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Agenda Item 5: Intersessional activities and follow-up to thematic studies
and advice

Joint Statement by
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Thank you Chair for giving me the floor.

Because of United Nations' initiatives, many Indigenous peoples around the globe are able to exercise their rights. But in the case of Bangladesh, although the government made an agreement called CHT accord with the PCJSS party in 1997 for the Chittagong Hill Tracts area, known as CHT, it still remains far from fruition. The rights to self-determination cannot be ensured until and unless the rights of the indigenous peoples over land and territories are established.

Between 1978 and 1982, the Bangladesh Government brought about half a million Bengali settlers from plain districts into the hilly areas where the Indigenous Jumma peoples have been living for centuries and these settlers have been occupying vast land illegally.

As per the CHT Accord, a CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission was formed in 1999. This Land Commission role could not function, however, until 2022 because of the Sheikh Hasina Government's indifference, particularly by pending the formulation of the Rules of the Commission since 2016.

Three retired judges have taken the Commission Chairman's position to date and none of them acted anything that could relieve the CHT Indigenous peoples' agony. In fact, it is a prolonging tactic by the Sheikh Hasina Government that the land grabbing settlers are not giving back to the real owners of Indigenous peoples. Now the Land Commission remains in a dysfunctional condition. Instead of resolving the land issue, attacks on Jumma people, arson in villages, land grabbing and eviction from ancestral land are taking place.

- For example, in Chimbuk Hills in the Bandarban district, the Bangladesh military is constructing a hotel and an amusement park. This project will directly affect four villages and indirectly 70 to 116 villages of Mro people, putting about 10,000 Jum farmers at risk of becoming refugees. Many international organizations like IWGIA, Amnesty International, National NGOs

and many more urged them to not construct such projects, but they paid no heed to it. Even the government is completely silent in this regard.

- The militaries are constructing roads wherever they like and it destroys the forest, which is a destruction to the environment and the culture of the indigenous Jumma peoples. In fact, it is the militaries' tactic for easier movement to suppress the Indigenous peoples.

Therefore, I urge the Expert Mechanism to consider conducting a new study on land problems of indigenous peoples as a follow-up effort.

In addition, the UN along with the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights should adopt a resolution that whenever an agreement takes place between the government and the Indigenous peoples, they must get involved in supervising the dispute solution in order for the Indigenous peoples to be justified in their claim of their lands.

Thank you.