

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
14th Session**

**UN Headquarters, New York
20 April- 1 May 2015**

**Agenda Item: 7
Human Rights**

(29 April, 2015)

Intervention by:
Raja Devasish Roy
Member, UNPFII

Madam Chairperson, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Permit me to first add my voice of concern regarding the havoc caused by the recent earthquake in Nepal. I support the initiatives taken by our Vice Chair Joan Carling and urge upon all to support it as requested and otherwise.

Let me now take this opportunity to thank the governments that are actively participating here, and in an increasingly constructive manner, including Bangladesh and Indonesia, from Asia. The participation of Asian and African governments at this Forum, is still, however, far less than what we would like. Let us hope that this will change, for the better.

I would also urge governments, particularly in Asia and Africa, to adopt principled, pragmatic and human rights-oriented approaches to the question of the status of indigenous peoples in their countries. The generic understanding of 'indigenous peoples' is now entrenched, within the UN system. It would be of mutual benefit for the Asian and African states and their indigenous peoples, to work together with such an understanding.

The ratification ILO Convention No. 169 would facilitate huge improvements in indigenous peoples' rights, in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, including the Nordic countries that have not yet done so. In the same vein, I would urge the Nordic countries to achieve more substantive progress with regard to the draft Nordic Sami Convention. Similarly, the gap between the indigenous peoples and the government in Canada needs to be lessened in order to protect the indigenous peoples' rights.

Let me turn now to pressing human rights issues briefly. These include the disappearance of the 43 students in Guerrero State in Mexico, the discrimination faced by the Amazigh and other indigenous peoples in North Africa, the situation in West Papua, Indonesia, and some parts of Myanmar. Rape and sexual violence against indigenous women and girls by non-indigenous men continue to be a matter of concern, including in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

Finally, I commend the intervention of the Nordic countries on the agenda of Human Rights. This included a request to the Government of Bangladesh to implement, through a specified timeline, the provisions of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997, including amendments to the Land Commission Act of 2001. This matter was addressed a little while ago by the Hon'ble Member of the National Parliament of Bangladesh, Mr. Ushatan Talukdar (and earlier by the representative of the Government of Bangladesh).

We have been listening to commitments on implementation of the 1997 Accord for a long time, and have been impatiently waiting to see the action. It is like hearing that the vegetables have been chopped, the pot is on the stove, and the food is being cooked, and that it is going to be served soon. But the people of the CHT are yet to be served the food. They wish to see, feel and taste the food of implementation, of the remaining unimplemented provisions.

The Nordic states and MP Ushatan Talukdar also referred to an executive order of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh that restricted the entry of foreigners into the Chittagong Hill Tracts and forbade meetings between "tribal persons" of the Hill Tracts with outsider individuals and organizations - both national and international - except in the presence of civil, military or quasi-military officials.

I would like to believe that such a discriminatory measure was not taken with the consent of the head of government. The press and media reported that the order is to be withdrawn, perhaps signifying that indeed high-level policy-makers did not approve of such a decision. However, we are yet to see the revocation of the order, in writing, and in action.

Measures to address the impunity of attackers against indigenous peoples and their allies, including members of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, also need serious attention on the part of the Government of Bangladesh, as does the early conclusion of the trial involving the disappearance of indigenous woman activist Kalpana Chakma.

I have every faith in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's love and concern for the CHT, under whose courageous and far-sighted leadership the Chittagong Hill

Tracts Accord was signed in 1997. I must commend her leadership on various developmental achievements at the national and local levels, of which I am proud, as a Bangladeshi.

I look forward to the day when we will not have to speak of these unhappy issues at the international levels, and could thereby devote more attention, nationally and internationally, to more proactively achieving sustainable and self-determined development, of which the indigenous peoples are an integral part, including those identified in the Alta Outcome Document and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, both in the developed world and in the developing countries.

Thank you.