

Position Paper for the World Health Organization (WHO)

Happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples- these are the values of the WHO's Constitution, that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPR Korea) has taken to heart by consolidating its membership in the WHO in 1997. Therefore the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stresses the importance of the following issues: I. Improving Access to Mental Health Resources in Industrializing Countries; II. Strengthening Partnerships, Research, and Response Preparedness to Combat Pandemic and Resistant Diseases; and last but not least III. Improving Women's Health by Integrating Gender, Equity and Human Rights.

I. Improving Access to Mental Health Resources in Industrializing Countries

„There is no winter without snow, no spring without sunshine and no happiness without companions“. This Korean proverb underlines the importance of **happiness** for the Korean people which finds its roots in physical and, albeit often neglected, psychological integrity and can only be achieved by joined efforts. Therefore finding a solution via international cooperation is of the utmost importance for the DPR Korea. Mental health has become a topic of the WHO for a number of reasons and has been stressed accordingly in *A/RES/65/95*. The specifics of industrializing countries while approaching the question of how to promote mental health are of financial, practical and social nature. For instance, the integration of rural areas into the mental health care system and the negligence of continuing training of personnel are specific burdens to industrializing countries, since industrializing countries operate on a tight budget and mental health is a topic that is not as alarmingly visible as other diseases, though not the least bit less dangerous or serious. One of the most impacting consequences of poor mental health is suicide. The Asian region accounts for 60% of them worldwide. Therefore the **international** attention received should be raised in proportion to this high rate. The international community should not only focus on the worst-case scenario outcome, but on the different aspects of the diseases, such as depression, stigmatization and disconnection from society concerning the patients and the suffering of the family members that comes along with it, as well. In addition to the framework provided by the WHO, an effort on a **national level** is indispensable, as was underlined by *WHA 65.4*. The respective governments are in a privileged position to raise awareness of the seriousness of mental illness and its effects. Since such psychological diseases are not so easy to diagnose as a rash or a cold, the first obstacle to overcome it is to admit one's affection. On a further stage, namely the **regional** one, an active counteraction is needed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), when operating within the limits of national and governmental sovereignty, pose a useful instrument for their area of responsibility to attain a more personalized approach to the individual victims. The DPR Korea has worked close up to NGOs such as the Eugene Bell Foundation, Korea Foundation for International Health Care and Korea Love One in the past. The DPR Korea proposes a three step course of action: first **raising awareness** by incorporating mental health into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to set the foundation to the second step – **granting access** to primary mental health care. To be concrete, this means setting an NGO-friendly environment by ideologically supporting their work to reach even remote areas. In order for those areas to have the possibility to help themselves, the foundation of local self-help groups could be encouraged. Also, every person should be entitled to healthcare, preferably free of charge, like in the DPR Korea. And lastly, **ameliorating this basic care**. The productive activity of NGOs relies on a stable financial ground composed of funding by the WHO and private funding. It needs to be secured by all means available. Every person relies on a stable and functioning mind in nearly everything he or she does, yet most health care systems leave the mind vulnerable. The DPR Korea hopes that our nature-given minds will be set to foster self-preservation and turn this drawback around.

II. Strengthening Partnerships, Research and Response Preparedness to Combat Pandemic and Resistant Diseases

It is impossible to tell what will come first: **harmonious relations** or overall health. What the DPR Korea knows, is that one is needed for the other to flourish. Pandemic and resistant diseases pose a barrier that has to be overcome to reach overall health. Emergency preparedness is an issue that is demoted to second grade importance all too easily, since it plays an invisible yet costly role in everyday life and becomes indispensable only when catastrophe hits. Unfortunately, when it does, it is usually too late for prevention, which is why measures have to be taken in advance and emergency preparedness has to be prioritized. In accordance with *WHA63.1*, the DPR Korea has not stayed inactive regarding this topic. **Internationally**, the DPR Korea stresses the importance of backing the International

