INTERNATIONAL TAEKWON-DO FEDERATION®

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: November 12, 2026 (Thursday)
Jointly Issued by:

- Public Relations Committee, International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF Headquarters, UK)
- International Taekwon-Do Federation Korea (ITF KOREA)

Media & Press Inquiries:

- **Chan-kuk Chris Jung**, Chair of the Public Relations Committee, International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF)
  Tel: +82-10-6313-1872 | Email: prditf@gmail.com
- **Seung-hee Yoo**, Secretary General, International Taekwon-Do Federation Korea (ITF KOREA)
  Tel: +82-10-9216-6554 | Email: tkditfkorea@gmail.com

"Taekwon-Do Did Not Even Exist in North Korea Before the First Pyongyang Demonstration in September 1980" — ITF Condemns "Severe Historical Distortion" in North Korea's Unilateral UNESCO Nomination Dossier

- **ITF refutes North Korea's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Updated 2022), which falsely claims Taekwon-Do evolved indigenously from Koguryo Subak and Thaekkyon.**
- **Primary historical records and photographs released, verifying the official naming of Taekwon-Do in Seoul, South Korea on April 11, 1955, and its first introduction to Pyongyang in September 1980.**
- **Global online petition campaign launched ahead of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee's final decision on November 30 in Xiamen, China.**

LONDON / SEOUL — November 12, 2026 — Ahead of the 21st Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (November 30 – December 5, 2026), the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) has released primary historical records and launched a global citizen petition to correct severe historical distortions contained in North Korea's nomination dossier for Taekwon-Do.

The ITF announced that documents submitted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to UNESCO—specifically *Taekwon-Do, No. 9 of the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Updated in 2022)*—intentionally fabricate the origin and history of Taekwon-Do. To counter these claims, the ITF is publicly

releasing verifiable historical documents and photographs to the international media while preparing to submit formal letters of protest (Policy Proposals and Petitions) alongside global petition signatures to the UNESCO Secretariat and the Korea Heritage Service (KHS).

Following the recent recommendation to inscribe North Korea's nomination by UNESCO's Evaluation Body, Taekwon-Do faces the imminent risk of being inscribed solely under North Korea's distorted narrative during the upcoming committee session in Xiamen, China.

According to the ITF's analysis of North Korea's official submission, the section titled *"Historical Origin"* claims that Taekwon-Do is an ancient martial art that developed continuously within North Korean territory, citing the *Subak* mural in the Koguryo Tomb of King Kogukwon (located in Anak County, South Hwanghae Province) and Joseon-era *Thaekkyon*. Furthermore, the dossier vaguely implies that the late Founding President General Choi Hong Hi created Taekwon-Do based on those traditional martial arts, thereby fabricating historical continuity and claiming Pyongyang as the center of its propagation.

However, primary historical evidence proves that North Korea's claims are entirely fabricated. Modern Taekwon-Do was officially named and systematized on **April 11, 1955**, in Seoul, South Korea, through the **Taekwon-Do Naming Committee** (*Taekwon-Do Myeongching Jejeong Wiwonhoe*). Commemorative photographs and contemporaneous newspaper articles from 1955 definitively establish that Taekwon-Do is a modern martial art born in the Republic of Korea.

Most notably, Taekwon-Do was first introduced to North Korea in **September 1980**. Prior to the historic visit and demonstration in Pyongyang by Founding President General Choi Hong Hi and the ITF Demonstration Team in September 1980, the martial art known as "Taekwon-Do" did not exist in North Korea. Photographs from that inaugural demonstration—featuring a large banner inside the Pyongyang gymnasium reading, *"Warmly Welcoming Mr. Choi Hong Hi and His Delegation Visiting the Homeland"*—serve as irrefutable proof of Taekwon-Do's absence in North Korea prior to 1980.

"Even though UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage listing does not grant exclusive ownership to any single state, allowing a nomination built on blatant falsehoods and fabricated history to be entered into an official United Nations record directly undermines UNESCO's founding principles and the spirit of the Convention," said an ITF spokesperson.

