

Item 5: Review of recent developments – Adivasis in Jharkhand, India

Statement by Juliet Fatima Imam

Dear Mister Chairperson, members of the Working Group, distinguished government representative and fellow delegates from around the world. I bring greetings to you from my people in Jharkhand in Eastern India.

Mister Chairperson, I wish to speak on the developments that have been taking place in my part of the country.

1. There has been a merciless attack upon the natural environment in the name of development in my state of Jharkhand, and since we Adivasis or first dwellers, are not considered by our government as Indigenous Peoples the provisions of the UN Draft Declaration do not apply to us. Our villages, lands, forests and sacred sites are open to destructive development.
2. In my region Hazaribagh in northern Jharkhand the river Damodar and its forest valley and tributaries has for thousands of years been the home of our peoples. In the past century our forests, agriculture and villages including all our sacred sites and dozens of villages. Now in the upper valley in North Karanpura new mines, roads and railways threaten our forests and agriculture with total destruction.
3. For the past half century development has been used as a Mantra for displacing tribal and indigenous peoples and destroying their homelands.
4. Our food, fruit and shade trees of ancient age, trees like Mango, Mohwa, Banyan, Pipul, Imli, Neem, Jamun, have been destroyed in unbelievable numbers. Recently near my mother's village in Dato 1,70,000 trees are being cut to accommodate a new railway line which is being built to carry out the resources being mined. Thousands of ageold trees are being cut along highways passing through our villages.
5. The impact on us Adivasis, or Indigenous Peoples of India by displacement for development, and destruction of our environment must be studied by the experts. Development must no longer be a sacred mantra authorizing Third World governments to destroy the lives and livelihoods of us Adivasis peoples through dams, mines, roads, railways and building a "stolen generation" of our brothers and sisters by forcing them to the city slums.
6. Adivasis' or first-dwellers as we are called in India, have no Indigenous Peoples status recognized by our government, and your Draft Declaration and privileges given to indigenous peoples is not able to protect us.

7. I have come before you to tell you this. I appeal in the name of my people, my family, and in the name and memory of my Ancestors, that our Adivasis lands and peoples be given protection of the United Nations.

Thank you Mister for giving me this opportunity to speak.

Statement by

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