

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF  
THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES  
AT THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF  
THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS  
Geneva, July 19-30, 1993, Agenda Item no. 5

WGIP 93/SAJ-IND/5

Madam Chairperson,  
Honourable Members of the Working Group,  
Distinguished Government Representatives, and  
Fellow Delegates of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples from around the world,

I take this as a privilege to bring before you a brief overview of  
development pertaining to the promotion and protection of human  
rights of indigenous peoples, on behalf of 70 million indigenous  
and tribal brothers and sisters from India.

Moving stepwise from economic to social issues I would  
like to draw your attention to the following:

The liberal economic policy and free flow of foreign capital  
and investment adopted by our government, have directly affected our  
peoples, their land and means of subsistence nationwide. Madam  
Chairperson, I cannot help being specific about a few of them at  
this juncture. Various mining and industrial projects such as the  
following in tribal areas:

-- Subarnarekha Damodar valley in Jharkhand  
-- Mahanadi-Godavari river valley in Chhattisgarh

-- Narmada-Taptiriver valley in Bhilkhand

-- Wildlife sanctuaries in southern India

These have resulted in forced displacement of our peoples from their  
homes, exploiting our natural resources and thus enforcing economic  
colonisation. Our safety, protection and preservation is at stake  
until we as indigenous and tribal peoples are empowered to protect  
ourselves with the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.  
Our peoples are still fighting on. (The details of the most recent  
uptodate news about the situation of peoples and their submerged  
villages with crops and houses along with all belongings being  
washed away, is also available for distribution.)

The issues of indigenous and tribal peoples' autonomy have always been put aside due to some other 'national' issues such as Ayodhya. In eastern India the Bodoland movement has been lulled under the tripartite agreement between the government of India, the government of Assam and the Bodo indigenous activists for Bodo autonomous council. The 50 year old Jharkhand movement is being pushed into accepting the Jharkhand autonomous council comprising ~~of~~ the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana areas within the state of Bihar only.

It is rather unfortunate that during 1993, the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the indigenous and tribal peoples of India have found no opening for a <sup>constructive</sup> dialogue with the government of India on the UN draft Declaration. We in our own way have tried to observe the International Year. There have been awareness raising programmes in as many areas as possible. A historic meeting-- Adivasi Sangamam-- cannot go unmentioned at this point. Organised in South India, in Wayanad district in Kerala, on 12th October, 1992,

joined by adivasis from all over the country. This was to commemorate 500 years of resistance to annihilation, slavery and slaughter. The Delhi meeting (April 2-5, 1993) was equally important as it provided a forum to further broaden its base as an all India organisation.

The violation of human rights are more obvious as there is increase in the number of cases of rape and atrocities caused by military and para military forces in tribal areas.

Today tribal and indigenous peoples, their cultures and values in India are under a constant threat with the question of survival. Under these circumstances and the ongoing implementation of the assimilation theory which was discarded by the Expert Committee convened by the ILO in '86, Madam Chairperson, with due respect to you and your committee and my peoples back home who are suffering the genocide, I shall conclude with the question 'how long can our peoples resist and fight their battle the Gandhian way?

Thank you, Madam Chairperson