"This is not merely an internal issue for the Taekwon-Do community, but a matter of universal historical justice to prevent falsified history from becoming an official global record," the spokesperson added. "We are gathering signatures not only from Taekwon-Do practitioners worldwide, but also from global citizens who stand for historical truth, to deliver a resolute message to the UNESCO Committee."

The ITF is currently collecting signatures in multiple languages—including English, Korean, and Chinese—via its official online petition page (**https://forms.gle/xbcxgrV6y7dxvveA8**). In accordance with strict personal data

protection principles, all collected personal information will be permanently destroyed immediately after the petition is submitted. **(END)**

[List of Attached Primary Evidence & Media Materials]

(Available for immediate editorial use with proper source attribution)

1. **[Photo 1]** Commemorative photograph of the Taekwon-Do Naming Committee in Seoul, South Korea (April 11, 1955). *(Source: ITF Taekwon-Do Research Institute)*
2. **[Photo 2]** Original 1955 newspaper clipping reporting the official naming of "Taekwon-Do" and listing committee attendees. *(Source: Taekwon-Do Textbook, 1972, National Library of Korea)*
3. **[Photos 3 & 4]** Two photographs from the first-ever Taekwon-Do demonstration in Pyongyang, North Korea by Founding President General Choi Hong Hi and the ITF Demonstration Team (September 1980), including the gymnasium welcome banner. *(Source: ITF Taekwon-Do Research Institute)*
4. **[Document 5]** Excerpts from North Korea's UNESCO submission dossier: *National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 9, "Taekwon-Do" (Updated in 2022)* (Korean and English versions, 11 pages total).

[Annex 1] Fact-Check Comparison: North Korea's UNESCO Dossier vs. Historical Facts

Category	North Korea's Submission Claims (Historical Distortion)	Verified Historical Facts & Primary Evidence
Origin & Legitimacy	Claims Taekwon-Do evolved indigenously from ancient Gojoseon/Koguryo *Subak* murals and *Thaekkyon*.	Modern martial art created and officially named on **April 11, 1955**, in Seoul, South Korea by the Taekwon-Do Naming Committee. *(Evidence 1 & 2)*
Introduction to North Korea	Fabricates continuous transmission within North Korean territory centered around Pyongyang since ancient times.	**Non-existent in North Korea prior to September 1980**, when Founding President General Choi Hong Hi and the ITF Demonstration Team held the first demonstration in Pyongyang. *(Evidence 3 & 4)*
Founder General Choi Hong Hi	Vaguely states he founded Taekwon-Do based on North Korean traditional martial arts, framing its growth as an achievement of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un.	Founded in 1955 by **General Choi Hong Hi** (a former Republic of Korea Army General), who established the ITF in Seoul in 1966 and first introduced Taekwon-Do to North Korea in 1980.

UNESCO Inscription Issue	Seeks unilateral inscription under the sole title *"Taekwon-Do"* based on falsified historical narratives.	Violates the spirit of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention by attempting to legitimize fabricated history through an international body.

[Annex 2] Key Historical Evidence & Photographic Materials for Media Use (5 Items Total)

※ The photographs and documentary materials below may be freely used for news reporting purposes. Please include the designated source credit upon publication.

[Insert Phot



o 1 Here]

1955. 4. 11. Taekwon-Do Naming Committee

[Insert Ph



oto 2 Here]

1955. 4. 11. Original Newspaper Article

▶ [Evidence 1] Commemorative Photograph of the Taekwon-Do Naming Committee (April 11, 1955)

- Description: Historic gathering in Seoul, Republic of Korea, where key military, government, and civilian leaders officially named the new martial art "Taekwon-Do (跆拳道)."
- Source: ITF Taekwon-Do Research Institute

▶ [Evidence 2] Contemporaneous Newspaper Article on the Taekwon-Do Naming Committee (April 11, 1955)

- Description: Original press report documenting the official naming committee meeting and listing the attendees.
- Source: Scanned from Taekwon-Do Textbook (1972), held at the National Library of Korea

