



## **SETTING A HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR NORTH KOREA**

**Meeting Report  
The Brookings Institution  
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### **INTRODUCTION**

On March 4, 2004, the Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement and Refugees International convened a strategy meeting of NGOs and experts to identify the components of a humanitarian and human rights agenda for North Korea. In their letter of invitation, the organizers pointed out that there was no unified agenda on humanitarian and human rights issues and too often there was lack of consensus on priorities and tactics with regard to food aid, refugee issues and human rights concerns. The purpose of the meeting therefore was to clarify thinking and identify priorities so that humanitarian and human rights issues, so often sidelined in political and strategic discussions, could be taken into account in future discussions.

Participants at the meeting included humanitarian and human rights NGOs, United Nations agencies, think tanks, academic institutions and several former United States Government officials. Roberta Cohen from the Brookings Institution and Joel Charny from Refugees International served as co-chairs. It was agreed at the outset that to assure candid expression of views, participants would not be identified by name or organizational affiliation in this report.

### **WELCOME AND OVERVIEW**

The meeting opened with introductory comments by representatives of the host institutions. After noting the deliberate diversity of participants at the meeting and the growing interest in humanitarian and human rights issues in North Korea, they underscored the importance of developing a humanitarian and human rights agenda that might be taken forward in the context of the six-party talks on nuclear and security matters. Although North Korea had a history of severe humanitarian and human rights problems, there had been insufficient dialogue between humanitarian and human rights organizations about priorities, tactics and strategies, and the possible integration of humanitarian and human rights concerns into the larger political agenda. Among the key questions identified for consideration were:

- Should humanitarian aid be used as a bargaining chip to encourage North Korea to abandon its nuclear program, or should humanitarian goals be separated from a political agenda?
- Does humanitarian engagement in North Korea save lives and provide stability or does it help shore up a regime that commits human rights abuses?
- Should humanitarian standards be insisted upon with regard to access and fair distribution of food? If so, at what point, if any, should food or assistance be held up or denied?
- Will publicity campaigns about human rights and humanitarian issues become the basis for promoting regime change or are they essential for dealing with an abusive regime?
- Does human rights advocacy make humanitarian engagement more difficult?
- Does added pressure and increased action jeopardize escape routes for refugees?

A Brookings scholar began the presentations by offering a policymaker's perspective. To begin with, he emphasized that it was important to consider the views and desires of the people of South Korea in discussing humanitarian and human rights issues. Any approach that did not take their concerns into account would fail. For example, South Korea's attitude of caution toward the integration of refugees needed to be understood in light of its constitution, which provides that once a person leaves North Korea, that person is considered a South Korean citizen.

Recalling the Clinton Administration, he said that while formal US policy was not to link humanitarian aid to progress on security issues, as a practical matter there was indeed linkage. In negotiations with North Korea, for example, it was understood that food aid would be generously provided if there were greater access to nuclear facilities. In the case of the Bush Administration, while its rhetoric on humanitarian aid was principled, in fact the level of humanitarian assistance had decreased and even had been withheld. At the same time, humanitarian and human rights issues could not be expected to rise to the same level of priority as political and security objectives. The challenge was how to integrate these agendas effectively, at what level and at what point in the negotiating process. In his view, the European Union could play a useful role because it maintained a dialogue with North Korea on humanitarian and human rights issues.

## **HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

### *Presentations*

The first presenter commented on the background to the humanitarian crisis in North Korea, making the following points:

- It was important to recognize the history of strategic deception by the North Korean government, which as a rule has sought to mislead.
- The North Korean economy was distorted, characterized by hyper militarization, a war against the consumer, an industrial base of high costs and low productivity, planning without facts, etc. For an industrialized and literate country to

experience in peacetime the scale of famine and economic deprivation that North Korea did in the 1990s was unprecedented.

