

REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MEETING OF THE NORTH KOREA ROUND TABLE

May 22, 1998
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Present: J. Cornelius, P. Evans, R. Fee, D. Forrester, D. Francis, M. Hawes, M. Hunter, N. Hudson, S. Lee, L. Matthes, K. Minden, J. Mundy, M. Olsen, K. Park, W. Reimer, A. Sawh

PURPOSE

The group came together to discuss the present situation in North Korea. Their purpose was to discuss the threats and possible threats in the region. They also examined possible partnerships to address human needs and human security.

DISCUSSION

The group very quickly agreed that the current situation of famine, combined with energy and fuel shortages, is a very serious situation. One which warrants both a human and political response.

The discussion centred around the following topics:

Canada's Role

Canadians have a role to play in North Korea for a number of reasons. First, we are not seen as an imperialist presence - something which makes us different from the Superpowers. Second, we share a common element of governance with the North Korean communist regime insofar as Canada can relate to the concept of a strong role for the state in the areas of health care, the economy and the welfare state. Third, there is a sense that we are a part of the United Nations process, and are perceived as being important in that process.

Food and Agriculture

North Korea has experienced agriculturally devastating natural disasters over the last three years - ranging from drought to flooding. However, their problems go deeper than this. They have relatively little land conducive to agriculture and, in their attempts to increase this land space, have begun farming on hillsides, which has brought about further flooding.