



Oral Statement by the International Bar Association

60th Session of the Human Rights Council

General Debate - Enhanced ID on HC report on DPRK

22 September 2025

State-Organised Forced Labour and the Exploitation of Children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

IBAHRI is deeply concerned by the entrenched system of state-organised forced labour in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights clearly highlights in their latest report. Thousands of people are routinely compelled to work long hours in agriculture, construction and manufacturing under the guise of “voluntary” mobilisation campaigns.

Particularly troubling are the reports on orphans and “street children” who, without family protection, are forcibly placed in state-run facilities, such as farms or mines, where they work in dangerous conditions with little or no pay and with a high risk of death. These practices amount to contemporary forms of slavery. They are incompatible with the DPRK's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

IBAHRI is also alarmed by credible evidence that DPRK nationals, including minors, are sent abroad under coercive arrangements in sectors such as fishing, hospitality and construction, with wages diverted to the regime. This Council cannot ignore such abuses.

We urge Member States to:

- Establish regular reporting and dedicated debates on forced labour and the exploitation of children in the DPRK, building on the High Commissioner's findings;
- Strengthen independent monitoring and transparency mechanisms on DPRK labour export and its links to global supply chains;
- Back measures that guarantee survivors, including orphans and those subjected to child labour, and their families can safely provide testimony and take part in decision-making on matters that impact their lives;
- Implement all recommendations from the High Commissioner's report and the 2014 report of the Commission of Inquiry.

Thank you.

Contact:

Nina Nutting

Programme Administrator

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

nina.nutting@int-bar.org

Francesca Restifo

Senior Human Rights Lawyer and UN Representative

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

francesca.restifo@int-bar.org