- The famine was the direct, logical, and predictable result of government policy.
- Because of fear of ideological and cultural penetration, there was no sharing of key data with aid agencies, such as basic demographic information or how many people had starved. Information was also falsified, as exemplified by the 1993 Census and the 2002 Nutrition Survey, which claimed that the incidence of low birth weight was 6 per cent whereas the figure for the United States was 7.8 per cent.
- The North Korean government did not allow aid agencies to meet the needs of its people.
- One billion dollars spent appropriately on an annual basis would solve North Korea's food problems.

The second presenter noted that while initially it was difficult to have a complete picture of the humanitarian situation in North Korea, progress had occurred more recently. When the famine first came to the attention of the outside world in 1996, marked by the deaths of 1 to 2 million people, only a small trickle of international assistance was going into the country. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the time, as would be expected, focused their energy on raising awareness to the problem and trying to bring assistance into the country. But they and the World Food Program (WFP) faced challenges, in particular an inability to monitor food distribution effectively because of lack of random access, inability to go into certain areas, and the prohibition against aid agencies' using Korean language speakers. The political environment magnified these problems and as a result, North Korea was held to a stricter standard than other countries.

Today, WFP had gained access to 163 out of 206 counties, and some of the other monitoring problems had been partially addressed. For instance, the time for negotiating visits had become shorter; some Korean speakers had been allowed on monitoring teams; and food could now be docked through points in the northeast. Most importantly, North Korea was no longer in an acute stage of famine. Distribution problems nonetheless remained. The incidence of famine and food shortages remained greater in the mountainous regions of the country, which raised the question of who received the aid. The speaker acknowledged that both the military and the elite had "first grabs" on rice. Thus, improved monitoring was needed and a unified approach adopted by the entire donor community in support of standards. Unfortunately, standards for monitoring too often were negotiated on an *ad hoc* basis after the commitments to provide food had been announced, a pattern particularly evident during the Clinton Administration. On the other hand, the withholding or denying of humanitarian assistance to North Korea, as the Bush Administration had done, should be avoided at all costs since it would allow the regime to thrive on the isolation of its people. A balance was needed between the approaches of the Clinton and Bush Administrations.

## *Discussion*

Participants expressed varying views about whether food aid was adequately reaching the North Korean people and whether the evidence put forward to demonstrate improvements in food distribution was persuasive.

One participant from an international relief agency emphasized that his agency had not been able to gain sufficient access to needy people and that his organization was frustrated by the lack of evidence of improvements in the nutritional status of the people. Refugees who had been interviewed did not report improvements. Nor had aid agencies gained a great deal of access. He questioned the indicators used for measuring whether food aid was being distributed equitably. Other aid agency representatives countered that while no one was pretending that the food assistance program in North Korea was optimal, there had been “incremental progress” on issues such as reductions in the time needed for advance notification of monitoring visits, an increase in international monitors, and an increase in the amount of monitoring data available. Despite diversions, food was reaching those in need. The end of the famine in North Korea was a testament to the effectiveness of humanitarian aid operations.

Another participant reminded the group to exhibit more “cultural understanding” when looking at accountability and monitoring. North Korea was comprised of people who thought the Western world was evil. It was thus unrealistic to expect a positive response to requests for random access and on-the-spot monitoring. Practicality needed to be injected into the discussion. North Korea should not be held to a higher standard than other countries when it came to food aid.

Others argued to the contrary that North Korea was being treated as an exception to international standards. Treating it as an exception would corrupt humanitarian principles, have consequences internationally and erode support for food assistance. In the view of one participant, there was “no evidence” to substantiate the overall effectiveness of food aid in North Korea. Indeed, it was probably not even possible to monitor food aid in North Korea and determine that it was getting to the right people. Far from being a failed state, the North Korean government was very much in control, thus limiting the space for humanitarian organizations. A more effective food aid strategy might be to feed North Koreans outside of North Korea so that feeding the people did not strengthen the government.

A number of participants favored the continuation of food aid but called for more effective international monitoring. It was suggested that a collective donor effort should be made to monitor food assistance, without a political agenda and using a common standard. At the same time, it was pointed out that donors like China and South Korea provided food aid unconditionally, which gave North Korea the flexibility to reject the imposition of strict monitoring standards by multilateral organizations and NGOs.

