

## **Statement on behalf of NGO Major Groups to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

For this year's VNR, the DPRK set strict conditions for its participation, agreeing to only answer one of the four questions that were raised by civil society. This has significantly limited the space for CSOs to voice their opinions at the VNR, which should be an inclusive process for all stakeholders. What efforts will the DPRK make to ensure inclusiveness and accountability to the SDGs that leaves no one behind in the future?

The DPRK has stated that all possible measures are taken to protect vulnerable groups. What concrete efforts have been made to include those who were born with physical and mental disabilities so that the most vulnerable are not left behind?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DPRK has imposed strict border closures resulting in alarming consequences for food security, access to education, and economic activity across the country. The North Korean people's isolation has deepened with even stricter barriers to external information and trade across the border. What steps are being taken to resume cross-border economic activity to alleviate the scarcity of food and medicine and allow the freedom of movement for all its people?

Despite the pledge to "leave no one behind," the DPRK continues to sustain systemic discrimination at all levels of society. Instead of protecting vulnerable groups, the DPRK exploits them as a labour force in the name of 'social assignments' for 'self-reliance,' such as the mobilization of orphaned children in mines and on collective farms, forced labour of political prisoners and demanding of resources from women to advance the State's economic interests. Such discrimination defies the global goals and can also be seen in the unequal access and application of the justice system in the DPRK. How does the DPRK plan to address systemic discrimination within the country and provide equal opportunities for all?