

PF Samarjit Sinha Item 4 2704

**Intervention on Agenda Item 4 – Implementation of the six mandated areas of the  
Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples**

To participate as an observer at the 16th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII15), scheduled to take place from April 24 to May 5, 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Honorable Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, government and non-governmental representatives, UN Agencies, fellow indigenous peoples, ladies and gentlemen. I am Samarjit Sinha, representing the Greater Sylhet Indigenous Peoples Forum of Bangladesh. Before I present my presentation, I would like to thank our Honorable Prime Minister of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, and current government, for her wise decision to select Honorable Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha as a Chief Justice of Bangladesh, Chief Executive of Judiciary one of three organs – Executive, Legislative and Judiciary of Bangladesh. We are very proud Chief Justice Sinha is a first minority, and an Indigenous member of the Manipuri community to be selected as Chief Justice of Bangladesh.

In order to implement Article 14 of UNDRIP and to make meaningful progress on Sustainable Development Goal number 4 "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all," it is crucial that states promote multilingual education in the mother tongues of indigenous peoples, especially at the pre-primary school level in consultation with the indigenous communities and organizations.

Indigenous children face multiple barriers to fully participating in and benefiting from public education. In addition to being among the most economically marginalized segment of society and often living in remote locations with limited access to educational facilities, indigenous children must also overcome the barrier of language to keep up with the curriculum. Furthermore, indigenous children studying in public schools with non-indigenous children may face various types of belittling, discrimination or bullying. Such factors have led to indigenous children dropping out of school at a much higher rate than the majority population in most countries, leaving them at a disadvantage for the remainder of their lives, unable to find gainful employment or improve their socio-economic status. Such factors create a negative cycle that are antithetical to the achievement of SDGs.

Mother tongue-based Multilingual education especially at the pre-primary and primary school level gives indigenous children a chance to learn the national language in a reasonable pace while getting a proper understanding of the basic subjects of study, so that they will be prepared to learn on an equal footing with the majority population in later stages of their education. Studies have shown the benefits of early Mother tongue-based multilingual education in reducing the drop-out rate and improving educational outcomes.

I am pleased to inform that UNESCO has declared 21<sup>st</sup> February as the Independent Mother Language day in 1999 Commemorating the Language Martyrs Day – the day when many Bangladeshis sacrificed their lives for the sake of their language.

In this regard, I feel proud to draw attention to the pioneering initiative of the government of Bangladesh to promote a mother tongue-based multilingual education program to provide relevant learning materials in six indigenous languages and to acknowledge the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education in the national education policy. We look forward with great expectations to the successful implementation of this historic endeavor, and to its future expansion to other languages including that of our Manipuri community and the other indigenous communities i.e khasi, Garo, Tripuri, Chakma, Marma etc. of Bangladesh, in consultation with each of the concerned indigenous peoples and their representative institutions. We hope that this will be a success story widely recognized and emulated in other countries.

In closing, I would like to make an appeal to international society through this august forum. We have no option but to accept the reality that we are passing through the most uncertain era of human civilization. We do not know what will be our or our future generation. We do not feel the inner presence in ourselves the strengthening of hope and aspiration which is capable to present us a good dream. It is our collective duty to find out the mistakes we have done that have been pushing us at the verge of obstruction.

Though all the trees, insects, animals, birds and other creatures follow the laws of nature, the human race, the greatest handiwork of the creator, has forgotten these laws and fallen into a trap of killing, war, racism, discrimination and gender-based violence in pursuit of power and narrow self-interests. Human ignorance, greed and power struggles are drawing the world toward destruction, taking away the hope of our children. This is not what we really want. Let us all chant the true mantra of peace: **"right thought and right action is natural religion."** May all people accept this principle in their hearts to give the gift of peace to future generations – harmony among nations instead of war, cooperative nation building instead of power struggles, respect for women's rights instead of violations, and mutual respect among peoples, cultures and religions instead of communal strife.

Our Honorable Prime Minister of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, and current government is committed and do work to establish the peace of Bangladesh, we hope today or tomorrow the Bangladesh is remarkable the peace of world wide. In the meantime, Bangladesh is one of the current members of the Human Right Council; Bangladesh is one of the top contributor to the UN Peace Keeping Mission; and current government of Bangladesh has been awarded for its significant achievement in Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Religion is for each, the world is for all.

World Peace is the true religion. May this be our common aspiration.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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