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Madame Chairperson,

My delegation has asked for the floor to provide this august body with some factual information in order to disprove the allegations by Mr. Bimal Tishya Bhikkhu about the situation in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh made two days ago in this august body.

Madam Chairperson,

The government of Bangladesh has always co-operated with the Human Rights Commission and conveyed detailed information supported by adequate evidences whenever any reported violation of human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was brought to its knowledge. I presume all these information are available to the distinguished members of this working group. *Now all these documents are available in the Human Rights Centre.*

Any careful study of these information would make it obvious that the allegations made in this working group by Mr. Bimal Tishya Bhikkhu are far from the truth, and are exaggerated out of all proportion. Nevertheless, my delegation would like to make the following few points for the record.

The allegation that the Bangladesh government had deprived the tribal people of the high degree of autonomy which they enjoyed under the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 is just not true. Only to give an example, the Chittagong Hill Tract Regulation of 1900, introduced by the colonial rulers, far from guaranteeing the so called high degree of autonomy to the tribal people, did not even recognise their fundamental right of possession of land. The Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts could evict any one at a short-notice without showing any cause.

The fact, Madam Chairperson, is that it is the government of Bangladesh which took initiatives to amend the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900 and has taken a number of legal and administrative measures protecting the rights and ethnic ~~ethnic~~ distinction of people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The government has

taken various steps with a view to preserving their socio-cultural identity and ushering in an era of rapid socio-economic development for them. Establishment of a tribal Institute at Rangamati, allocation of special funds for rapid development of the area, reservation of seats in institutions of higher education and government service, introduction of special facilities and incentives namely, reduced rate of interest on bank loans and tax holidays etc. provide adequate proof of the concern of the government of Bangladesh for the wellbeing of the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The establishment of a Council Committee ^{at ministerial level} on the Chittagong Hill Tracts under the Chairmanship of no less a personality than the President himself for monitoring proper implementation of a massive development programme for the area is another proof of the government's sincerity of purpose in this regard.

Madam Chairperson,

The speaker has tried to present a grossly incorrect picture of the Chittagong Hill Tracts which does not tally with the actual situation on the ground. Allegation of killing of nearly one third of the indigenous population in the area by law enforcing agencies of Bangladesh or settlers is nothing more than a sweeping allegation without any foundation. ^{The speaker} ~~A look at himself has qualified his figures by the word "perhaps". His census figures for Tribal Population of Chittagong Hill Tracts indicates how sure he is about the his allegations. Statistics area also contradicts the allegation. According to the tribal population of Chittagong Hill Tracts increased from 350,898 in 1974 to 4,39,454 in 1981. Besides,~~ If the allegation of annihilation of one-third of the tribal population is to be believed then how does one explain ~~the~~ ^{hundred thousand} increase of the tribal population by nearly one million ^{since Bangladesh became independent} despite the alleged extermination?

Mme. Chairperson,

The security forces and other law enforcing agencies in Chittagong Hill Tracts are there to maintain peace and security and they have never involved themselves in any action which can be termed as persecution of local people. The actions of the members of law enforcing agencies are conducted in strict respect of relevant legal and constitutional provisions protecting lives and honour of all citizens of Bangladesh including those

in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Instances of isolated acts of violation of legal provisions by any member of law enforcing agency are promptly investigated and actions have always been taken against offending person whenever the allegation ~~was~~ ^{to be} proved correct. In the absence of any substantiating evidence, I wonder whether the allegation of attack on the orphanage deserves any attention.

Madam Chairperson,

On the allegation of taking over of tribal land, it may be pointed out that citizen's right to settle anywhere in the country has been recognised in the constitution of Bangladesh. This was reiterated by a decision of the High Court. In an over populated country like Bangladesh movement of people from densely populated area to relatively sparsely populated ones is rather spontaneous and somewhat inevitable. The government, however, has always taken necessary measures for the protection of the tribal culture and tradition and identity

So far as land ownership is concerned, it may be noted that as per provisions of the Constitution the Government has the sovereign right over the ownership of land. Tribal people, who in the past migrated from place to place, had in fact no substantive ownership in any area. The Government under the provision of Regulation No. 1 of 1900 adopted rules for registration documents and regulation of transfer of land. The Government has taken further steps to give tenancy right to the tribal population. Thus a new beginning in tribal living has been initiated and tribal people are found reaping the benefit of developmental efforts of the Government.

Madam Chairperson,

The assertion with regard to the displaced persons from Chittagong Hill Tracts also does not correspond to the actual situation. The government of Bangladesh has categorically stated on several occasions that the tribal people of Chittagong Hill Tracts who have temporarily crossed over to the other side of Border due to violence perpetrated by the miscreants ~~of so~~ ~~called Shanti Bahini~~ would be taken back provided their identity as Bangladeshi nationals are established. Bangladesh government is doing everything possible for their early return and rehabilitation. Meetings were held between Bangladesh and India at local and other levels to facilitate return of genuine Bangladeshi nationals. In fact, January 15th this year was fixed for the return of the first batch of displaced persons and for that purpose Bangladesh authorities had set up 3 reception centres near the border. However, before the process of repatriation could take place, the miscreants escalated their acts of violence in the area creating again a temporary sense of uncertainty with a view to frustrating the positive move of the Government of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, however, has continued its efforts for the early return of the displaced persons. It has taken a number of measures to create congenial atmosphere for their return.

Madam Chairperson,

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it may be mentioned that
to these developments have visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts region and ~~were~~ came back
satisfied with the actual situation and the development work that
are going on there. XX A number of tribal leaders also appealed to
UNEP, UNDP & the displaced persons from Chittagong Hill Tracts to return to
their homes in view of the prevalent peace and tranquility. As
many as 5000 displaced persons have already returned to their
homes in Chittagong Hill Tracts.
providing assistance.

Madam Chairperson,

As I have stated earlier, the government of Bangladesh has always provided adequate and substantiated information on the situation in Chittagong Hill Tracts. The co-operation of the government of Bangladesh in this regard with the Human Rights Centre has been complete and unreserved. Against this background it is surprising that the speaker has gone to the extent of suggesting the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the issue. I would like to state most emphatically that the request ~~is a sweeping one which~~ does not correspond to the actual situation. ~~The question of entertaining this preposterous suggestion simply does not arise & therefore must not be taken into consideration in any way.~~

Madam Chairperson,

In concluding my brief intervention, I would express the hope that the factual position stated in my submission would convince the distinguished members of the working group that the allegations in question are without any foundation and should thus be treated accordingly.

The speaker having been justified
his ~~own~~ allegance by "perhaps" which
shows how true he is about his position
of ... That was to the liberal people
would make some sense by 1900
1-2 ... since the time B.D.
became independent.