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Statement submitted by People for Successful Corean Reunification in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statements, which are being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

The importance of Internet freedom in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Internet has emerged as a critical tool for promoting human rights and driving social and economic change. However, the government of the DPRK imposes unparalleled and massive restrictions on Internet access on its population further exacerbating the country's isolation and inflicting harsh and arbitrary punishments on its citizens for failing to comply with these rules. Such a situation is particularly pronounced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated technological innovation and progress in many countries.

The actions of the government of the DPRK, which impose severe restrictions on Internet access, represent serious violations of human rights and are incompatible with the 2030 Agenda's goals of promoting sustainable development for everyone. Only a handful of high-ranking officials and researchers working for the regime have limited and monitored access to the global Internet. People for Successful Corean Reunification's latest report, "Digital Hostages: Internet Freedom in North Korea", tries to examine and draw attention to the troubling realities of this situation and how it adversely affects the people of the DPRK's civil, political, social, and cultural rights. The restrictions on Internet access imposed by the government of the DPRK are not only in violation of Sustainable Development Goal 9.c, which aims to improve access to information and communication technology worldwide, but also contradict the widely accepted notion that Information Communication Technologies play a crucial role in achieving all Sustainable Development Goals.

In light of the previously mentioned factors, we urge the United Nations and its member states to demand unrestricted Internet access for the people of the DPRK. We ask them to take action and recognize Internet freedom as a fundamental human right, establishing a legal framework to ensure open and free access to the Internet. Furthermore, we encourage the United Nations and the international community to support funding and investing for the development of appropriate infrastructure and to continue promoting research and innovation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 9.c.

Finally, we call on the government of the DPRK to support these measures and cease arbitrarily punishing their citizens for using the Internet, which infringes on their human rights and hinders economic and social growth. They need to honor their commitment to the 2030 Agenda, recognizing the significance of the Internet as a tool for achieving successful and durable development.

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