RESOLUTION FOR THE XII GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Submitted by (Member/Members): Chittagong Hill Tracts
Organization(s): Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS)

RESOLUTION

The multi-lingual indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh, who collectively identify themselves as the Jumma people (High Landers), have been suppressed for centuries. Before the British annexed the region to Bengal, they were independent. Even during the British colonial period (1860-1947), the CHT was regarded as an “Excluded Area”, in order to protect the indigenous Jumma people from economic exploitation by non-indigenous people and to preserve the indigenous peoples' socio-cultural and political institutions based on customary laws, community ownership of land and so on. However, during the Pakistani period (1947-1971) and even after Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the entire CHT region was thrown open for unrestricted migration and acquisition of land titles by non-indigenous people, in violation of the letter and spirit of the 1900 Regulation.

After a long struggle, the indigenous Jumma people compelled the government of Bangladesh to engage in negotiations resulting in the signing the ‘CHT Accord’ on 2nd December 1997 in order to resolve the CHT crisis through protecting the rights of indigenous Jumma people in the region by peaceful and political means as well as bringing in an end to the armed conflict. However, the main issues of the Accord, on which preservation of status of tribal-inhabited region, introduction of self-rule governance system in CHT with CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils, resolution of land disputes and restriction of having land title by non-residents of CHT and demilitarisation depend, are yet to be implemented. But substantial progress is yet to be achieved due to non-implementation of the main issues of the Accord. As a whole, most of the main issues of the Accord, have either left unimplemented or partially implemented.

The failure to fully implement the CHT Accord has led to widespread human rights violations. Thus, Jumma people continue to be victims of violent land-grabbing and land alienation, and are systematically being evicted from their traditional homelands. Violence against indigenous Jumma women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights in CHT. Hence, the existence of the ethnic entity of Jumma people, at the moment, has been thrown into the verge of final extermination due to rapid change of demographic figure of populations through fresh political migration and forcible land grabbing aided by the local army authorities.
The UNPO General Assembly,

**Appreciating** the Government of Bangladesh for recognising rights to self-determination of indigenous Jumma people in CHT by signing CHT Accord in 1997;

**Noting** ratification of major international human rights instruments including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ILO’s Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention No. 107 by the Government of Bangladesh that guarantee certain rights, such as right to land, self-governance and development, to indigenous and tribal peoples;

**Fully believing** recommendations of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in its 11th session in 2011\(^1\) regarding speedy and proper implementation of CHT Accord and prevention of military personnel and units that are violating human rights from participating in the UN peacekeeping operations;

**Appreciating** voluntary commitment of the Government of Bangladesh in the second cycle of the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2013 and in the election manifestos in 2008 and 2014 regarding implementation of CHT Accord and ending the culture of impunity in order to ensure access to justice of indigenous peoples including protection of women and girls;

**Condemning** against the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs on 7 January 2015, which imposes restrictions upon indigenous peoples to meet national/foreign organizations and individuals without the presence of local administration, army/BGB and prohibition against foreigners entering the CHT without the prior consent of the Home Ministry and allows the BGB for setting up, on the pretext of maintaining security in the international borders, more camps on the lands and villages of the indigenous Jumma people and relocating them for this purpose without their free, prior and informed consent;

**Expressing disapproval** of eviction of the Jumma peoples from their ancestral lands and homesteads by clandestinely patronizing massive racist attacks on Jumma settlements, sponsoring forcible occupation of hundreds of acres of lands by the outsiders, by declaring the Jum (shifting cultivation) and community lands as reserve forests, by expanding and establishing army/BGB camps and establishing tourism centres by the army;

**Expressing grave concern** continuing de facto military rule named “Operation Uttoran (Operation Upliftment)’’ imposed in 2001 in violation of the provision of

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\(^1\) E/2011/43-E/C.19/2011/14
the CHT Accord relating to demilitarization, rather authorising the military forces for their interference and domination over the civil administration, law and order, and also on the matters of implementation of the CHT Accord;

Therefore, we, the UNPO General Assembly:

1. **Solemnly affirms** our support to the fullest implementation of CHT Accord of 1997 in its letter and spirits.

2. **Calls upon** the Government of Bangladesh for declaring a timeline (roadmap) for speedy and proper implementation of the CHT Accord giving priority to devolution of authority to the CHTRC and three HDCs, resolution of land disputes by amending the contradictory provisions of the CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission Act 2001, withdrawal of all temporary camps and de facto military rule ‘Operation Uttoron’ (Operation Upliftment) from CHT, relocation of government-sponsored Bengali settlers outside the CHT, among others.

3. **Calls upon** the United Nations, the European Union and the International Community to support proper implementation of the CHT Accord with priority given to the land issue and good governance as well as to provide necessary economic assistance for CHT in line with the provisions of the CHT Accord and to exert their good offices upon Government of Bangladesh for implementation of the resolutions of the UNPFII adopted in 2011 about fullest implementation of the CHT Accord and screening of armed forces personnel in deploying in the UN Peacekeeping Force.

4. **Calls upon** the government of Bangladesh to end the culture of impunity in order to ensure access to justice of indigenous Jumma people, including protection of women and girls as per commitment of the Government in the second cycle of the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and election commitment.