European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2016 on North Korea (2016/2521(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on North Korea,

– having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, of 6 January 2016 on the alleged nuclear test in DPRK,

– having regard to the UN Secretary-General’s statement of 6 January 2016 on the Nuclear Test announced by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,

– having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 1718(2006), 1874(2009), 2087(2013) and 2094(2013) which explicitly ban nuclear tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,

– having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution of 17 December 2015 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,

– having regard to the UN report entitled ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Korea 2015: Needs and Priorities’ of April 2015,

– having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 27 March 2015 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,

– having regard to the report of the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea of 7 February 2014,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to all of which the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is a party,

– having regard to the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the Council of the European Union and the UN Security Council condemned what the DPRK claimed to have been a ‘successful hydrogen bomb test’ conducted on 6 January 2016, which clearly violates its international obligations under the UN Security Council resolutions;

B. whereas the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery represents a threat to international peace and security; whereas the DPRK withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, has been conducting nuclear tests since 2006 and officially declared in 2009 that it had developed a nuclear weapon, which means that the threat of the advancement of its nuclear capabilities has clearly amplified; whereas the pursuit of illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes constitutes a challenge to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and risks aggravating regional tensions;

C. whereas the country, with its military-focused economy, is far from achieving its stated goal of becoming a strong and prosperous nation and has instead increasingly isolated and impoverished its people through its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;

D. whereas the EU strongly supports the idea of a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, and considers the resumption of the Six-Party Talks to be essential for peace, security and stability in the region;

E. whereas the DPRK’s focus on military investments can be considered criminal negligence of the basic needs of its citizens in view of the fact that some 70 percent of the country’s 24.6 million population are food insecure and that almost 30 percent of children aged under five are acutely malnourished;

F. whereas the DPRK has had an extremely problematic human rights situation for many years; whereas the DPRK regime has hardly cooperated with the UN and has rejected all UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions regarding human rights in North Korea; whereas it has failed to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the country, and has rejected all assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights under the special procedures;

G. whereas a meeting took place following the Human Rights Council resolution of 27 March 2015 between North Korean diplomats and Marzuki Darusman, the HRC Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea;

H. whereas the European Union is a defender and promoter of human rights and democracy in the world; whereas the EU-DPRK human rights dialogue has been suspended by the DPRK since 2013; whereas the EU and DPRK held a political dialogue round in June 2015;

I. whereas the UN Commission of Inquiry (CoI) investigated ‘the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights’ in North Korea and released a report on 7 February 2014; whereas the CoI concluded in its report that Pyongyang’s human rights abuses are ‘without any parallel in the contemporary world’ and found ‘an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information, and association’; whereas the CoI found in
many instances that the violations of human rights constitute crimes against humanity; whereas the situation of human rights in the DPRK has worsened since 2014;

J. whereas the DPRK Government does not allow any political opposition, free and fair elections, free media, religious freedom, freedom of association, collective bargaining or freedom of movement;

K. whereas the DPRK has an extensive and well-structured security system which closely monitors the life of nearly every citizen and does not allow any kind of basic freedom in the country;

L. whereas the DPRK state authorities systematically perpetrate extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and disappearances, including in the form of abductions of foreign nationals, interning more than 100,000 people in prison and ‘re-education’ camps;

M. whereas the people of the DPRK have been exposed to decades of under-development, with poor health care and high levels of maternal and child malnutrition, in a context of political and economic isolation, recurrent natural disasters and international increases in food and fuel prices; whereas the DPRK is violating the right to food of its people;

1. Strongly condemns the fourth nuclear test of 6 January 2016 as an unnecessary and dangerous provocation as well as a violation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and a serious threat to peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and the North East Asian region; supports meaningful and effective sanctions following the recent nuclear test to be decided upon by the international community;

2. Urges the DPRK to refrain from further provocative actions by abandoning its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, to cease all related activities and to comply immediately with all its international obligations, including the UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions as well as other international disarmament and non-proliferation norms; calls on the DPRK to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty without delay and to abide by its commitments under the Six-Party Talks Joint Statement of 19 September 2005;

3. Affirms its desire for a diplomatic and political solution to the DPRK nuclear issue; reiterates its support for the Six-Party Talks and calls for their resumption; urges all the participants in the Six-Party Talks to intensify their efforts; calls on the DPRK to re-engage constructively with the international community, and in particular the members of the Six-Party Talks, in order to work towards lasting peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and as the best means to secure a more prosperous and stable future for the DPRK;

