STATEMENT

by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton concerning the expulsion of nine North Koreans from Laos

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative is concerned at reports that nine North Korean refugees, some of them minors, were expelled from Laos on 27 May 2013 and sent to North Korea via China. At this stage, the full facts of the incident remain unclear. Nevertheless, the High Representative is deeply concerned that the nine refugees face severe punishment in North Korea.

The High Representative calls on all States to observe the principle of non-refoulement which is a core tenet of international humanitarian law and to refrain from any expulsion of refugees to countries where they may face persecution.

The High Representative calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by international humanitarian and human rights standards and ensure that the nine individuals concerned will not be subjected to the death penalty, torture or any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

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