One participant contested the statement of one of the presenters that the famine had started in 1996 and asserted that the famine actually had begun three years earlier.

Analysis suggested that one million deaths was the upper boundary of the estimated death toll. Taken together, these facts suggested that the famine was more chronic than perceived and that the death rate was lower.

Several participants pointed out that humanitarian assistance was not the only way to respond to North Korea's food needs. Structural change and economic aid might be other ways to address the poor nutritional situation in the country. Food, it was emphasized, was an enormously politicized form of aid, suggesting that other forms of assistance, such as small-scale support to food production and health care projects, might be more appropriate and easier to monitor. Development projects allowed for the establishment of a direct relationship between the donor and the institution receiving the aid. For example, a North Korean institution provided a video of crop production when the SARS epidemic prevented a direct monitoring visit.

However, the extent to which donor countries were willing to fund agricultural development in North Korea was questioned. So too was the possibility of North Korea's achieving food self-sufficiency, given the ratio of land to population. Rather, an opening up of the economy and the development of exports should be encouraged. Like other countries in northeast Asia, North Korea's comparative advantage lay in selling labor-intensive products internationally and then buying cheap food. Agricultural development, while potentially helpful, would not address North Korea's structural food deficit.

As for the impact of the economic reforms in North Korea, one participant reported that there had been some increase in economic activity at the household level, but there had not been a corresponding increase in industrial output. Moreover, the reforms were having the effect of increasing social differentiation, which suggested that humanitarian organizations should make an even greater effort to focus their assistance on vulnerable groups, such as the urban poor.

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EXODUS**

### *Presentations*

The first presenter provided data concerning internal and external exodus of North Koreans. Many of the attempts to cross the border occurred in winter, when the Tumen River, which constitutes a part of the border between North Korea and China, was frozen over. People crossing the border were quite vulnerable to arrest and deportation. Recently there had been an increase in the number of North Koreans seeking to reach South Korea through China rather than remain in China, which was proving a challenge to both countries.

There were considerable obstacles to protecting North Koreans in China. For example:

- China considers all North Koreans who flee to China economic migrants rather than refugees;

- China has a repatriation agreement with North Korea and deports an estimated 100 North Koreans per week;
- Those in China who help North Korean refugees are fined or put in detention centers;
- The Chinese deny international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) access to the North Koreans who cross into China.

From looking at the data, one could see a pattern of increased arrivals in winter and lower arrivals in summer, even though the latter was the lean season. Peak arrivals were noted in January and February, although the numbers overall had been declining from one year to the next. Following the storming of the Spanish Embassy in Beijing in March 2002, the Chinese had cracked down on North Koreans in China, and a marked decline followed in the numbers of North Koreans entering China.

The speaker then commented on internal displacement in North Korea, noting that improved access would be necessary to collect data about and reach internally displaced persons (IDPs). The internally displaced included people moving from village to village toward the border, the urban displaced and street children.

The second presenter emphasized that the border was a lifeline for vulnerable North Koreans. Networks of assistance had been established that were critical. Enabling North Koreans to move back and forth across the border was therefore essential. All remedial actions would have to be weighed carefully since taking dramatic actions in China could prove detrimental and lead to having the border shut down. In addition, any increase in cross-border assistance should be carefully calibrated so as not to reach a scale that would force action by the Chinese or North Korean authorities.

To protect North Koreans who were in China, fundamental modifications in China's policies would be needed. Three recommendations were put forward:

- First, efforts should be made to try to encourage China to stop arrests and deportations of North Koreans. Local integration in China was an easy option for North Koreans since there were so many Chinese of Korean origin living in the border area and many networks of help. The major problem was the constant fear of being arrested.
- Second, steps were needed to persuade China to allow UNHCR access to North Koreans in China to assess their situation. It was underscored that China was a member of UNHCR's Executive Committee and therefore had an obligation to the organization's principles.
- Third, "humanitarian status" should be awarded all North Koreans in China. This status was something short of refugee status but a status that still could offer protection. Whether Chinese authorities would grant this status to North Koreans was not known.

