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**The 15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues**

The UN Headquarters, New York, 9-20 May 2016

Agenda Item-4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent
Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples

Joint Statement

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Mr. Chairperson and distinguished delegates,

Economic and social development is one of crucial issues of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum, and the issue is inseparably linked to the rights to free, prior and informed consent which is stipulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Development with culture and identity is characterized by a holistic approach that seeks to build on indigenous peoples' collective rights, security and greater control and self-governance of lands, territories and resources.

It is worthy to be mentioned that many indigenous peoples of the globe continue to suffer the consequences of historical injustices, including discrimination, marginalization, and dispossession from their lands and resources, and often their right to development is denied. Indigenous peoples of Bangladesh are not exception to this paradigm.

According to the provisions of the CHT Accord of 1997 and the relevant laws, the CHT Regional Council, the apex body in the CHT special administrative system, has the power relating to general administration, law and order, and to undertake overall supervision and coordination of all functions of the three Hill District Councils and development activities of the CHT Development Board. But the government of Bangladesh has been carrying out development activities in the CHT bypassing the CHT Regional council.

Government has taken range of important decisions relating to general administration, law & order, and development, without consulting or informing the CHT Regional Council and Hill District Councils. In forming new

administrative units - Guimara Upazila, Sajek police station, and Bartholi Union, for example, the government did not consult with the CHT Regional Council and the concerned Hill District Council in making such important decisions concerning administrative setup in the region. The government has been taking decisions and implementing development projects, which have direct impacts on public interest, such as construction of border roads, land port at Thegamukh, setting up of luxurious tourism complexes under the patronage of military authority, declaration of protected and reserved forests, installation of Border Out Posts (BOP) for Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), without consulting with the CHT Regional Council and the three Hill District Councils.

Construction of network of roads and infrastructures in Rangamati with the support of World Bank would not only accelerate the draining out of the already depleted forest resources from the region, but also result in an adverse impact on the environment. The most serious concern is that before full implementation of the CHT Accord, with the road construction there would be large-scale infiltration of outsiders into the CHT region, which would severely jeopardise the indigenous Jumma-habitat and its features of the region, while the CHT Accord guarantees the recognition and protection of the characteristic of the CHT as Jumma-inhabited region.

The top-down approach to development is still being followed and executed in the CHT, despite the establishment of the CHT Regional Councils and the three Hill District Councils to decide on their own development needs by themselves. As a result, the trend of sustainable development, as per the CHT Accord, is yet to be ensured in the CHT.

Bangladesh looks at Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with much interest and wants to sustain the momentum of the MDGs, build on their successes, and transform Bangladesh, for the better. Indigenous peoples in Bangladesh look forward to being a full part of the SDG journey, so that all Bangladeshis can truly transform Bangladesh and bring peace and prosperity for all.

I recommend to all development partners to encourage the Government of Bangladesh to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 and ratify the ILO Convention 169 as the government has pledged commitment in its 6th and 7th Five Year Plan at national level.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.