

## ***Greater Sylhet Indigenous Peoples Forum***

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### **‘Indigenous Peoples, Collective rights to lands, territories and resources’**

Representation to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

17th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues ,

United Nations Headquarters in New York from 16-27<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Honorable Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Govt. and Non-Govt. Representatives, UN Agencies, Fellow Indigenous Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greater Sylhet Indigenous Peoples Forum (GSIPF) is pleased that the UNPFII have this year chosen ‘Indigenous Peoples, Collective rights to lands, territories and resources’ as its principle theme.

We hope issues effecting indigenous peoples livelihood and their rights to lands, territories and resources will be highly given importance in this ongoing conference.

We would like to draw the attention of all concern in this meeting to the challenges and issues facing by indigenous peoples in land right issues, and the way forward to resolving this crucial issue.

Indigenous peoples have customary ways of recognising land and resource rights and the collective aspects of their rights to lands, territories, and resources are intrinsically linked to their collective rights to self-determination, non-discrimination, cultural integrity, and development as distinct peoples.

Indigenous peoples do not have rights only to the land they directly cultivate or inhabit, but to the broader territory, encompassing the total environments of the areas which they occupy or otherwise use, inclusive of natural resources, rivers, lakes, and coasts.

Their rights to land and natural resources require special attention, as these are fundamental to securing the broader set of rights related to self-management and the right to determine their own priorities for development.

Indigenous peoples have rights to the lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally occupied, owned, or used, meaning that it is “the traditional occupation and use which is the basis for establishing indigenous peoples’ land rights.

In many cases it is proven government’s initiatives failed to deal and resolve land problem effectively for its lack of understanding the culture and values of the peoples.

The basis for indigenous peoples’ land rights is traditional occupation and use, and UNDRIP and Convention No. 169 enshrine a series of fundamental principles to determine the scope of indigenous peoples’ rights to lands, territories, and natural resources and provide guidance on adequate procedures for states’ official recognition or registration of indigenous peoples’ land ownership.

I would like to reiterate the following few recommendations in this important session,

- ❖ Indigenous peoples’ own procedures for transmission of land rights should be respected, implying state recognition of customary law governing lands and resources.
- ❖ States should take steps to identify indigenous peoples’ lands and territories, as the first crucial step towards recognition and protection. This process must necessarily be undertaken with the full participation of the peoples concerned and be based on traditional occupation, ownership, or use.
- ❖ States have a duty to effectively protect indigenous peoples’ land and resource rights: UNDRIP and Convention No. 169 provide for states to comply with the duties.

Thank You very much for your kind attention.

**Samarjit Singha**

Senior Member

GSIPF, Bangladesh