## *Discussion*

It was pointed out that during the past week the United States had turned back 1,000 Haitian asylum seekers to Haiti without any screening or assessment, even though many organizations had pleaded with the government at every level to assess Haitian claims to asylum. This was underscored because it pointed up how much of a myth it was to think of UNHCR as a powerful organization able to force governments like the United States or China to change their policies. Rather, the organization was at the mercy of governments. As to the question of whether quiet diplomacy or activist demands were the best approach to the situation of North Koreans in China, UNHCR found that quiet diplomacy and negotiations with the Chinese government and foreign embassies had produced results. Over time, the Chinese government had become more cooperative. As for the status of North Koreans in China, granting them *prima facie* refugee status would require the agreement of the host government, and this had not been forthcoming. As for “humanitarian status,” it was not within UNHCR’s legal framework to award this status. However, in many places where refugee status was not extended, host governments did provide certain protections. For example, in Bosnia and Kosovo, “temporary protection” status was introduced, which offered temporary asylum to a defined group of people. In line with such innovations, in September 2003, UNHCR had declared that North Koreans in China were “persons of concern” to the agency since refugee status determinations were not being allowed and the persons involved could potentially be arrested.

China, it was pointed out, had concerns about ethnic Korean immigration, making it unlikely that China would accede to an agreement to give North Koreans refugee status or some other permanent status. China wanted to decrease the number of North Koreans crossing the border. If the international community had concerns about the status of North Koreans in China, then it should invest serious resources to resettle them elsewhere and take them off China’s hands. One participant argued that the East German experience, in which refugee flows helped destabilize the government, should be the model applied to North Korea.

Several participants favored resettlement of North Koreans to third countries as a goal to be pursued. Some pointed out that Russia might take a certain number of North Koreans. A provincial governor in eastern Russia had announced that this province would take 200,000. Although some expressed skepticism about the number, there was no doubt that the Russians needed workers in this area. Another participant cited the Southeast Asia “boat people” program as a possible model for this situation. The Brownback bill in the United States was also mentioned although some pointed out it was more symbolic than real when it came to resettlement.

A number of participants emphasized the challenges to resettlement. For one, the South Korean government exhibited a great deal of ambivalence. While official policy was based on ethnic solidarity, there was fear of being overrun by refugees, jeopardizing South Korea’s economic achievements. South Korean policy was described as follows -- if North Koreans could make it into South Korea, the country would accept them.

However, it would not go out of its way to do search and rescue missions for North Korean refugees. In fact, South Korea was still taking only 1,000 North Koreans per year, which was low, considering the need and the expressed feelings of solidarity.

Another participant emphasized that the situation was not one of refugees without resettlement options, but rather resettlement options without refugees. Nobody in South Korea even called the incoming of North Koreans a refugee flow; South Koreans argued that North Koreans were migrants under the constitution. Calling these people refugees, therefore, would be contrary to what South Korea really wanted. Further, it was not certain that if South Korea were to open its doors, more North Koreans would go to South Korea. Some participants mentioned that North Koreans had doubts concerning South Korea, did not feel comfortable in the developed South or simply didn't have the money to be able to make the trip. Only 5 to 10 percent of the North Koreans in China were actively searching for a way out; most just wanted to be left alone. This made some question whether third country resettlement was the best goal. Resettlement, moreover, could become a magnet, which could lead to greater restrictions at the border.

In an effort to summarize some of the main points in the discussion, one of the presenters offered a few final comments. Most participants, he felt, seemed to agree that there was need to end deportations from China but didn't see China as ready to change its policy. Nonetheless, given cross-border solidarity, local officials at times did continue to look the other way, which enabled North Koreans entry. As for resettlement, there were persuasive reasons for it as well as obstacles. In the case of the United States, the idea that it might resettle hundreds of thousands of North Koreans was unrealistic given the lack of political will and security concerns that have affected the entire US resettlement program since September 11, 2001. If no realistic policy agenda could be created in partnership with China, the international community would have to find other options.

