



Statement by Ujana Chakma

Agenda item 4: General Statement

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving an opportunity to speak in this working group. I am Ujana Chakma representing the Jumma indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh.

Distinguished members of the Working Group, representatives of governments and non-governmental organizations, indigenous friends.

Most of you may aware that we had a peace agreement known as the CHT Accord with the government of Bangladesh in 1997. We hope that since the agreement no indigenous mothers in the CHT will have to lose their children in conflict and human rights violations. But contrary to our hope, we are still in difficult situation due to violation of the Accord by the government. I would like to specifically mention three points of the Accord that have been violated by the government.

1. The Prime Minister keeps the post of CHT Affairs Ministry under her charge instead of giving it to an indigenous minister;
2. The Hill District Councils, the local governmental bodies in the CHT have been formed with persons nominated by the government. The bodies are working as the ruling BNP party office in the CHT. It is an attacked on democracy.
3. The government appointed Wadud Bhuiya, a Bengali non-indigenous setter as the chairman of the CHT Development Board.

Mr. Chairman,

The government is considering placing a Bill in the Parliament to amend the constitution for reservation of seats for women in the Parliament. According to this arrangement, there will be one woman member in the Parliament from each district of Bangladesh. But from the CHT, where we have three districts, there will be only one woman member in the parliament. This is a step to institutionalise discrimination against the indigenous women in the CHT. The women organisations placed memorandums to the Prime Minister demanding reservation of three women members from the three districts of the CHT in line with other areas of Bangladesh. We are yet to get positive response to it.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I request you to recommend in your report the urgency of proper ~~and~~ implementation of the CHT Accord for democratisation and protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Jumma indigenous people in the CHT.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.