



# Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS)

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## Statement by

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## Agenda Item 3:

Special theme: "The Doctrine of Discovery: its enduring impact on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests (articles 28 and 37 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)"

Thank you, Madame Chair, distinguished Government delegates, honorable indigenous sisters and brothers,

It is observed that State governments and corporate agencies facilitate the doctrine of discovery for the purpose of development negating and undermining the rights of indigenous peoples. Militarization and transmigration of population on indigenous land and territories are common

As in many other parts of the world, the indigenous peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts are also victims of development, militarization and transmigration of population. In 1960, the Kaptai Dam flooded our lands and homes of indigenous Jumma peoples and even today many of our people remain un-rehabilitated. Our lands, forests and territories have been and are still being taken away without our free, prior and informed consent, to build so-called "Reserve Forests", "Protected Areas", "National Parks", "Eco-parks", Tourism, and even for establishing military bases and training centres. In some of the areas known as "Reserved Forests", not only are the original inhabitants regarded as encroachers and treated as serfs, but they are also victimized by assaults of Forest guards, arbitrary arrest and oppressive criminal cases.

It is needless to say that indigenous peoples have the right to redress for past illegal occupation. In order to redress the past suppression and to resolve the CHT problem through political and peaceful means, an accord, popularly known as CHT Accord was signed between government of Bangladesh and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) in 1997. It paves way for the peace, development and opportunities to meaningful engagement of indigenous peoples in CHT.

It is expected that self-determined development approach is to be developed ensuring rights to land, territory and natural resources.

However, the main issues of the Accord, on which preservation of status of tribal-inhabited region, introduction of special governance system in CHT with CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils, resolution of land disputes, demilitarization of the region depend, are yet to be implemented. As a whole, most of the provisions, especially the main issues of the Accord, have either left unimplemented or partially implemented.

Due to lack of effective initiative for implementation of main provisions of the Accord, no basic changes have been achieved during the period of present government. More than three years have passed since the assumption of state power by the present government, but effective measures are yet to be taken for implementation of the main provisions of the Accord.

Last year, Mr. Lars-Anders Baer, a special rapporteur appointed by the UNPFII to study on implementation of CHT Accord, submitted his report at the 10<sup>th</sup> session of the PFII. But the government of Bangladesh did not take any consideration for implementation of the CHT Accord.

Hence, I urge the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and international community to influence government of Bangladesh for taking effective initiatives for implementation of CHT Accord as per recommendations of Mr. Lars-Anders Baer by declaring a roadmap with a time-frame without any further delay.

Thanks you Madam Chair.