



TALKING POINTS

Asan Plenum 2013: "New World Disorder"
www.asanplenum.org

RELEASE EMBARGO DATE: APR. 30, 2013 AT 9 AM

Panel: Human Security in North Korea (Grand Ballroom III)

Date/Time: Tuesday, April 30, 2013 / 14:00-15:15

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HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO NORTH KOREA HUMAN RIGHTS

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The international community has focused for long on changing North Korea from the outside. That is, the measures utilized by the international community were primarily formulated according to a political approach: the economic sanctions and the humanitarian aid provided in exchange for dismantling the North Korean nuclear and missile programs. The North Korean human rights issues, however, should not be raised from a confrontational standpoint. A comprehensive approach using various methods in different fields such as dialogue and mutual understanding, humanitarian aid, investment, mutual education, and cultural exchange is also necessary. Many skeptics do not believe that this kind of approach has actually contributed to the improvement of North Korean human rights. It is true that the immediate effect of this kind of approach is minor. From a long-term perspective, however, a balanced combination of the two types of approaches is desirable. In other words, only a gradual change from the inside may create the necessary breakthrough to improve the human rights conditions in North Korea. And we can call this a human-right based approach to the North Korea human rights issue.

Therefore, first, it is necessary that international community makes frequent contact with North Korea through diverse channels and close cooperation with related countries. For example, we can promote consistent initiatives led by the private sector such as humanitarian aid, meetings between families separated in the North and South, and cultural exchanges. Second, as the concern of the international community has been mainly focused on the civil rights aspects, economic and social rights including the right to life and right to food should also be addressed. Lastly, it is important by UN to establish a database system to record cases of human rights violations in North Korea and to create a strategy to effectively utilize the information gathered in order to draw an accurate picture of the situation.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.