[Annex 2 Continued] Photographs from the First Pyongyang Demonstration (September 1980) & North Korean Submission Documents



[Insert Photo 3 Here]

1980. 9. General Choi Hong Hi in Pyongyang



[Insert Photo 4 Here]

1980. 9. ITF Demonstration Team & Banner

▶ [Evidence 3] First Taekwon-Do Demonstration in Pyongyang, North Korea (01) (September 1980)

- Description: The late Founding President General Choi Hong Hi and the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) Demonstration Team delivering opening remarks as they introduce Taekwon-Do to North Korea for the very first time.
- Source: ITF Taekwon-Do Research Institute

▶ [Evidence 4] First Taekwon-Do Demonstration in Pyongyang, North Korea (02) (September 1980)

- Description: The ITF Demonstration Team lined up inside the Pyongyang gymnasium beneath a banner reading, "Warmly Welcoming Mr. Choi Hong Hi and His Delegation Visiting the Homeland!"—proving the absence of Taekwon-Do in North Korea prior to 1980.
- Source: ITF Taekwon-Do Research Institute

▶ [Evidence 5] Excerpts from North Korea's UNESCO Nomination Document for Taekwon-Do [Korean Version]



국가비물질문화유산목록
《태권도》(개요)

대상이름	태권도	구분	사회적관습과 례식 및 로동생활풍습

등록근거

1. 정서위신들의 령도정적

위대한 수령님과 위대한 장군님의 현명한 령도에 의하여 태권도는 널리 보급되고 발전하여왔다.

장래하는 **김정은**동지께서는 사회생활의 모든 분야에서 인측전통을 살려나갈데 대하여 가르쳐주시면서 전사회적으로 태권도를 널리 장려하도록 이끌어주시였다.

2. 정의와 기술적내용

- 태권도의 정의

태권도는 아무런 무기나 기재의 도움이 없이 상대의 움직으로부터 자신을 지키는 무술이다. 다시 말하여 부단한 수련을 통하여 인간이 가지고있는 모든 정신적, 육체적힘을 최대한 발휘하는 놀라운 기능의 운동이다.

태권도에서 《태》는 발차기술리를 의미하며 《권》은 주먹을 뜻하고 《도》는 높은 정신수양을 의미한다.

태권도의 기본동작은 3,200여개로서 반동력, 질중, 균형, 호흡조절, 속도 등 과학기술적원리에 의하여 체계화, 세분화되여있다.

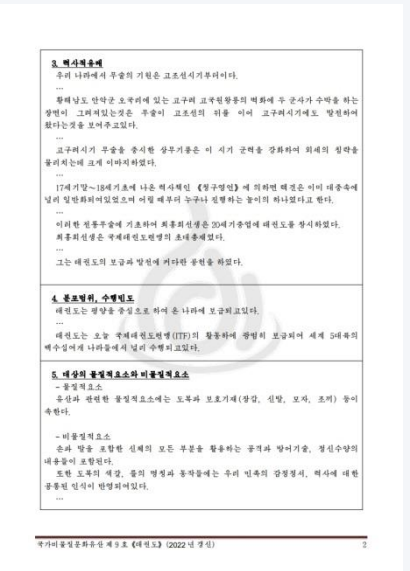
태권도의 기술구성체계는 기본동작과 품, 맞서기, 단련, 호신술로 이루어졌다.

사람들은 금과 당이 올바른수록 어려운 극한정도 극복하게 되는데 이 과정에 보다 높은 육체적능력과 정신적수양을 쌓게 된다.

사람들은 품의 명칭과 동작들에 반영된 력사적인물들과 사실들을 회상하므로서 그들의 정신과 애국심을 느끼게 된다.

기술수준과 품실은 10개의 급과 9개의 단으로 평가되며 도복과 띠로 표현된다.

국가비물질문화유산 제3호《태권도》(2022년 갱신) 1



3. 력사적유래

우리 나라에서 무술의 기원은 고조선시기부터이다.

