



WGIP 88 GOV/SAS. IND/1

PERMANENT MISSION OF
INDIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
GENEVA

STATEMENT MADE BY MR. PRABHU DAYAL
ON BEHALF OF THE DELEGATION OF INDIA
IN THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
ON AUGUST 4, 1988 - GENEVA

Madam Chairperson,

At the very outset, I would like to congratulate you on the effective but democratic manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of this Working Group. My delegation would also like to felicitate you and the other members of this Working Group for their great contribution to the on-going process of the development of international standard concerning the rights of indigenous populations.

Some statements have been made yesterday regarding the scheduled tribes of India. Professor Kisku, the Secretary General of the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples spoke at length about the conditions of the scheduled tribes in India and made a plea for their right to self-determination. He referred to the scheduled tribes of India as the indigenous and tribal people and spoke of "their distinct identity". He went on to say: "The demand for a separate homeland within the constitutional framework of India has to be achieved".

At the meeting of this very Working Group last year, my delegation had asserted that the term Adivasis used commonly in India to designate the scheduled tribes cannot be equated with the term "indigenous people". We^{had} pointed out that the specific designation of scheduled tribes in India is in keeping with the developmental requirements of certain sections of our population in favour of whom a system of positive

order to secure for them special privileges and to ensure their accelerated progress. The Constitution order of 1950 had declared 212 tribes located in 14 States as scheduled tribes. This number has grown. However, it is impossible to say which section of India's population is indigenous and which is not. Professor Andre Beteille, an eminent sociologist has stated in an important study on the subject that in India hardly any of the tribes exists as a separate society and they have all been absorbed in varying degrees into the wider society of India. I submit, Madam, that in India no tribe has a separate political boundary and I request the members of the Working Group to reject the attempt to equate certain minorities in India with indigenous populations. My Government does not recognise right of self-determination of any group of people within India. As we pointed out last year, the right to self-determination is applicable in the context of colonial situation or foreign occupation and not otherwise. In India peoples of many different faiths and religions and ethnic groups have over a period of time joined together in building the world's largest democracy. In our democracy, civil and political rights are guaranteed to all without any discrimination. My delegation has no hesitation in rejecting the demand for a separate homeland which

has been voiced by Professor Kisku. I submit, India is the home of its scheduled tribes as much as it is the home of all other Indians. In some north eastern States of India such as Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur where the population is predominantly tribal, the tribals themselves are running the Government and administration.

Madam Chairman, I would also like to focus the attention of this Working Group on the tremendous efforts which my Government is making towards the welfare and development of the weaker sections of the society including the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. During the period of colonial rule, these groups did not receive much attention. However, after attaining independence India has enacted a Constitution which prescribes protection and safeguards for the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes and aims to promote their educational and economic interests. My Government is continuously engaged in the task of removing the social disabilities of the scheduled tribes. Prof. Kisku acknowledged in his statement and I quote, "Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has himself travelled into the remote part of the country where our indigenous and tribal people lives and seen their disasters". Professor Kisku also acknowledged the new policy and programmes for

improving the economic conditions of the scheduled tribes which are being implemented in India. The Ministry of Welfare of the Government of India is the agency which is responsible for the improvement of the lot of scheduled tribes. Prof. Kisku has himself spoken favourably of efforts made by the All India Conference of State Ministers of Tribal Welfare which was held in India recently. Madam Chairperson, I would like to submit for the consideration of this Working Group that the progress registered during the last 41 years in the development of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other down-trodden groups has been considerable. Of course, the pace of development has to be evaluated against the background of social and economic backwardness and the inherent constraints on the resources of the developing economy.

Madam Chairperson, the representative of Amnesty International delivered a statement alleging that members of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are particularly liable to torture despite the special constitutional protection awarded to them. The statement referred to some alleged cases of violence against tribals and also to certain cases of rape of women belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. My delegation agrees that members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes can be easy target for victimisation.

However, all economically and socially backward sections of Indian society are also equally vulnerable to crimes such as torture, beating and rape. My delegation understands the concern shown by Amnesty International towards the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India. I would like to point out that my Government is engaged in the colossal task of improving the lot of all deprived sections of our society. Our crusade goes on relentlessly.

I thank you, Madam Chairman.
