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Countries urged to send North Korean workers home

[Taipei Times](#) (08.04.2023) - Washington and Tokyo yesterday urged UN member states to repatriate North Koreans working overseas, saying they continue to evade sanctions abroad to finance Pyongyang's unlawful weapons program.

North Korea was also engaged in "malicious cyber activities" that supported its military expansion, representatives of the three countries said in a joint statement.

The nuclear-armed country has long made a fortune from the army of citizens it sends abroad to work, mostly in neighboring China and Russia, but also in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Under a UN Security Council resolution unanimously approved in 2017, member states had until December 2019 to send back all North Koreans working in their countries.

However, Seoul, Tokyo and Washington's special envoys for North Korea yesterday said the country's overseas workers are continuing to help fund Pyongyang's increasingly aggressive provocations, following a trilateral meeting in the South Korean capital.

Overseas North Korean information technology workers "continue using forged identities and nationalities to evade [UN] sanctions and earn income abroad that funds the DPRK's unlawful weapon of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs," the envoys said in a joint statement, using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

"We are also deeply concerned about how the DPRK supports these programs by stealing and laundering funds, as well as gathering information through malicious cyber activities," they said.

The envoys accused Pyongyang of stealing up to US\$1.7 billion in cryptocurrency last year.

In 2019, analysts said Beijing and Moscow — Pyongyang's key allies — were issuing North Korean workers with alternative visas to ensure a continued supply of cheap labor. North Korea last year declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearization talks. (...)

"We express deep regret that the DPRK continues to ignore the hardship of its people, choosing instead to pour its scarce resources into its [weapons of mass destruction] and ballistic missile programs in clear violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions," they said.

Taiwan urged again to stop employment of North Koreans in 2018

By the end of July 2018, Taiwan was to stop employing any North Korean workers, after Taiwan was included in a list of nations that still employed North Koreans in a sanctions advisory published by Washington.

The US Department of State and other US agencies on Monday warned businesses against contracting overseas companies that still employed North Korean workers, thereby generating revenue for the North Korean government in a potential contravention of US sanctions.

The advisory listed Taiwan among the 41 nations and jurisdictions where laborers working on behalf of the North Korean government were present in 2017 and 2018, with China and Russia continuing to host more such workers than all of the other nations on the list combined.

The agencies flagged the seafood industry as the most likely sector in Taiwan to employ North Korean workers.

End of July 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a news release that the Fisheries Agency had for years been cooperating with UN Security Council resolutions concerning North Korea.

“On Aug. 12, 2016, the agency issued a notice to concerned firms asking them to stop hiring or renewing existing employment contracts with North Korean crew members,” the ministry said. “It also encouraged them to terminate the contracts in advance.” Some 278 workers were then still concerned.
