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**STATEMENT
BY
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HEAD OF DELEGATION
DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA
AT THE 50TH SESSION OF
THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
(January 23, 2009)**

Madame chairperson,

Dear members of the Committee,

I am pleased that our delegation was invited to attend the current session of this Committee for consideration of the report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in our country. We deeply thank the Committee on the Rights of the Child for arranging this opportunity to exchange our views with you all and look forward to a good result.

Through the constructive and useful dialogues between this Committee and our delegations in the past and the combined third and fourth periodic report and subsequent written replies that we have submitted, we think that you have some understanding of the efforts made by our Government and people for the faithful implementation of the CRC and the reality of our children in exercise of their rights in our country.

From the first days of the founding of the state, the fatherly leader of our people President Kim Il Sung valued children as the king of the country and its future and ensured that they were provided with everything best possible.

The great leader of our people General Kim Jong Il made meaningful remarks that we should live today for tomorrow, not for the sake of today.

These remarks, which crystallize the idea of attaching great importance to the future and children, serve as the cornerstone of the child policy and guideline to be strictly adhered to by the government of the DPRK in its efforts for the promotion of the welfare of children.

The DPRK, over the past 60 years ever since its foundation, has invariably maintained the policy of attaching great importance to children and has been making continued efforts to bring up children as masters of the future intellectually, morally and physically matured by giving full play to the system of ongoing universal compulsory free education and free medical care.

The present report covers the period from 2001 to 2007.

This period was a difficult period for the DPRK characterized by extremely tense situation and manifold economic difficulties due to the factors related external forces' policy of stifling our country.

Breaking through the prevailing difficulties, the DPRK government and people have made devoted struggle for the building of a great prosperous powerful nation full of confidence and optimism, while ensuring that the rights of the children and their welfare are under the deep attention of the state and the whole society.

In implementing the CRC, the government went ahead with positive steps which would help children enjoy the full range of their independent rights as social beings and guarantee their rights legally and institutionally as set forth in the Convention.

During the period under review, the government acceded to the Tobacco Control Convention and Drug-related Conventions, while trying to harmonize national laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments to which it is a party.

With a view to ensuring effective implementation of the child-related state policy and the CRC, a number of laws including the Law on Protection of Persons with Disabilities, the Law on the DPRK Red Cross Society, and the Social Security Law were adopted and the Criminal Law, the Criminal Procedures Law, the Family Law, the Drug Control Law, the Foodstuff Hygiene Law, Communicable Diseases Control Law, the Environmental Protection Law and other laws were updated to conform to the evolving reality.

A new work system was established for the law enforcement officials to have hearings on the recommendations of the NCRC and consultative meetings were convened to achieve the fullest possible conformity of the national laws with the provisions of the CRC.

While further consolidating the activities for ensuring the rights of the children and promotion of their welfare legally and institutionally, the government attached equal importance to providing material conditions and fostering social atmosphere for their realization.

Measures were taken to ensure that the universal free medical care system effectively proves its merit and activities were undertaken to satisfactorily realize the basic public health policies including the provision of the preventive medical care, training of competent health workers and development of medical science and technology.

Special protection of child and maternal health was made one of the 10 priorities of national health policy and much efforts were directed to improving child nutrition, modernizing the childcare facilities and children's wards, increasing vaccination coverage and enhancing the sense of responsibility and quality of dry nurses, which resulted in the significant improving of child health.

Health workers were encouraged to work devotedly for the health care of the people and the quality of medical service was further improved as a result of building, renovating or updating pharmaceutical factories and medical appliances factories, and increasing the production of essential and basic medicine.

A system was established for the special protection of the persons with disabilities including children with disabilities during the period under review with the active involvement of the Central Committee of the Korean Federation for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and other social organizations.

The government, regarding education as a fundamental question related to the future of the country as well as rise and fall of the nation, has taken practical measures to make full use of the advantages of the universal free education system.

Efforts were made at the national level to further develop educational work, with main emphasis placed on the improvement of the contents and method of education and quality of teachers and reinforcement of material conditions of education.

Teaching programmes and contents of education were revised to keep abreast of the developing realities and primary schools have started computer and foreign language classes as of April, 2008 based on the results of tentative education.

Application of heuristic teaching method and steady improvement of education method such as close combination of theory and practice enabled students to acquire practical knowledge.

Honourable Teachers' Order and Honourable Teachers' Medal were instituted with a view to encouraging teaching personnel to devote their energy and enthusiasm for the education of children, to ensure social respect and preferential treatment for them and to honour those who distinguished themselves in the educational work.

Educational amenities were improved significantly, though not at a satisfactory level and progress has been achieved in modernizing educational facilities as required by the IT age. At least one school at the national, provincial and county level was selected as a model school for educational facilities and amenities to be followed by other schools and a number of new school buildings were constructed. As a result of the afore-mentioned efforts last year the attendance rate was over 98%, which means that one of the targets of the National Program of Action for Education for All has been attained.

Mass movements like the "Drive to Win the Title of Model Educational County" and "School Support Month" were actively undertaken, thus encouraging the general public to consider the support for school as part of patriotic movement. As a result, in the year 2008 alone, 1,140,000 pieces of educational equipments and apparatuses of 3,500 kinds were supplied to the educational establishments across the country.

The government maintained the principle of the best interests of the child in matters related to international cooperation.

The United Nations and other international organizations and several countries provided us with medicine and other aid materials, which encouraged our people in their efforts to remove the aftereffects of the severe natural disasters.

Our government highly appreciated the international assistance and I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that our government will, in the future, too, work in close cooperation with the international organizations and other countries for the protection of the rights of the children and promotion of their welfare.

Madame chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

We became convinced, through the coordination and implementation of the CRC during the period under review, that our government's policy of attaching great importance to the children is in line with the ideals of the Convention. We also became aware that there are still challenges in effecting the policy of attaching great importance to children in relation to the CRC and that it is important to find out the ways and means to overcome the challenges to keep abreast with the requirement of the developing reality.

More should be done for the enjoyment of the rights of the children and promotion of their welfare and many obstacles and difficulties will be standing in our way.

The government of the DPRK will, in the future, too, invariably maintain the principle of "The best things for children!" based on the man-centered Juche idea and give full play to the advantages of the universal free education, free medical care and other human rights protection systems, thus realizing the requirements of the CRC at a high level and fulfilling its obligations as a state Party to the Convention.

In conclusion, our delegation expects that today's consideration of our report will proceed in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and constructive dialogue and will be conducive to our government's efforts for the implementation of the CRC.

Thank you