As you all know, one of the crucial issues of indigenous peoples is the taking away of their lands and territory and eviction from their homestead and ancestral lands violating their traditional land rights without their free, prior and informed consent.

For instance, the Government of Bangladesh had ratified the ILO Convention No. 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Population in 1972, where the individual and collective land rights of the indigenous peoples and their customary land rights have been recognized.

But the government of Bangladesh has not yet recognized the traditional land rights of the tribals as well as the collective land rights according to ILO Convention No. 107. As a result, lands belonging to indigenous peoples are being taken away by state and non-state authorities in Chittagong Hill Tracts and plain lands.

One of such examples is the land of indigenous Santal peoples acquired by the government for sugar factory in Gaibandha, which was supposed to be returned when the sugar mill was closed down. But as per the agreement, the lands were not returned to Santal peoples.

Similarly, according to the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997, the land of the indigenous Jumma peoples submerged in the Kaptai Lake was supposed to be returned to the original owners of indigenous peoples if these lands are suitable for cultivation. But the Muslim settlers continue to encroach these lands under the umbrella of the administration in violation of that provision of that Accord.

Therefore, I suggest that appropriate steps should be taken by the United Nations to convince the Government of Bangladesh for implementing the ILO Convention No, 107 and CHT Accord of 1997 pertaining to promote and protect traditional land rights as well as collective rights of indigenous peoples of Bangladesh.

Finally, I would request the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples to expand its program of funding to the indigenous representatives to attend various UN sessions. Because without the financial supporting of the United Nations, the opportunity for the indigenous people to attend the UN meetings is very limited.

I thank you.