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Item 6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Republic of Korea

Thank you Mr. President,

CIVICUS is pleased by the efforts of the Republic of Korea in addressing all remaining human rights challenges and welcomes the launching of the second National Plan of Action for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2012-2016).

However, as highlighted by CIVICUS in its submission to the UPR in April 2012, there is "shrinking space for freedom of expression, association, assembly and peaceful protest" in the Republic of Korea. This is in total contradiction with the assertion made by the country in the UPR report addendum as to the maximum guarantee of freedom of expression in Republic of Korea.

CIVICUS calls once again the attention of the Human Rights Council to the issue of silencing of dissenting voices under the National security Act (NSA) in the country. It criminalises praising or encouraging "anti-state" groups. Additionally, the internet remains a highly restricted space. By October 2012, the police had deleted 67,300 web posts they believed threatened national security.

Moreover, between 2008 and 2012, several restrictions have been placed on the freedom of peaceful assembly through application of the Assembly and Demonstration Act as well as the Criminal Act. As of April 2012, 442 people were arrested and/or detained due to their actions against the construction of a naval base in Gangjeong village in Jeju Island.

CIVICUS urges the Government of the Republic of Korea to repeal or suitably amend the National Security Act to ensure the restrictions on freedom of assembly it spotlights are removed. Arrests carried out during public demonstrations should be properly investigated and law enforcement officials carrying out wrongful arrests should be brought to justice. Besides, further actions should be taken to remove limitations on internet content so as to ensure freedom of expression, including opinions which are different from the positions of the Government.

I thank you for your attention.