The question of internal displacement in North Korea was touched upon. It was pointed out that there was a lack of access to IDP populations and also limited data. The 2003 *World Refugee Survey* listed 100,000 IDPs in North Korea but it was not clear what this estimate was based upon. In 2000, the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement, UNHCR and other organizations convened a meeting in Bangkok on internal displacement in Asia and included internal displacement in North Korea on the agenda. The WFP, however, had objected. Nonetheless, the IDP situation in North Korea was discussed and two papers presented and later published in the *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, constituting the first two articles on this subject. Several participants suggested that organizations operating in North Korea and the border area should be expected to collect information about IDPs so that more information could become available on this situation.



## HUMAN RIGHTS/ DEMOCRATIZATION ISSUES

### *Presentations*

The first presenter spoke about the best strategy for advancing a human rights agenda. While he did not support linking human rights improvements to the provision of humanitarian aid, he did consider it essential to link human rights conditions to the provision of development aid and foreign investment. Indeed, it was at the point when foreign development aid or access to markets entered the six-party negotiations over nuclear issues that human rights issues should be raised and integrated into the talks. Just as food aid had been built into the negotiations and into the economy of North Korea, the North Korean government had similar expectations with regard to foreign investment and development aid. However, if North Korea wanted investments, aid, and access to world markets, the international community should make clear that the standard would be “more for more” and “no more something for nothing.”

The speaker emphasized the importance of paying attention to the South Korean political context when developing a strategy. The South Korean government would prefer to downplay or ignore human rights violations in the North in pursuit of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Whether there was a case for initiating a Helsinki process for North Korea, the presenter was unsure. To some extent, North Korea was cooperating with the international community. It had resumed filing reports to UN human rights treaty bodies on its compliance with the conventions it had signed. But it was not cooperating with any of the rapporteurs appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights who had requested entry. When the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights tried to contact North Korea about human rights issues, it received no response, but also no rejection. It might be possible for UN technical assistance programs to be developed. There was need for a road map that the international human rights community could follow. There was also need for further mobilization of public opinion to support the integration of human rights issues into the talks about nuclear issues.

The second presenter said it was important to underscore that the denial of civil and political rights had worsened since the famine and that the situation was further exacerbated by the lack of public information and by restrictions on freedom of movement. North Korea's policies and actions made the famine worse and the fact that people were fleeing because of the famine was a human rights problem.

It was imperative to try to open up the country so as to increase the flow of information. It was conceivable that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights could establish a non-confrontational dialogue with the North Korean government and open an office in the country. North Korea had taken some modest positive steps, such as sending officials to the United Kingdom to receive training in human rights.

Based on his experience with other countries, the speaker said that the best means for change would be an intra-Korean dialogue. South Korea had the unique opportunity to show North Korea how to move forward and to do so in a friendly way. In addition, humanitarian NGOs working inside North Korea could communicate human rights concerns when they had discussions with North Korean officials. In the speaker's view, human rights conditions should not be tied to food aid. Indeed, human rights should never be linked to other goals or issues because that could prove counterproductive: the government would feel put on the spot and the human rights agenda would get stalemated.

### *Discussion*

The chair identified several issues for discussion. The first was the extent to which human rights and humanitarian considerations should be linked -- should human rights conditions be tied to development aid and investment to North Korea? should humanitarian organizations raise human rights concerns and provide information to human rights groups? Second, at what point should human rights issues become part of the political negotiating process -- was it when development aid and investment were on the table? Third, could the Helsinki process become a useful model for North Korea? Fourth, to what extent should North Korea be encouraged to participate in the international human rights system? Had any concrete improvements resulted from the dialogues in which North Korea was engaged with international institutions and governments? Were there other practical options besides quiet diplomacy?

A participant with extensive background in the Helsinki process made two points in support of this model. First, Helsinki was multilateral and President Bush was insisting on a multilateral negotiation process for North Korea. A multilateral forum for different issues could conceivably emerge from the talks. Second, Helsinki was a broad-based process. Human rights, freedom of expression, family reunification, human contacts and cultural issues were on the table along with political, security and economic concerns. Indeed, one of the lessons of Helsinki was that only in that broad context of issues was progress able to be made on human rights. It was also pointed out that South Korea had a special relationship with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) so it might be responsive to the idea. Some US Congressmen had even suggested exploring whether North Korea could be given a relationship to the OSCE in order to further dialogue.

