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Agenda Item: 3 (c): Youth, self-harm and suicide

Joint Statement

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on behalf of

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Madam Chair and distinguished delegates, indigenous sisters and brothers,

Madam Chair, I congratulate your election as the Chair of the Permanent Forum in its 14th Session.

The issues of indigenous youths are so important as indigenous peoples experience disproportionately high rates of youth self-harm and suicide. The indigenous children and youth face many problems, especially, armed conflict, forced relocation and loss of land, unemployment, suicide, illiteracy and drop-out rates, lack of culturally appropriated education, discrimination and so on.

Colonization, militarization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources made many indigenous peoples sufferings. This has had an impact on the indigenous youth who are often frustrated at the additional challenges they face due to their distinct identity and culture.

The status of vulnerability and protection of indigenous youths in Bangladesh, for example, is worse than their other counterparts because of the nature of vulnerabilities exclusively faced by Indigenous peoples. It is undeniable that the situation of indigenous youths is intertwined with the situations of indigenous peoples in general. Indigenous youths are victims of different forms of human rights violations – that may range from sheer discrimination to as brutal as killing and cruel treatment. While systematic discrimination of Indigenous peoples in Bangladesh has been an inseparable part of their lives, Indigenous peoples across the country have reportedly experienced more than a dozen brutal communal attacks when hundreds of Indigenous peoples including youths were killed, injured, and suffered otherwise. Such incidents of violence continue unabated pitching their lives in general into dire situations and eventually leaving them insecure, destitute and frustrated, leading them to be engaged with drug, self-harm and suicide.

In terms of the youths in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), the failure to proper implementation of the CHT Accord, signed between the government of Bangladesh and indigenous peoples in 1997, has led the indigenous Jumma youths to deprivation of development, access to justice, education, health and employment.

In conclusion, I call upon to the States, the UN agencies and other actors to develop policies and programmes with an intercultural approach and to strengthen indigenous peoples' control over the development of measures to address indigenous youth self-harm and suicide and to implement CHT Accord properly.

I thank you Madam Chair.
