

**First Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Agenda Item No. 6 : Economic and Social Development

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished government delegates and representatives of indigenous peoples

Mr. Chairman, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the historic First Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

Indigenous peoples fought a long-drawn battle with state parties for their identity. Many people lost their lives in this battle. Many indigenous peoples lost their homes, lands and resources. Their history, language, culture and identity have been put to near extinction. Finally, they got a little space—Permanent Forum—within the UN system. The Permanent Forum, as I understand, is a reconciliation between state parties and indigenous peoples on the basis of a shared vision to make a just world for the humanity.

Today, I would like to offer my deepest honors to those indigenous and non-indigenous heroes who once dreamt, worked and sacrificed their lives for this Forum. Let us invoke their holy spirits to join us in this historic moment and to guide us in achieving the objectives of the Forum.

The Permanent Forum has offered a unique opportunity to indigenous peoples and state parties to work in partnership for a common goal of peace and justice.

Following the famous definition of democracy given by former president of the United States of America Woodrow Wilson I would like to say that development has to be for the people, by the people and with the people.

In the context of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which is my homeland, **economic and social development largely depend on proper implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord** signed by our political party Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and the former Awami League government of Bangladesh in 1997. However, I am sorry to state in this Forum that the government of Bangladesh failed to respect the Accord in spirit. As a result, poverty, hunger, diseases, unemployment, political and social instability is rocking the Jumma indigenous people and thousands of Jumma refugee and internally displaced Jumma families remain deprived of their homes and lands. We call upon the government of Bangladesh to extend its friendly hands to cope with these problems.

Thank you Mr. Chair for your kind attention.