4. Is convinced that the time has come for the international community to take concrete action to end the perpetrators’ impunity; demands that those most responsible for the crimes against humanity committed in the DPRK be held accountable, be brought before the International Criminal Court and be subjected to targeted sanctions;

5. Underlines the fact that the violations described in the CoI report, many of which constitute crimes against humanity, have been taking place for far too long under the observing eyes of the international community;

6. Urges the DPRK Government to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry without delay;
7. Calls on the Government of the People’s Republic of China to exert its increased influence and political and economic leverage over the DPRK to ensure that the situation does not escalate further; calls on the People’s Republic of China to take all the necessary steps, in cooperation with the international community, in order to restore peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula; notes the support of the People’s Republic of China for UN Security Council resolution 2094(2013); notes the consensus among the members of the UN Security Council reacting to the recent nuclear test by the DPRK;

8. Urges the Government of the People’s Republic of China, in accordance with its obligations as a state party to the UN Refugee Convention, not to deny North Korean refugees who cross the border into China their right to seek asylum or to forcibly return them to North Korea, but to protect their fundamental human rights; calls on the EU to exert diplomatic pressure to that effect; reiterates its call on all countries who are recipients of refugees from the DPRK to respect the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 protocol by not sending any North Korean refugees back to the DPRK;

9. Welcomes the UN General Assembly resolution of 17 December 2015 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which was supported by all the EU Member States; calls on the EU and its Member States to continue to address the grave human rights situation in the DPRK;

10. Calls on VP/HR Federica Mogherini to use the expert capacity of the Republic of Korea in formulating the EU’s strategy towards the DPRK; calls on the VP/HR to monitor further developments in the DPRK and to report back to Parliament so that the issue of human rights in the DPRK stays high on the EU’s political agenda; believes that the EU has a constructive role to play through its critical engagement with the DPRK Government;

11. Expresses its deep concern about the persisting deterioration of the human rights situation in the DPRK; calls on the Government of the DPRK to fulfil its obligations under the human rights instruments to which it is a party, and to ensure that humanitarian organisations, independent human rights monitors and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK have access to the country and are provided with the necessary cooperation;

12. Calls on the Government of the DPRK to end immediately its use of the systematic suppression of human rights as a political tool to control and monitor its own population;

13. Strongly condemns the systematic and large-scale use of the death penalty in the DPRK; calls on the Government of the DPRK to declare a moratorium on all executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty in the near future; calls on the DPRK to put an end to extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, to release political prisoners and to allow its citizens to travel freely, both within and outside the country; calls on the DPRK to allow free expression and press freedom for national and international media, and to allow its citizens uncensored access to the internet;

14. Urges the DPRK Government to stop its State-sponsored forced labour programme under which foreign countries have hired tens of thousands of North Korean labourers under illegal conditions, mainly in mining, logging, textile and construction projects, which has generated hard currency to help maintain the regime; points out that in this case the responsibility to protect labour rights extends to hosting states which should ensure the protection of labour and human rights standards;
15. Condemns the severe restrictions on the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion or belief, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as discrimination based on the songbun system which classifies people on the basis of State-assigned social class and birth, and also includes consideration of political opinions and religion;

16. Expresses its particular concern about the severity of the food situation the country is facing and its impact on the economic, social and cultural rights of the population; calls on the Commission to maintain existing humanitarian aid programmes and channels of communication with the DPRK, and to secure their safe delivery to the targeted parts of the population; calls on the DPRK authorities to ensure access for all citizens to food and humanitarian assistance on the basis of need, in accordance with humanitarian principles;

17. Urges the authorities of the DPRK to resolve urgently the issue of the systematic abduction of persons, to hand over all information on third-country nationals, including those of Japan and the Republic of Korea, suspected to have been abducted by North Korean state agents over the past decades, and to return abductees still being held to their home countries immediately;

18. Calls on the DPRK to continue to engage constructively with international interlocutors with a view to promoting concrete improvements in the human rights situation on the ground, including through dialogues, official visits to the country and more people-to-people contact;

19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the Government and Parliament of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Korea, the Government and Parliament of the People’s Republic of China, the Government and Parliament of the United States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Government and Parliament of Japan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, and the UN Secretary-General.