

**Intervention by 4th Session of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues, New York, 16-27 May 2005**

Agenda Item: 5

Future work of the Forum

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Thank you, Madame Chair, distinguished Government delegates, honorable indigenous sisters and brothers. We support the recommendations to this Forum by the Asian Indigenous Peoples Caucus.

On behalf of the indigenous peoples' organization of Bangladesh, I would like to recommend following proposals for the future work of the Permanent Forum during the second decade on indigenous peoples:

1. Permanent Forum should formulate mechanisms for monitoring the implementation processes of treaties, accords, agreements and other legal arrangements, made between governments and indigenous peoples. In Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) the 'Peace' Accord signed between the indigenous Jumma people and Government of Bangladesh, like most other treaties etc made between the governments and the indigenous peoples in all over the world are not (*fully*) properly implemented by the governments. It is very urgent to have such mechanisms for monitoring on implementation of the treaties, accords, agreements etc within United Nations system.
2. The Permanent Forum should initiate a regional conference on the concept of indigenous peoples, particularly in Asia as some of the governments of the Asian countries have been denying existence of indigenous peoples in their countries. Yesterday honorable delegates of government of my country, Bangladesh denied to identify us as indigenous peoples. However, some laws refer to us as 'indigenous' (*Act 12 of 1995 and Rules 6, 34, 45 & 50 of the CHT Regulation, 1900*) or as 'aboriginal' (*section 97, East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950*). Even in 2000 the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and in 2003 present Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in their messages given on the occasion of the international day of the world's indigenous peoples regarded us as indigenous peoples. But in United Nations, delegates of the government of Bangladesh have always been denied existence of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh.

Statement of Bangladesh delegate is also baseless that we are descendents of the settlers and came from the region east of Bangladesh a few centuries back. (*In fact, CHT indigenous Jumma were independent before the British annexed it*). But it historical fact that before the British annexed the region to Bengal, CHT indigenous Jumma people were independent. Even during the British colonial period (1860-1947) and even early period of Pakistan, the CHT was regarded as an "Excluded Area".

3. The Government of Bangladesh invite the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to visit Bangladesh this year, to assess the situation of indigenous peoples. In light of the views expressed by the representative of Bangladesh yesterday, we are sure the Government would also support such a measure to end malicious propaganda and baseless arguments. If an invitation is not forthcoming from the Government of Bangladesh, then we the Indigenous Peoples Organizations of Bangladesh extend our cordial invitation to the Special Rapporteur.
4. Permanent Forum should conduct a detailed study on militarization, land dispossession, transmigration of the mainstream population to the indigenous territories and its impact on indigenous peoples. Like in many other parts of the world, the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh are facing serious human rights violations in term of militarization, land dispossession, transmigration of population. Our lands, forests and territories are still being taken away without our free, prior and informed consent, to build so-called "Reserve Forests", "Protected Areas", "National Parks", "Eco-parks", Tourism, and even for establishing military bases and training centres.
5. The Permanent Forum monitor the work of UNDP and other development agencies engaging in activities on indigenous lands, without Government recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples. The activities of UNDP and such organizations often do more to hinder the rights and search for justice of indigenous peoples, than aid their developmental aspirations.

Thank you Madame Chair.