



HRC, 11th session, Agenda Item 6
Consideration of UPR - Bangladesh
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
Speaker: Lee Swepton

Thank you Mr. President,

The situation of the indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is extremely precarious. Widespread human rights violations including torture, killings, sexual violence against women and the dispossession of indigenous peoples' land by Bengali settlers and military personnel are regularly reported. The Chittagong Hill Tracts remains heavily militarized, which reinforces the human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples in the region.

A permanent solution to these problems is contained in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord signed in 1997 by the Government of Bangladesh. Unfortunately, 11 years after its signing, the most crucial provisions of the Peace Accord remain either unimplemented or only partly implemented.

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and the international Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission are therefore pleased to note that the Government of Bangladesh has expressed its sincere intention to fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and that it has, since resuming office in January 2009, taken initial steps to implement the Accord.

We would, however, like to reiterate the recommendation made by Norway and Australia in the UPR session in February that the Government of Bangladesh publicizes a time-bound plan for the implementation of all the provisions of the Peace Accord and makes it available for public scrutiny.

Of particular importance is:

- Resolving the land disputes with effectiveness and justice by amending the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 in conformity with the 1997 Accord, and by having the Land Disputes Resolution Commission resume its work, and by initiating a viable process of voluntary relocation of government-sponsored Bengali settlers outside the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- Expediting the withdrawal of all of the hundreds of temporary military camps and withdrawing all special powers and facilities granted to military authorities to perform functions of a civil nature.
- Facilitating normal civil administration by transferring all the agreed subjects and functions to the Hill District Councils with immediate effect, and by taking all the necessary steps to ensure the full functioning of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council.

Finally, we note the Government's call to end impunity and assert due process and recommend that in the same spirit the issue of impunity for human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts should be addressed by holding independent and impartial investigations into such reports. Where

sufficient evidence exists, those responsible should be brought to justice and reparations provided to the victims.

Thank you Mr. President.