

**37<sup>th</sup> session United Nations Human Rights Council  
Republic of Korea, Universal Periodic Review adoption  
March 14, 2018**

Human Rights Watch welcomes the adoption of the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Korea, which reflects recommendations to protect freedom of expression and assembly and the rights of vulnerable workers, women, foreigners, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, including single parents. The outcome also addresses continued support of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including OHCHR work on human rights abuses in North Korea and the formulation and adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

We note that the South Korean government accepted 131 such recommendations and urge it to fully implement them.

However, we are concerned that the South Korean government chose to “note” rather than to accept 97 recommendations for being “incompatible with the domestic law and conditions, some already in effect, and some noted because of social controversy or discrepancy with the position of the Government, which hinders their immediate adoption.” Rejected recommendations include calls for the Republic of Korea to abolish the death penalty, and the national security law, and to decriminalize defamation. The government also noted the recommendation to abolish the crime of abortion, which is at issue in a pending case in the Constitutional Court, and the recommendation to “repeal article 92-6 of the Military Criminal Code which criminalizes consensual sexual relations between people of the same sex in the army.” The government also noted all recommendations mentioning the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals.

We are concerned that although the South Korean government said it developed a plan on gender equality in 2015 which prohibited gender-based discrimination, it also developed a national standard on sex education that reinforces gender stereotypes and discriminatory norms and does not include sexual minorities or instruction on methods of contraception. Last November, in response to a petition to legalize abortion, the government pledged to “systematize education on contraception methods for youth.”