance and counseling on day-to-day affairs, and connecting them with welfare offices.

### 3. Improving the Settlement Support System

Given that the refugee settlement law was enacted seven years ago and the changes that have taken place since then, including the sudden increase of refugees in South Korea, the government has reexamined the settlement support system. In July 2004, the government decided measures to improve the settlement support system with a special focus on financial assistance.

Moreover, the focus for the refugee settlement support system has shifted from “protection” to “independence and self-sufficiency.” Also, related regulations and institutions will be improved in the future.

## IV. Improving Human Rights and Environmental Concerns in North Korea

### 1. Human Rights in North Korea

Based on the testimonies of North Korean refugees contained in various human rights reports, the international community considers North Korea's human rights record to be poor.

In 2004, international organizations and the UN Commission on Human Rights, individual countries, and NGOs played an active role, attracting the world's attention to the North Korean human rights issue. The 60th UN Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva on March 15 to April 23, 2004, adopted a resolution on North Korea's human rights, expressing grave concern over human rights violations in North Korea. The resolution urged North Korea to deal with the human rights issue in a transparent and constructive manner. At the same time, the UN Commission made a request to the UN High Commissioner that a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights on North Korea be appointed after consultation with the UN High Commission for Human Rights.

As a result, the UN Economic and Social Council approved, on June 15, the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to North Korea. The South Korean government's decision to abstain from voting on the resolution of the North Korean human rights at the UN Human Rights Commission is not an indication of its indifference to the human rights situation there. The decision, instead, reflects the South Korean government's position of having to approach the issue in a prudent manner given that it is a party directly concerned in a unique situation where the Korean Peninsula remains divided.

Individual countries have also started paying more attention to North Korea's human rights situation. In its annual Human Rights Report, the U.S. State Department expressed grave concern over North Korea's human rights situation, and the "International Religious Freedom Report 2004" published on September 15 designated North Korea as "a country of particular concern" for its lack of religious freedom.

With the signing of the North Korea Human Rights Act into law by President Bush on October 18, 2004 after it was unanimously approved by the U.S. Congress, the United States will provide US\$24 million annually from 2005 to 2008 for improving human rights in North Korea, appoint a special human rights ambassador on North Korea, and would allow North Korean defectors to settle in the United States, and consider the possibility of regional human rights dialogue.

The South Korean government believes that there are two levels of consideration in approaching the North Korean human rights issue: on one level, consideration should be

given to what should be done, and on another level, one needs to consider a realistic approach. In other words, while efforts should be made to improve the quality of North Korean people's lives to meet universal standards based on humanitarianism, change should be induced through a more realistic approach of improving inter-Korean relations.

### South Korean Government's Position on the North Korean Human Rights Issue

- The South Korean government has paid significant attention to the need for improving North Korea's human rights as it is a universal value.
- For substantive and effective improvement of the North Korea's human rights situation, the Korean government believes various approaches should be strategically reviewed and adopted depending on the different situations that each country faces.
- In this regard, the Korean government is seeking to reduce tensions and promote reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas through its Policy of Peace and Prosperity, and in the process of pursuing this policy, it hopes to facilitate gradual and substantive improvement of human rights in North Korea.
- Moreover, the South Korean government plans to consult closely with the United States so that the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 will be in concert with its efforts to promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, such as making progress in the six-party talks as well as in inter-Korean relations.

From a realistic perspective, while it is important to secure civic and political rights, it is also important to guarantee the North Korean people's right to life and economic advancement. Based on this understanding, the South Korean government has been steadily making efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea and to improve its economic situation.

## 2. Environmental Concerns in North Korea

2004 was a meaningful year in that North Korea seemed to be making efforts to improve the environment. In August 2004, the North Korean government, which had been reluctant about disclosing information about environmental pollution and participating in environment cooperation projects with international organizations, prepared and published the report *DPRK 2003: State of the Environment* jointly with the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) and UN

Development Program (UNDP).

This report is significant in that it is the first general report on the evaluation of the North Korean environmental situation. Considering the fact that the North Korean government (20 ministries and research institutes) actively participated in the process of drafting this report, it appears that North Korea is determined to improve its environment with the support of the international community.

Based on the report, the UNDP is reviewing the need for a trust fund to secure funding for 16 model projects for improving the environment in North Korea. The South Korean government is positively reviewing its participation in these projects by way of contributing to the trust fund.

Recently, as part of a project to prevent flooding in the Imjin River basin, the Roh Administration is engaged in consultations with the North on providing seedlings for reforestation around the Imjin River. This project is significant because this is the first joint government project on reforestation.

The Roh Administration plans to expand inter-Korean environmental cooperation, which is currently limited to the field of forestry led by a private organization, to fields of water quality, air, soil, and biodiversity, as well as continuing consultations with the North on ways to find projects for joint environmental cooperation.