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£NORTH KOREA

@Government Replies to Amnesty International Report

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SUMMARY

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The authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 14 October commented on a 19-page Amnesty International report entitled *North Korea: Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns*, published on 15 October 1993. Amnesty International had provided the government with advance copies of the report. The North Korean authorities "categorically reject" the information contained in the report as "either utterly groundless or far from the fact" but they confirm the use of public executions, and fail to address at all Amnesty International's detailed information about prisoners of conscience and people in unacknowledged detention.

The government's response, contained in a four-page letter, denies Amnesty International's report that employees at two foreign trade organizations had been detained in March 1993 and accused of spying, but indicates that joint venture companies had been investigated in 1992 and 1993 and that the former vice president of the Korea Joint Venture Bank had been tried in March 1993 for embezzlement. The letter does not indicate what the sentence against him was.

Concerning the detention of workers at North Korean-administered logging camps in the Russian far East, the letter states that "there is no 'prison' but only education rooms" which are "intended to give knowledge about the Russian laws to those workers who were taken on charges of violation of the laws and handed over to our side". The letter states that "there is no criminal punishment inflicted on the violators" but that "security" personnel "educate workers to properly observe the Russian laws". Despite these denials, Amnesty

International remains concerned that places of detention exist in logging camps and have been used to hold North Korean workers without judicial supervision, for "education".

The letter gives the name of a man who was tried for murder and "publicly executed in November [1992] at the request of the crowd", thus confirming reports from unofficial sources mentioned by Amnesty International. It also states that articles of the Criminal Law containing provisions on "crimes against the state", which Amnesty International believes are vaguely worded and open to wide interpretations, have "crime-preventive significance and are rarely applied". However in the absence of indications of how they have been applied, Amnesty International remains concerned that people may be convicted and imprisoned under these articles for the mere exercise of fundamental rights.

Amnesty International appreciates the response to its report by the Government of the DPRK and hopes it signals a willingness of the government to engage in further discussion on human rights. However the organization regrets that the authorities have failed to address the cases of prisoners of conscience named by Amnesty International and notes that the letter actually confirms some of the information given in its report.

In that context Amnesty International is renewing its call on the DPRK authorities to implement its recommendations, including by releasing all prisoners of conscience and ending public executions, and by allowing international human rights organizations to visit the country and investigate human rights concerns.

Appended to this document is the text of the 4-page letter addressed by the Permanent Representative of the DPRK at the United Nations in Geneva to Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sané, date 13 October 1993.

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