One participant questioned why any leader of North Korea would sign a document that would eventually bring down his regime. However, another participant responded by pointing out that totalitarian regimes make mistakes and miscalculations. One shouldn't dismiss doing things that could change the regime over time, in say 10 years -- a realistic goal. Still another participant argued that the OSCE was a moribund institution, which could not take effective action on serious violators. However, in response it was pointed out that the OSCE did provide a forum for discussion, which was important, especially for non-governmental groups and human rights advocates who might have no other way to make their views known to different governments.

Some saw the value of a regional framework like Helsinki in helping to advance human rights issues. Any agreement, for example, that would emerge from the six-party talks would have binding obligations for all signatories. This would increase the likelihood for North Korea to face up to its international obligations in a regional context, rather than being isolated. Another participant suggested that the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki process might be an appropriate occasion for introducing comparable processes in other parts of the world, such as northeast Asia.

Points of view varied over whether change in North Korea would best be stimulated by greater opening and exposure, or by pressure. One participant pointed out that the North Korean government in recent years had become more engaged in human rights dialogue with the outside world and that training programs in human rights issues had increased with other countries. However, after the passage of the resolution on North Korea in the UN Human Rights Commission, in 2003, the government had halted this cooperation. In this participant's view, initiatives that resulted in shutting down contact should be avoided whereas programs that increased contacts with North Koreans and exposed the society to new ideas should be promoted.

Others disagreed. The North Korean government, it was pointed out, had created one of the most oppressive societies in world history. Was a strategy of dialogue to create incremental change adequate in the face of such a horrible regime? Further, the government showed no real inclination to change in any fundamental way. The sunshine policy and "treating North Korea with kid gloves" were insufficient. Clear standards and benchmarks needed to be established to assess the success of any engagement strategy. Further, linkage should be made between human rights issues and economic development aid, since North Korea might respond to incentives.

One participant pointed out that because humanitarian NGOs depended on the government for access, they were the wrong vehicle to seek information about human rights and to engage in a dialogue with the government.

Another participant pointed out that the issue of North Korea was unique in American politics, in that liberals, who normally mobilized to bring attention to human rights problems, had been relatively silent on North Korea, whereas conservatives had been pushing for regime change based on human rights concerns. The challenge was bringing these two viewpoints together.

## **EFFORTS AT COMMON GROUND**

This stage of the meeting sought to identify common ground or at least bring forward promising ideas.

### ***Human Rights***

To achieve human rights objectives, a number of participants argued that both quiet diplomacy and actions of pressure should be pursued simultaneously. Indeed, the United Nations offered a two-track approach. On the one hand, efforts should be made to strengthen support for the resolution on North Korea at the UN Human Rights Commission. The resolution was a form of pressure and it would be important to increase the number of countries voting for the resolution. Such an international expression of concern would send an undeniable message to the North Korean government. At the same time, the new High Commissioner for Human Rights should be encouraged to arrange technical cooperation programs with the government of North Korea under the rubric of a regional framework for the protection of human rights in northeast Asia. This avenue would involve structured dialogue, education, and training programs.

Some participants, however, questioned whether pressure, as exemplified by the Commission resolution, would serve to enhance dialogue. Quiet diplomacy and more expanded contact, they argued, was the more effective road to take. An intra-Korean dialogue on human rights was recommended.

One participant voiced concern over “regime-change strategies,” arguing that the human cost of provoking a massive refugee outflow and internal chaos, and of intervening militarily, with human rights as a possible reason, would be too high. There should be better options for bringing about change.

Several participants suggested increased use of the United Nations human rights system. For example:

- Exploring the possibility of having the UN Secretary-General appoint a special envoy or rapporteur on human rights in North Korea; and
- Using the formal mechanisms of the UN human rights treaty body system to increase North Korean awareness of its human rights obligations. In this regard, it was suggested that special attention be paid to the right to food, since more people in North Korea had died from absence of food than from torture or other human rights violations.

