It is my great honor to join you today and see so many old friends and colleagues to mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and remember especially today the people of North Korea, our brothers and sisters living North of here. They live not so very far away physically, but their living circumstances could not be more different. Under the brutal Kim family dictatorship, North Koreans are the only people in the world that are prevented from enjoying any of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As you may know, this document was written and passed by the United Nations in 1948, in reaction to the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

It is a most cruel and ironic fact that same year of 1948 is when Kim Il Song came to power ensuring that everyone born North of the DMZ would have none of these rights. That same year 1948 - when the international community was recognizing “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, Kim Il Song was instituting a regime that would rob everyone born in North Korea of that freedom and dignity enslaving people through the cruelest of means: executions, political prison camps, starvation, propaganda and brainwashing and creating a country that is literally living in darkness.

Today is a most urgent time: It is not enough to recognize and talk about North Korea human rights, we must act.

Because of the people in this room and the organizations gathered to host this conference, no longer can anyone deny that every day the Kim regime is committing crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights that have no parallel in the modern world.

But what does it matter if we know this but do nothing?

Once again this year we witnessed North Korea playing out its classic dance: Fiery rhetoric and threats and then manipulating the good will of South Korea and America to maintain their grip on power and continue their atrocious violations of human rights against their own people.

We have witnessed: the 4 Party Talks, the Agreed Framework, the Sunshine Policy, the Engagement Policy, and the 6 Party Talks, and during all these talks – full of hope and promise, millions of North Koreans have died and there has not been one action by the
Kim regime to indicate he intends to allow greater freedoms to improve the lives of the PEOPLE of North Korea.

No, in fact just the opposite: the situation facing refugees trying to escape is worse than ever before. North Korea’s death camps continue to function and the daily lives of North Koreans continue to be strictly controlled.

Can we not ask at the very least that Kim Jong Un stop killing his own people just for leaving the country without permission or to at least allow humanitarian agencies to provide medical attention and food to the political prisoners in his “reeducation camps.”?? Could we at least distribute the Declaration of Human Rights to the citizens of North Korea?

Part of the great promise of the universal declaration of human rights was that every student and citizen of this world would have access to this document. The hope was that we would never again see such inhumane and tragic events as the Holocaust and other atrocities ever again.

But what are we doing NOW to help the PEOPLE of North Korea?

If we do not focus attention on their suffering we not only betray this document, we help feed into Kim Jong Un’s propaganda and lies. When we do not put human rights at the forefront, we feed into the North Korea regime’s narrative that is used to justify their nuclear program: that we want to destroy them, that we are their enemy. This is the narrative the triple Kim dictatorships have fed to their people from childhood to hate Americans as Yankee imperialist wolves bent on their destruction. When we fail to raise our concerns about the suffering North Koreans face every day, we feed into that lie.

If we want to be faithful to the goals of the UDHR then we must:

1) Save the Lives of North Koreans: this begins by saving the refugees trying to escape and pressuring China to end its barbaric, cruel and ILLEGAL policy of repatriation;

2) Make Human Rights a part of any and ALL negotiations with North Korea;

3) Press the international community to end North Korean slave labor;

4) Enforce sanctions which target KIM and those who keep him in power, NOT the people of North Korea;
5) And finally the most important thing we can do: financially support the work of defector NGOs.

We witnessed this summer the historic Singapore Summit between Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump and the seemingly glowing exchanges between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae In. The current U.S. Policy aim is to bring about C-V-I-D: Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.

But the defectors have warned us for decades this is not possible under the Kim dictatorship. Whether it is the late Hwang Jang Yop or the highest ranking defector, Mr. Thae Young Ho, whether it is average citizens or survivors of the North Korean gulag, all the defectors repeat the same thing: Kim Jong-un will never give up his nuclear weapons. Never. He will make false promises that he will give them up but will never give up his nuclear weapons.

C-V-I-D is a great objective, but the only real solution is C-V-I-F, Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible FREEDOM, for the North Korean people. No one knows better how to bring about freedom to the people of North Korea than those who have escaped.

There is no group that Kim fears more than his own people and that is why he focuses so much attention on preventing them from escaping and attacking them when they do.

I share the same view as the North Koreans who have escaped: The Truth Will Set Them Free: if we can get the truth to the people of North Korea unification can come peacefully. In addition to acting - not just talking about human rights -- but financially supporting the defectors NGOs to help them with radio broadcasting; balloon launches; rice bottle launches; smuggling in USB and SDs through all possible means: this is the work we must be about.

I close with a warning. Because of the bravery of the North Koreans who have escaped to educate us about the Kim regimes, the world no longer doubts the suffering in North Korea. If we fail to speak and act, we not only fail the goals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but we fail them, our brothers and sisters just north of here. History will judge us for that.