

Beat: Miscellaneous

Botswana cuts ties with N. Korea over human rights abuses

-, 19.02.2014, 20:25 Time

USPA News - The southern African nation of Botswana on Wednesday decided to sever immediately all diplomatic and consular relations with North Korea after a United Nations (UN) report earlier this week documented wide-ranging and ongoing crimes against humanity in the country. Botswana government spokesman Jeff Ramsay said it had decided to terminate all diplomatic and consular relations with North Korea, following the African nation's decision early last year to suspend bilateral cooperation with North Korea.

Botswana's interests in North Korea had since been served by the Botswana Embassy in Beijing, which will end with Wednesday's decision. "The Government's decision is informed by the recently released report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea which details systematic, widespread and grave human rights violations by North Korean authorities," Ramsay said in an e-mail. "The Government of Botswana does not wish to be associated with a Government which continues to display such total disregard for the human rights of its citizens." Ramsay, who said the government's decision to cut ties with North Korea does not target North Korean citizens, said the "deplorable acts" detailed in the UN report are "startling" and "warrant strong condemnation" by the international community. "Botswana wishes to convey its heartfelt sympathies to the people of North Korea who are currently subjected to inhuman treatment under the leadership of Kim Jong Un," he added. In a 400-page set of linked reports and supporting documents, based on first-hand testimony from victims and witnesses, the UN Commission documented in great detail what it described as "unspeakable atrocities" committed in North Korea. "The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world," the report said. The Commission said the crimes against humanity include extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation. It said it would recommend referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1909/botswana-cuts-ties-with-n-korea-over-human-rights-abuses.html>

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