

**Twelfth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**New York 20-31 May 2013**

**Statement by the Danish Delegation on agenda item 8:**

**Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

First, Denmark would like to express its sincere condolences with the many Bangladeshi families who lost relatives as a result of the Rana Plaza accident on 24 April, and to express its support for the Government of Bangladesh's efforts to address this tragic situation.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Bangladesh for having just completed its second cycle of the Universal Period Review in Geneva with the participation of its Foreign Minister.

While recognising that Bangladesh faces significant challenges, such as climate change and natural disasters and widespread poverty, Denmark would like to take this opportunity to echo some of the main concerns raised by several States during the recent UPR – namely the lack of full implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord that are fundamental to the rights of Jumma indigenous peoples in the CHT, as well as the rights pertaining to other ethnic and religious minorities in the country, including their right to explicit recognition of their distinct identities. Likewise, we would like to express our continued concern for adivasi and minority women and girls. With these concerns in mind, we repeat our call for the Government of Bangladesh to ratify ILO convention No. 169.

We acknowledge the positive developments that have taken place to restore peace and ensure rule of law and the respect for human rights, and in that regard we welcome the fact that the

the Cabinet has just approved the draft amendments to the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act.

We urge that the amendments reflect in full the 13-point-agreement arrived at with the CHT Regional Council on 30 July 2012 in accordance with the provision in the CHT Accord regarding consultation and consent of the CHT Regional Council on legislation pertaining to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We consider this a critical element in furthering the peace process.

Similarly, we urge that consultations take place with the CHT Regional Council regarding the Forrest (Amendment) Bill 2013, and that its recommendations are incorporated before the bill is passed in Parliament. Denmark also welcomes the transfer of authority of a number of departmental functions to the CHT Hill District Councils, and we hope that the necessary finances and functionaries as well as other critical powers will soon be transferred to the District Councils.

A number of critical challenges remain, however. We are concerned by the communal violence in CHT, most recently in Rangamati town on 22-23 September 2012, where scores of indigenous peoples were injured. We are concerned in particular with the reported increasing number of human rights violations being committed against women and children living in Chittagong Hill Tracts – violence, rape and sexual harassment, and killings are reported to have taken place with apparent impunity. We urge the Government of Bangladesh to take the necessary steps to protect its people against such violations, and to ensure that victims have access to justice and that perpetrators are held accountable for the serious crimes committed.

As mentioned earlier, we support the Government of Bangladesh in its efforts to bring peace to Chittagong Hill Tracts and to address the social problems experienced by the Jumma indigenous peoples and other tribal peoples within a general human rights framework, but we cannot but strongly encourage the Government of Bangladesh to take these mentioned urgent steps to promote justice and thereby also peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Thank you for your attention.