Participants generally supported exploring the possibility of initiating a Helsinki-type process for Northeast Asia within the framework of the OSCE, but at the same time bearing in mind a potential North or South Korean refusal and the institutional weaknesses of the OSCE.

No consensus emerged with regard to linking human rights issues to development aid. Some argued against linkage, pointing out that development aid and expanded international presence, in particular of international financial institutions, would promote change in North Korea and should not be obstructed. Tying human rights conditions to the aid would be tantamount to “shooting oneself in the foot.” Accordingly, the linkage proposed in the North Korean Freedom Act, which used human rights and aid to try to force progress on security issues, should be avoided.

Others strongly opposed “open-ended engagement without conditions” in a country with such egregious human rights violations. Unconditional engagement would work to strengthen the regime -- assuring it economic aid would lead to more funds being channeled to the military. Indeed, the food and other aid already provided had led to an increase in military expenditures. When it came to investment, loans, and development aid, standards and conditions were needed.

Some participants from humanitarian organizations opposed the inclusion of human rights or humanitarian issues in the six-party negotiations. Human rights issues, said one participant, could undermine humanitarian action if they were linked together. Instead, it would be better for donor governments to raise such issues privately with the North Korean government. Others favored the linkage of human rights conditions to development aid and investment and supported the inclusion of human rights issues in the negotiations at the point at which such aid was being considered. The linkage, they pointed out, need not be a punitive measure; rather, incentives could be built into the process.

### *Humanitarian Aid*

The fundamental issue debated was whether humanitarian aid should be made conditional on international standards for food distribution, or whether aid agencies and donors should work towards well-defined standards but in the interim engage with North Korea and provide assistance under less than ideal conditions.

No consensus was reached on this point. A representative from a humanitarian aid organization pointed out that when organizations were willing to be flexible and engage with North Korea, progress had occurred and small improvements were better than no progress at all. The point also was made that it was important to understand how North Korea viewed the problem since aid agencies had to match their standards to the standards of the country and what it was willing to accept.

Others acknowledged that changes had occurred but considered them miniscule. After ten years of experience within North Korea, they asked whether actions by humanitarian aid agencies had brought about effective change. Had North Korea begun a meaningful process of economic reform, or was the aid actually inhibiting economic reform? In the view of one participant, aid over the past ten years had reinforced and helped empower the North Korean government because it was the government that handed out the food to the population; in addition, the food helped subsidize increases in military expenditures.

While no participant called for the termination of humanitarian aid to North Korea, and a majority seemed to support continued engagement while working toward greater acceptance of standards, this option did not satisfy a number of those present. To improve ongoing food aid, many called for the development of clear indicators to measure progress and the setting of clear time frames during which these indicators would have to be met.

### *Internal/External Exodus*

There was broad support for UNHCR's September 2003 designation of all North Koreans in China as "persons of concern." It was generally acknowledged that the border was a lifeline and that steps that might lead to its closing should be avoided.

At the same time, there was considerable skepticism about whether the international community could protect North Koreans in China and whether China's attitude toward North Koreans could be changed. It was considered unrealistic to expect that China would recognize North Koreans as citizens and that a large-scale exodus/resettlement plan could go forward.

The idea of "temporary protection" status for North Koreans was again raised, with some wondering whether the Chinese could quietly and informally agree for the next six months or one year not to harass or deport North Koreans. Participants also reiterated the suggestion that more attention should be given to directing a larger flow of North Koreans to Russia. Further, it was recommended that the United States discuss the resettlement option with a variety of countries.

With regard to internal displacement in North Korea, there seemed to be general agreement that more information should be collected, that an assessment should be made, and that humanitarian organizations should make more of an effort to make an evaluation.

The co-chairs closed the meeting and pointed out that although participants generally shared the same goals, there was a lack of consensus at the meeting on many humanitarian and human rights issues. Nonetheless, there was agreement on some and many useful ideas had been put forward. Most importantly, groups and experts that generally did not meet with one another had the opportunity to converse together and hopefully expand their own thinking.