

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank my Co-Chairman Frank Wolf for recognizing me, and I want to thank him for having called this important hearing today. I would also like to apologize to our witnesses for being late, but I was unavoidably detained by urgent congressional matters.

Today's hearing on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is particularly timely as speculations abound on what North Korea's next domestic and international moves could be. And – as per usual – even the most experienced North Korea observers are completely baffled by the unpredictability as well as the opacity of political events in this completely closed-off country. We may -- or may not -- see a transfer of power from Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il to his third son, Kim Jong-un, which may – or may not – happen at the upcoming Workers' Party Conference, scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup>. Today, there is news that North Korea promoted three senior officials who have been involved previously with the United States in nuclear negotiations. This change in leadership may indicate North Korean willingness to reengage in denuclearization talks.

While those developments remain shrouded in complete secrecy, what is painfully clear is the suffering of the people inside the DPRK and of hundreds of thousands of defectors in neighboring countries. All of you

here today are powerful reminders of the severity of the suffering and the urgency with which the international community must address it.

As my colleagues and our witnesses have already explored the breadth of the human rights violations in North Korea, I will not do so here again. Suffice to say, the situation is so abysmal that the former U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Vitit Nuntarbhorn [**Noon-tar-born**], described it as “*sui generis* [**soo-ee GEN-er-us**](in its own category).”

Because the suffering is so clear and urgent, we simply cannot be satisfied by just denouncing the situation in justifiably harsh language either here in the U.S. Congress or at the United Nations, and just by doing so expect that changes on the ground will occur. If that were the solution, North Korea would be a human rights paradise today.

We clearly need strong and consistent criticism and documentation of North Korea's human rights situation in all international fora such as the UN Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly, the World Bank, as well as in all regional bodies to create pressure on North Korea to engage in a meaningful human rights process. The international community was successful once before in the endeavor to move North Korea to engage in the Six Party Talks on nuclear issues. And while the talks are currently stalled, there may be new signs of life from China. Given North Korea's paranoia vis-à-vis the United States and the

DPRK's complete isolation, we need to break North Korea out of this detrimental mindset with the help and support of other global and regional powers that hold some sway over Pyongyang [pyuhng-yahng]. From a human rights perspective, this includes Russia and China, countries with poor human rights records of their own, but there is no realistic alternative to those powers if we are to achieve any real improvements for the people suffering today and tomorrow. An independent and exclusive human rights mechanism modeled on the Six-Party-Talks and the "2+4" process which led to Germany's reunification at least should be given a chance to see if it could produce positive results. After all, we cannot simply throw up our arms in utter frustration declaring that nothing can be done about North Korea. The people of North Korea deserve better.

Thank you.