Health Regulations (IHR). The IHR provide a public health response in the form of obligations and standing or temporary non-binding recommendations. These include avoiding unnecessary interference with international travel and trade, a measure which the DPR Korea strongly agrees with and that due to its efficiency has been implemented for the most part. The DPR Korea calls for a **“cooperation through isolation” policy** to avoid the uncontrolled spread of disease and illness across international borders. **Regionally**, the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for Asia and the Pacific is highly appreciated by the DPR Korea and should be further encouraged and expanded to cover more ground, especially since Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Nevertheless, countries cannot rely solely on outside help. Measures have to be taken **nationwide** as well. For instance, emergency committees facilitate an implementation of preventive measures on all administrative levels of the government. The DPR Korea has made use of these in 2013 concerning the bird flu, concretely via the checkup of persons in virus-hit areas, testing and quarantine of poultry and restriction of movement on living fowls. The DPR Korea adjudges special importance to **hospital cooperation**, since no hospital alone can cope with the masses of patients in need of care in case of an outbreak. Beneficial to combating the outbreaks, hospital staff can be shared between medical facilities. In case of a personnel shortage, volunteers such as retired care workers or specialists working in other fields than the affected can be set in. On an **interpersonal level**, the importance of family bonds is not to be underestimated. Considering a possible health care system overload, infected people might need to be taken care of in the comfort of their homes. Therefore family members must be briefed on security measures to enable them to provide a medically appropriate care for their fellow infected family members, without heightening the risk of infection for themselves. This briefing can consist of distributing brochures and **spreading information** via radio, television and Internet, as well as providing basic equipment such as surgical masks, rubber gloves and disinfectant. There is no such thing as immunity from pandemics, which is why no country should skip out on the collaborative effort.

III. Improving Women's Health by Integrating Gender, Equity and Human Rights

Commissioned in compliance with Art. 77 of the Socialist Constitution of the DPR Korea the State shall provide all conditions for women to play a full role in society. Awareness of the desideratum for every single person, regardless of gender, to play such a role in the achievement of **security of all peoples** characterizes the DPR Korea. **Internationally**, it underlines the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in *A/RES/34/180*. Decisive steps have been taken towards equality and the achievement of MDG Nr.3 within the scope of the Country Cooperation Strategy (CSS), including the Maternal Health Program, which consists of Improving Women’s and Children’s Health Project and the Project on Strengthening Service Delivery for Improving Maternal and Child Survival in the DPR Korea. The initiative has yielded remarkable results and deserves to receive continued support. Moreover, its structure is suitable for other countries and health care systems as well and should therefore serve as an example. Further, the DPR Korea calls for interdependent participation in UN Women’s programmes and strategies. **Nationally**, the DPR Korea passed the *Sex Equality Law* already in 1946, granting women the right to vote, **equal rights** of labor, pay and education, as well as the abolition of marriage by force. It also established a right to divorce, decades before some European countries even start their legislative process. These rights do not exist solely on paper, but are mirrored in the DPR Korea’s everyday life. For instance, the DPR Korea works in close cooperation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) to solidify the right to abortion by increasing women’s choice of safer abortion methods. A key factor of integration of women into society is their equal treatment at the workplace. That is why there are just as many women as there are men in the Korean army, and women play a crucial role in the production of goods in Korean factories. In addition, the DPR Korea seeks to eliminate segregation in education and has succeeded so far: The literacy rate for Koreans over 15 years lies at 99% for men and women both. The DPR Korea recognizes though, that all the while women are equal to men, they are not the same. The outstandingly important task of bearing children is incumbent only to women. That is why the DPR Korea strives towards constant improvement of maternal, newborn and child health. Furthermore gender equality is supported by the establishment of a network of **maternity hospitals**, nurseries and kindergartens. **On a regional level**, traditional Korean **values** arrange for a sheltered and treasured position of femininity and womanhood. In Korean mentality, motherhood is more than the mere fact of having children. It is also a synonym for being loving and looking after everything. These maternal characteristics are attributed to the country’s leader as well, for his way of caringly looking after everything has lead our country to glory. States need to **acknowledge their positions’** inherent responsibilities as loving and caring mothers and do everything in their power to provide health-based security to everybody—especially those in at times still disadvantaged positions: women.