

The 23rd Session of Working Group on Indigenous Populations
18-22 July 2005

by B.
Agenda Item: Indigenous peoples and the international and domestic protection of
Traditional Knowledge.
Date: 18 July 2005.

Mr.
Dear Chairperson, Distinguished delegates, Indigenous brothers and sisters and other
participants

I am Goutam Kumar Chakma from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh would like
to thank you all.

It is a great pleasure that the UN Human Rights Commission has taken up the issue of
Indigenous peoples and finding out ways to address the problems of them as well.

Bangladesh emerged as a nation state in 1971. There ^{are} totally 45 ethnic groups of
indigenous peoples in Bangladesh including more than 10 multi-lingual ethnic groups *in CHT.*
(who call themselves as Jumma people (People of High Land)).

Bangladesh ratified ILO Convention 107, which is related to the indigenous peoples
of the globe. It was definitely a wise and generous step for which indigenous peoples
of Bangladesh feel proud.

But it is a very great worrying that Constitution of Bangladesh did not recognise
existence of indigenous peoples in the country. So the governments of Bangladesh did
not frame any legislation for protection of rights of indigenous peoples including that
of Traditional knowledge.

However, the Constitution of Bangladesh recognised the 'Existing Laws', which
legalised previous legislations like 'The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900 (1 of
1900)' and 'The Estate Acquisition Act of 1950' where some rights for indigenous
peoples naming indigenous hill people or indigenous peoples were included. As the
government did not adopt favourable policy toward indigenous peoples in the country
those provisions are seldom executed or abided by government administration.

As a consequence, total extermination of the indigenous peoples in the country is
imminent. After a two long decades armed conflicts in the CHT region an Agreement
was signed between the Government and our organisation PCJSS on 2 December
2005 for which UNESCO provided the 'Hophouet Boigny Award' to then Prime
Minister Sheikh Hasina in 1999. But the government did not take up the Agreement
for proper implementation.

Until and unless the Government of Bangladesh recognises the existence of
indigenous people in the country and frame proper legislation and above all modify its
policy protection of traditional knowledge is not expected.

rights of the indigenous peoples including
Therefore, I, on behalf of the indigenous peoples in CHT and other parts of
Bangladesh, would like to appeal to the international community including the UN to
come up for protection of the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh from their imminent
extermination with ~~the~~ fullest support and help. Thank you all.