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## **NORTH KOREA | BBC Korean Language Service Welcomed**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the decision by the BBC World Service to provide a Korean language service on the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean language service, which will include short-wave and medium-wave radio programs, as well as online and social media content, comes as part of the BBC's biggest expansion plan since the 1940s.

The news follows many years of campaigning by Lord Alton of Liverpool, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on North Korea, CSW and other organizations, who see the service as an important step in breaking the North Korean regime's information blockade. In 2014, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry into human rights in North Korea reported, "There is almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as well as the right to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association."

The establishment of a Korean language broadcast as part of BBC World Service programming was a specific recommendation made during a debate in the House of Lords on North Korea in January 2013, introduced by Lord Alton.

In a statement, Lord Alton said, "North Korea is a country where access to foreign media is prohibited and accessing such media is punishable by barbaric sentences. Today, the BBC and the United Kingdom government have taken a stand against the censorship and repression practiced by the North Korean government. Free speech, objective news, and voices from the outside world will now travel from London to the darkest corners of North Korea."

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "The BBC's decision to launch a Korean language service is warmly welcomed. This service will play a vital role in breaking the North Korean regime's information blockade and challenging the diet of propaganda on which its population has been raised. Creative tools are necessary to pry open the world's most closed country and

we look forward to the day that North Korean citizens are free to determine and contribute to their country's future.”