counter online gender based violence. Representatives from many of these organisations came together for a discussion to mark International Human Rights Day at the end of the year.

**4. EU financial engagement**: Under the EU Policy and Outreach Partnership (EUPOP) project, the EU aimed at promoting human rights and societal resilience by supporting activities of mutual interest to the Republic of Korea and the EU. The project specifically addressed topics under the theme of discriminations, raising awareness about EU and international human rights frameworks, and broadly addressing gender equality across its activities. Through the project, the EU carried out targeted outreach, dialogue and communication actions and explored concrete partnerships with local CSOs.

**5. Multilateral context:** There is a high degree of convergence between the EU and the Republic of Korea as regards the priorities for the promotion of human rights in international institutions. The EU and the Republic of Korea exchanged views on draft resolutions ahead of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Third Committee. The Republic of Korea resumed co-sponsoring resolutions on human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea concluded its membership of the Human Rights Council.

## Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** There were no indications that the DPRK engaged in constructive action to address the findings of the International Commission of Inquiry's conclusions in 2014 that *"systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, its institutions and officials. In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute crimes against humanity".* The substantially reduced number of people escaping across the border and the absence of most diplomats and international humanitarian staff from the country decreased the level of first-hand information about the human rights situation. The government continued to refuse to engage the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the DPRK and limited engagement with other UN human rights bodies and mechanisms. The government maintained the closure of the border to most travellers and a large amount of goods, which it has said since January 2020 is necessary to prevent the spread of COVID. In May, the authorities announced an outbreak of COVID, but did not accept offers from several UN Member States for COVID related assistance. While there were signs that some parts of the population were vaccinated later in the year, the majority of people appear to remain unprotected against COVID. Several organisations outside the country presented indications obtained within the DPRK that the government threatened and implemented severe penalties, including the death penalty, for breaches of regulations said to be intended to prevent the spread of COVID 19 or for access and dissemination of information from outside the country. Outside observers continued to express concern that the reduction of imports, controls on market transactions and suspension of projects by international humanitarian agencies, together with the long-term effects of poor economic management and previous natural disasters, were leading to increased food insecurity and a potential humanitarian emergency.

**2. EU action - key focus areas:** The EU addressed all areas of concern through resolutions at the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly. Frequent communication took place between the EU and the United Nations Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as like-minded international partners. This included a side-event in the margins of the UN General Assembly together with the new Special Rapporteur and the government of the Republic of Korea on ways to pursue a dual track approach of promoting accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses while maintaining a readiness to engage with the DPRK government to improve the situation. The EU also kept up close cooperation with civil society organisations working on the issue. The European Parliament held a debate and passed a resolution on the human rights situation in the DPRK including the persecution of religious minorities.

The EU renewed sanctions against two senior DPRK officials and the Central Public Prosecutor's Office under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

**3. EU bilateral political engagement:** The EU maintained limited contact with the DPRK authorities through diplomatic channels in Europe, including on issues related to human rights.

**4. EU financial engagement:** It was not possible to implement humanitarian assistance and food security projects in the DPRK in the context of the withdrawal of international staff from the country.

**5. Multilateral context:** The EU initiated country-specific resolutions on the human rights situation in the DPRK at the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly. Both resolutions were adopted without a vote and served to maintain international attention on the situation. The Human Rights Council Resolution focuses, *inter alia*, on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Council itself, whereas the United Nations General Assembly Resolution focuses, *inter* alia, on the work of the Security Council.

Human Rights Council Resolution 49/22 stressed the importance of following up on the recommendations contained in the report of the Commission of Inquiry, expressed deep concern about the systematic, widespread, and gross human rights violations in the country and the humanitarian situation in the country, which may have further deteriorated in the contest of COVID-19. Underlining the need for accountability, the resolution welcomed steps taken by the Office of the High Commissioner, including its field-based structure in Seoul. Furthermore, the text was updated on three important issues. The preamble paragraph on the issue of abductees was strengthened, a new operational paragraph on COVAX was included, and the operational paragraph on the accountability work of the OHCHR, including the Soul office, was strengthened by encouraging cooperation with a wide range of stake-holders in the procurement of evidence that could be used in future criminal proceedings. The High Commissioner was requested to provide an oral update on the progress made in this regard, and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur was extended for a period of one year.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 77/226 expressed deep concern at the grave human rights situation, the pervasive culture of impunity, and the lack of accountability for

human rights violations and abuses in the DPRK. It condemned in the strongest terms the long-standing and ongoing systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights and expressed its very serious concern about numerous human rights violations of both political and civil and social, economic, and cultural rights. The text introduced new language on developments related to the COVID 19 situation.

## India

**1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation:** India's Constitution, as well as other laws and mandated institutions, serve to safeguard the human rights of the country's over 1.4 billion inhabitants. India's economy has grown significantly in the past decade, which resulted in a substantial reduction of extreme poverty. However, socio-economic inequality persists. In terms of gender equality, notably in the areas of education and the political empowerment of women, the situation slightly improved in 2022 – as noted in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022.

Several independent reports and UN bodies noted that space for civil society and societal diversity continued to shrink. In the World Press Freedom Index, India's ranking dropped by eight places from 2021 to 2022 to a position of 150th out of 180 countries. UN Special Rapporteurs highlighted an increasing use of anti-terror laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against journalists and human rights defenders (HRDs), which they defined as the Indian government's attempt "to restrict civil society". Similarly, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), a law providing immunity to armed forces personnel, currently applied in some parts of North-East India and in Jammu and Kashmir, was described by UN Special Rapporteurs as a "symbol of excessive state power" with "no role to play in a democracy".

The broader civil society movement in India continues to be significantly affected by the 2020 amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act (FCRA), regulating the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals, NGOs and not-for-profit organisations. The year 2022 started with almost 6,000 organisations losing their FCRA license. Others are still operating while waiting for their renewal to be granted (the Ministry of Home Affairs extended the deadline for completion of this process seven times already). This led to uncertainty among CSOs, affecting planning and implementation of their activities, and self-censorship for fear of reprisals. CSOs can lose their FCRA license from one day to another, and consequently, get their FCRA bank accounts frozen immediately. A number of reputed CSOs – including OXFAM, Socio Legal Information Centre (SLIC), the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – had their FCRA suspended or cancelled. EU support to CSOs in India became more complex: in particular, the prohibition of sub-granting of FCRA funds makes it difficult to support smaller, rural CSOs and ensure support to grassroots' communities. Together with some Member States, the EU also faced an increased risk of non-recovery of unutilised funds and seizure of assets purchased with EU funds – a potential loss of our tax-payers' money. Efforts by CSOs to engage with the Ministry of Home Affairs on the FCRA issue has not been very productive.