

**Intervention by H.E. Mr. Md. Mesbahul Islam, Secretary, Ministry of
Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs of Bangladesh at the 18th Session of UNPFII
Agenda item 9: Traditional knowledge: Generation, transmission and protection
22 April – 3 May 2019
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Thank you, Madam Chair for giving me the floor.

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Bangladesh delegation at this 18th UNPFII. ~~We regret that due to time management issue we could not deliver our statement under agenda item 5.~~

Madam Chair, and distinguished participants,

Bangladesh, a country of cultural and ethnic diversity, has 50 ethnic communities which constitutes more than two million people with diverse cultures and traditions. 40% of the aforesaid population consisting of eleven ethnic communities live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes the fundamental right of all citizens irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. In the 15th Amendment Article 23A has further stipulates that State shall undertake responsibility to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribal and ethnic communities of Bangladesh.

Madam Chair,

The Government has established seven cultural institutes under the Small Ethnic Communities Cultural Institutions Act, 2010 aimed at preserving and promoting traditional cultural expression, customs and knowledge of our ethnic communities. Bangladesh is a party to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005. We encourage the age-old tradition of intergenerational solidarity and transfer of knowledge, history and wisdom through family, the most important and fundamental unit of the society, is one of the main enabling factors in our efforts.

We have followed yesterday's discussion where there was an unequivocal call to promote education in mother tongue. To this end, we are implementing through the National Education Policy, 2010 the Multi-lingual Education (MLE) programme that promoted primary education in mother tongues. Especially we have been able to

distribute books in five ethnic languages of Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo and Sadri children every year. As a special initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, development assistance is provided to small ethnic communities living in plain land including through scholarships and training programmes. Moreover, Bangladesh has established International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) to foster research and scholarly activities for the preservation of languages.

Our Government, under the prudent leadership of the hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remains sincere as ever to protect and promote traditional knowledge and cultural diversity of the people of the country. In CHT all the ethnic communities have a long traditional association with the knowledge of forest management, traditional healing system, herbal medicine, conservation of biodiversity, preservation of water catchment areas, unique agriculture etc. These traditional knowledge, systems, and practices of the ethnic people are recognized in Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900. The traditional knowledge for the conservation and management of natural resources through Village Common Forests (VCFs) is being widely practiced and promoted in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Madam Chair,

The Government of Bangladesh has been implementing policies, programme and taken special measures to ensure peace, progress and prosperity of all our ethnic communities of CHT and plain land. We have done a lot and efforts are underway in collaboration with the ministries and other stakeholders with a view to fully implement provisions of the CHT Peace Accord.

As we move along the path of sustainable development goals, we are committed to integrating all our ethnic community into mainstream socio-economic development without undermining their ethnic and cultural identities, so that no one is left behind. We highly value the traditional knowledge and wisdom that can be a great leverage in this direction.

