To mark the 20th anniversary of humanitarian aid to North Korea, more than 200 experts and representatives of multilateral, bilateral, government, and non-governmental organizations involved in this issue met in Seoul on Nov. 3 and 4, 2015.

They agreed that aid has played a constructive role in improving the humanitarian situation in the DPRK.

They expressed concern that the level of aid has decreased in recent years. Despite some recent economic progress, aid remains important to address continuing hardship among much of the North Korean population. This is true irrespective of broader political differences and tensions.

They urged the international community not only to continue but to increase the amount of humanitarian and long-term aid to the DPRK.

Participants also expressed the hope that humanitarian partners will work with North Korea to improve standards of international cooperation and maximize the efficiency of current and future aid.

Participants encouraged the two Koreas to explore a variety of mechanisms for carrying on dialogue including through bilateral, people to people, cultural, and educational exchanges.

In light of recent encouraging developments in inter-Korean relations, participants expressed the hope that South Korean NGOs will be able to play a greater role in humanitarian aid projects in the DPRK.

Participants supported not only taking the specific needs but also the distinctive capabilities of women into account in all activities promoting aid, development, and improved inter-Korean relations.

Aid can make a tangible contribution to improving understanding. At this crucial time, it is vitally important that it continue, and participants expressed the hope that governments and the international community will support these steps towards promoting peace on the Korean peninsula.