An ad hoc delegation of 3 MEPs from the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy - Jacques Santer, head of delegation, (EPP/ED, LUX), Jas Gawronski (EPP/ED, IT) and Glyn Ford (PES, UK) - has just returned from a visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) (21-24 February).

The delegation, the third such since 1998, was in Pyongyang in order to make an up-to-date assessment of the political and economic changes which have taken place since the delegation's last visit in October/November 2000 and to discuss key issues such as the nuclear question and the forthcoming six-party talks, the humanitarian situation and EU-DPRK relations in general. The delegation had meetings with the Prime Minister (Mr PAK Pong Ju), with the Foreign Minister (Mr PAEK Nam Soon) as well as with members of the Supreme People's Assembly and high-level officials from the International Department of the Workers' Party of Korea, the People's Armed Forces, the Flood Damage and Rehabilitation Committee, the Central Court and KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation). The delegation also went to Nampho seaport and made an extensive tour of the Taean Heavy Machinery Complex, as well as visiting the Tong Il market.

They held extensive briefings with European Union ambassadors stationed in Pyongyang and discussions with European NGOs involved in humanitarian aid working in the DPRK. Prior to arriving in North Korea, the delegation had meetings in Beijing, China with Ambassador NING Fukui, responsible for Korean Peninsula Issues, and with Ambassador WANG Yingfan, vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress and were briefed by EU ambassadors stationed in Beijing, some of whom are also accredited to the DPRK.