

Agenda item 4 Discussion on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum (economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights), with reference to the UNDRIP, the outcome document of the WCIP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Thank you, Chairperson, for giving me the floor.

I am Augustina Chakma Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.

Without the right to self-determination, sustainable development of Indigenous people cannot be obtained. The Indigenous Jumma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are no exception in this regard.

The historic CHT Accord was signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the PCJSS in 1997, introducing a unique governance system consisting of three Hill District Councils at the district level and the CHT Regional Council as the apex administrative body at the regional level.

But due to the government's prolonging tactics in the proper and full implementation of the Accord, such a system of self-governance has not yet developed in CHT. In the last 25 years, these councils have not been entrusted with the subjects such as general administration, law and order, land management, the environment, tourism, development of communication systems and many more.

The Election Rules and Electoral Roll Rules, which make a voter list with permanent residents, have not been enacted in the past 25 years. As a result, these councils have been governed by unelected interim councils, which have hindered the establishment of self-determination.

The absence of the participatory role from the CHT people in the administrative system has a negative and damaging impact on the national entity of Indigenous Jumma people and the existence of their birth land, culture and livelihoods, human rights, and the environment and biodiversity of this region.

The present government has been following the policy of military means, similarly to past dictators. At present, the CHT region has completely been handed over to the army under the jurisdiction of de facto military rule 'Operation Uttoron'.

The armies have been creating various obstructions. Hence, the human rights situation in CHT has become extremely critical as the Indigenous Jumma peoples are now forced to live in a suffocating state. The armies have been promulgating wide-scale propaganda and conspiring programs intending to identify the PCJSS activists and supporters engaged in the movement demanding for implementation of the Accord, as 'terrorists', 'extortionists' and 'armed miscreants' and much more.

Therefore, to ensure the rights of self-determination of the indigenous Jumma peoples, I urge the Permanent Forum to play a role in withdrawing all temporary camps, including the de facto military rule 'Operation Uttoron' and transferring political, administrative and economic powers and functions to the CHT councils and initiative for implementing the recommendations of the Permanent Forum regarding CHT adopted in 2011.

Thank you, Chair.