**[Oral intervention - *Ul-ryeok & Pum-asi* Project Team]**

*Ul-ryeok* & *Pum-asi* Project Team, Republic of Korea[[1]](#footnote-1)

The *Ul-ryeok & Pum-asi* Project Team makes this statement on behalf of all victims with disabilities of forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

Chairperson,

In 2014, the so-called ‘salt farm slavery case’ shocked the world in which at least 63 persons with disabilities were found to had lived in slavery-like condition for several years in the southern coastal region of the Korean peninsula. Regrettably, labor exploitation against persons with disabilities still continues to this day while police and prosecutors defend such cases by describing them as *ul-ryeok* and *pum-asi,* referring to Korean traditional culture of helping and cooperating with neighbors.

X was forced to work for 12 years at a garbage collection center. His perpetrator was released for "providing shelter and food for the poor disabled person." Y was exploited for 32 years at a temple. He was considered doing '*ul-ryeok*,' or voluntary cooperation work. Z was exploited for 17 years by a neighbor. She was considered doing "*pum-asi*," or labor exchange based on mutual trust. There are clear legal limitations which do not recognize labor exploitation of persons with disabilities as infringements of rights to freedom and bodily legal interests but as traditional custom. Also, statute of limitations of tort claims do not serve justice for continuous crimes that last over decades for victims with disabilities.

This must stop.

Labor exploitation should never be justified as traditional custom or for providing food or accommodation. Such principle must be reflected in training programs for, among others, law enforcement officers and legal practitioners. Recognising that persons with disabilities are core targets of modern slavery and human trafficking, disability must be considered in identifying victims, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators and reparations procedures. The value of labour exploited should not be discriminated against those without disabilities, and statute of limitations must not block the victims from exercising their right to reparations.

Thank you, Chairperson.

1. Activists and lawyers from: Duroo Association for Public Interest Law, GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation, Korea Disability Law Association (KDLA), Korean Lawyers for Public Interest and Human Rights, Lawyers for Public Interests Companion, MINBYUN – Lawyers for a Democratic Society, National Advocacy Agency for Persons with Disabilities, The Research Institute of the Differently Abled Person's Right in Korea (RIDRIK), Wongok Law Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)