…

활태닌도 안악군 오국리에 있는 고구려 고분벽화들의 벽화에 두 군사가 수박을 하는 장면이 그려져있는것은 무술이 고조선의 뒤를 이어 고구려시기에도 발전하여 왔다는것을 보여주고있다.

…

고구려시기 무술을 즐시한 상무기풍은 이 시기 군력을 강화하여 회세의 침략을 물리치는데 크게 이바지하였다.

…

17세기말~18세기초에 나온 력사책인 《청구영언》에 의하면 태조은 이미 대중속에 널리 일반화되여있었으며 어릴 때부터 누구나 질행하는 놀이의 하나였다고 한다.

…

이러한 전통무술에 기초하여 최홍희선생은 20세기중엽에 태권도를 정시하였다.

최홍희선생은 국제태권도련맹의 초대총재였다.

…

그는 태권도의 보급과 발전에 커다란 공헌을 하였다.

4. 분포범위, 수행빈도

태권도는 평양을 중심으로 하여 온 나라에 보급되고있다.

…

태권도는 오늘 국제태권도련맹(ITF)의 활동하에 광범히 보급되여 세계 5대륙의 백수십여개 나라들에서 널리 수행되고있다.

5. 대상의 물질적요소와 비물질적요소

- 물질적요소

우선과 관련한 물질적요소에는 도복과 보호기재(장갑, 신발, 모자, 조끼) 등이 속한다.

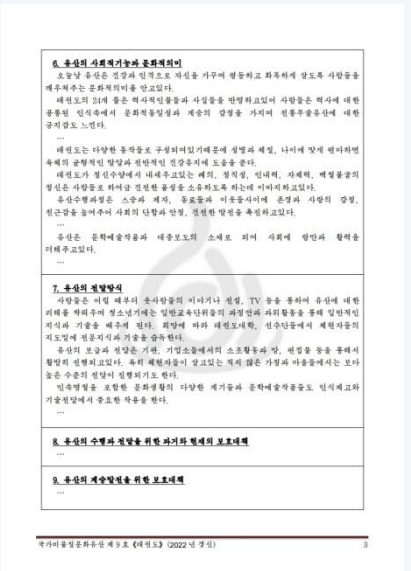
- 비물질적요소

손과 발을 포함한 신체의 모든 부분을 활용하는 공격과 방어기술, 정신수양의 내용들이 포함된다.

또한 도복의 색갈, 품의 명칭과 동작들에는 우리 인측의 감정정서, 력사에 대한 공통된 인식이 반영되여있다.

…

국가비물질문화유산 제3호《태권도》(2022년 갱신) 2



6. 유산의 사회적기능과 문화적의미

오늘날 유산은 집강과 인격으로 자신을 가꾸며 정돈하고 화목하게 살도록 사람들을 깨우쳐주는 문화적의미를 안고있다.

태권도의 21세 들은 력사적인물들과 사실들을 반영하고있어 사람들은 력사에 대한 공통된 인식속에서 문화적동질성과 계승의 감정을 가지며 전통무술유산에 대한 긍지감도 느낀다.

…

태권도는 다양한 동작들로 구성되여있기때문에 성별과 체질, 나이에 맞게 련마하면 육체의 균형적인 발달과 건강증지에 도움을 준다.

태권도가 정신수양에서 내세우고있는 례의, 정직성, 인내력, 자제력, 례절풍습의 정신은 사람들로 하여금 건전한 품성을 소유하도록 하는데 이바지하고있다.

유산수행과정은 스승과 제자, 동료들과 이웃들사이에 존경과 사랑의 감정, 친근감을 높여주어 사회의 단합과 안정, 건전한 발전을 촉진하고있다.

…

유산은 문학예술작품과 대중보도의 소재로 되여 사회에 정만과 활력을 더해주고있다.

…

7. 유산의 전달방식

사람들은 어릴 때부터 부사람들의 이야기나 전설, TV 등을 통하여 유산에 대한 리해를 학위주며 청소년기에는 일반교육단위들의 과정안과 과외활동을 통해 일반적인 지식과 기술을 배우게 된다. 특별히 따라 태권도대학, 선수단들에서 체계자들의 지도밑에 전문지식과 기술을 습득한다.

