Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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The President of the Swiss Confederation

CH-3003 Berne, FDFA, DB

A Post
United Nations Watch
Mr. Hillel Neuer
Executive Director
1, rue de Varembé
Case Postale 191
1211 Genève

Berne, 29 October 2014

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your open letter signed by 20 North Korean defectors of September, 19, 2014 regarding the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and in particular regarding your request to Switzerland to immediately freeze all assets of the North Korean leadership within its territory.

As you know, the universal protection and promotion of human rights are a top priority of Swiss foreign policy provided for by the Federal Constitution. Hence, human rights issues are incorporated into its overall foreign policy and are regularly addressed at governmental level and in multilateral forums.

The serious and systematic violations of human rights and crimes against humanity that are being committed on a large scale in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - as established by the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in its detailed, well-documented and comprehensive findings - are a source of grave concern to Switzerland. As stated in the open letter, these serious violations of human rights need to be treated with the greatest urgency. Therefore, Switzerland supports in particular the Commission's recommendation to refer this situation to the International Criminal Court.

The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea already led Switzerland to take action, including legal steps. On 25 October 2006, the Confederation enacted a range of coercive measures in order to implement sanctions that had been ordered by the United Nations Security Council: the Ordinance instituting Measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea entails a list of 12 individuals and 20 organisations that are subject to such coercive measures, including a freeze of their assets. Regarding coercive measures, resolute and concerted action at the United Nations are key to improve the situation and Switzerland stands ready to adapt its own legal measures should new developments take place at the Security Council.

Switzerland will also continue to express its grave concern related to the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea within the framework of its bilateral relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, such as during the political dialogue which will take place in November 2014, and will continue to be actively engaged regarding efforts in the UN General Assembly and in the Human Rights Council to improve the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Yours sincerely,

Didier Burkhalter