

The 17th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
The UN Headquarters, New York, 16-27 April 2018

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

Statement by:

Mangal Kumar Chakma

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), mkchakma@gmail.com

Thank you Madam Chair.

Since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, some major successes have been achieved. In regard to Bangladesh, in the 6th Five Year Plan, the Government mentioned that it will consider implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, any initiative or progress in regards to implementation of this plan over the period of the 6th Five Year Plan was not noticed. This assurance has been repeated in the 7th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh. Now the question remains: will it be a repetition of the 6th Five Year Plan?

Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord of 1997 signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the PCJSS, the political party of indigenous Jumma peoples, is related to implement the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum.

As CHT Accord of 1997 not being implemented, the human rights situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is growing more restless. The blueprint for demographic engineering to make indigenous Jumma peoples minority in their ancestral land is being rapidly implemented. The Government is using all forms of strategy from development activities to militarization, construction of border roads and link roads, declaration of reserve forests, indiscriminately leasing of lands to the outsiders, expansion of tourism industry etc.

Having the justified movement of indigenous Jumma peoples labeled as terrorism, the government forces frequently arrest, intimidate and inhuman physical torture to indigenous activists in CHT. Criminalisation of indigenous peoples organisations and its activists has been intensified in CHT to make them silent.

In fact, for political and peaceful solution to the CHT problem there is no alternative but implementation of the CHT Accord. The characteristics of the tribal-inhabited CHT region must be preserved as per CHT Accord, and all powers and functions have to be brought into force as per laws under the CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils introduced under CHT special administrative system.

I, in light of the above stated situation, would like to appeal to Permanent Forum for pursuing the Government of Bangladesh for urgent action on the following issues:

1. To end the culture of impunity and to ensure access to justice of indigenous peoples including women and girls and to stop criminalization of indigenous activists.
2. To take all necessary measures to implement the Permanent Forum's recommendations of 2011, including the prevention of military personnel and units that have a track record of human rights violations from participating in the UN peacekeeping operations.
3. To encourage the Government of Bangladesh to declare a time-bound road map for the proper and full implementation of the CHT Accord, including immediate withdrawal of all temporary camps and de facto military rule 'Operation Uttoron' from the CHT region.

Thanks you Madam Chair.