유산의 보급과 전달을 위한 기관, 기업소들에서의 소조활동과 망, 련합들 등을 통해서 활발히 진행되고있다. 특히 체력자들이 앞고있는 적지 않은 가정과 아동들에서는 보다 높은 수준의 전달이 진행되기도 한다.

인측행정을 포함한 문화생활의 다양한 제기들과 문학예술작품들도 인식제고와 기술전달에서 중요한 작용을 한다.

…

8. 유산의 수행과 전달을 위한 자기와 집체의 보호대책

…

9. 유산의 계승발전을 위한 보호대책

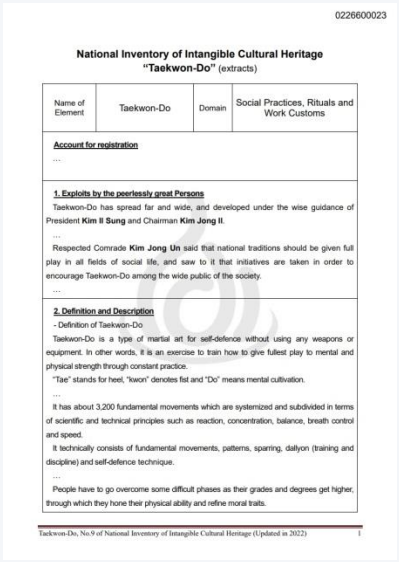
…

국가비물질문화유산 제3호《태권도》(2022년 갱신) 3

INTERNATIONAL TAEKWON-DO FEDERATION®

[Evidence 5] Excerpts from North Korea's UNESCO Nomination Document for Taekwon-Do [English Version]

[Insert Document



0226600023

National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage
"Taekwon-Do" (extracts)

Name of Element	Taekwon-Do	Domain	Social Practices, Rituals and Work Customs

Account for registration
…

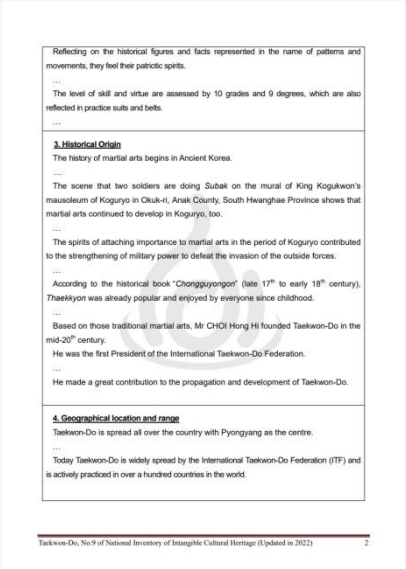
1. Exploits by the peerlessly great Persons
Taekwon-Do has spread far and wide, and developed under the wise guidance of President **Kim Il Sung** and Chairman **Kim Jong Il**.
…
Respected Comrade **Kim Jong Un** said that national traditions should be given full play in all fields of social life, and saw to it that initiatives are taken in order to encourage Taekwon-Do among the wide public of the society.
…

2. Definition and Description
- Definition of Taekwon-Do
Taekwon-Do is a type of martial art for self-defence without using any weapons or equipment. In other words, it is an exercise to train how to give fullest play to mental and physical strength through constant practice.
"Tae" stands for heel, "kwon" denotes fist and "Do" means mental cultivation.
…
It has about 3,200 fundamental movements which are systemized and subdivided in terms of scientific and technical principles such as reaction, concentration, balance, breath control and speed.
It technically consists of fundamental movements, patterns, sparring, dallyon (training and discipline) and self-defence technique.
…
People have to go overcome some difficult phases as their grades and degrees get higher, through which they hone their physical ability and refine moral traits.

Taekwon-Do, No.9 of National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Updated in 2022) 1

Scan - EN Page 1]

[Insert Document S



Reflecting on the historical figures and facts represented in the name of patterns and movements, they feel their patriotic spirits.
…
The level of skill and virtue are assessed by 10 grades and 9 degrees, which are also reflected in practice suits and belts.
…

3. Historical Origin
The history of martial arts begins in Ancient Korea.
…
The scene that two soldiers are doing *Subak* on the mural of King Kogukwon's mausoleum of Koguryo in Okuk-ri, Anak County, South Hwanghae Province shows that martial arts continued to develop in Koguryo, too.
…
The spirits of attaching importance to martial arts in the period of Koguryo contributed to the strengthening of military power to defeat the invasion of the outside forces.
…
According to the historical book "*Chongguyongon*" (late 17th to early 18th century), *Thaekkyon* was already popular and enjoyed by everyone since childhood.
…
Based on those traditional martial arts, Mr CHOI Hong Hi founded Taekwon-Do in the mid-20th century.
He was the first President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation.
…
He made a great contribution to the propagation and development of Taekwon-Do.

4. Geographical location and range
Taekwon-Do is spread all over the country with Pyongyang as the centre.
…
Today Taekwon-Do is widely spread by the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and is actively practiced in over a hundred countries in the world.

Taekwon-Do, No.9 of National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Updated in 2022) 2

can - EN Page 2]

[Insert Document



5. Tangible and Intangible elements
- Tangible element
It includes practice suits and safeguarding equipment (gloves, shoes, headgears and vests).
…
- Intangible element
It includes attacking and blocking skills to make the best use of all parts of body including hands and feet, as well as the mental cultivation.
The colour of practice suits, name of patterns and movements reflect the emotions and temperament of our nation and the common understanding of history.
…

6. Social functions and cultural meanings
The cultural meaning that the element has nowadays is that it helps people to train themselves to have good health and characters, and live in harmony. The 24 patterns of Taekwon-Do remind them of famous people and facts in Korean history and, thus, the element gives a sense of cultural identity and continuity with a common understanding of history and pride in the traditional martial arts.
…
Taekwon-Do consists of various movements, so if people train as befits their gender, physical constitution and age, it helps them develop their body in a balanced way and keep them healthy.
…
Courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit that Taekwon-Do focuses on in the mental cultivation contribute to possessing of virtuous characters. The practice of the element promotes solidarity, stability and sound development of the society by enhancing mutual respect, love and sense of fraternity between teachers and students, colleagues and neighbours.
…
The element is often chosen as a popular topic of TV programmes, literary and art works, adding liveliness and vigour to society.
…

Taekwon-Do, No.9 of National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Updated in 2022) 3

Scan - EN Page 3]

▶ [Evidence 5] North Korea's UNESCO Nomination Document (Summary of National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 9, "Taekwon-Do")

- **Document Overview:** North Korea's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage submitted as the basis for its UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage nomination (originally registered in 2014; updated November 30, 2022 / bilingual Korean–English version).
- **Key Distortion 1 (Section 1. Exploits by the Peerlessly Great Persons):** Describes Taekwon-Do as having been disseminated and developed under the guidance of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and Kim Jong Un, framing it as an instrument of political regime propaganda.
- **Key Distortion 2 (Section 3. Historical Origin):** Links the "Subak" mural in the Koguryo Tomb of King Kogukwon (Anak County, South Hwanghae Province) and Joseon-era "Thaekkyon" as direct origins of Taekwon-Do, followed by a claim that Mr. Choi Hong Hi founded Taekwon-Do in the mid-20th century—fabricating an unbroken historical lineage within North Korean

territory since the Koguryo era.

• **Key Distortion 3 (Section 4. Geographical Location and Range):** States that "Taekwon-Do is spread all over the country with Pyongyang as the centre," erasing South Korea as its true birthplace and distorting Pyongyang as the center of Taekwon-Do.

[About the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF)]

- **Official Name:** International Taekwon-Do Federation Ltd (ITF)
- **Headquarters:** The Unit, Victoria Lane, Harlington, Middlesex UB3 5EW, United Kingdom
- **Website & Contact:** https://itf-administration.com | Tel: +44 1895 459944 | Email: email@itf-administration.com

---