

2 December, 2012

## **Press Statement**

### **CHTC calls for immediate transfer of the remaining functions to the HDCs and enactment of agreed amendments to the Land Commission Act**

Dhaka, 2 December 2012. On the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the CHT Peace Accord, the International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) calls upon the Government to transfer the remaining functions to the Hill District Councils (HDC) in accord with the CHT Agreement without any further delay. The Commission also urges the Government to expedite the enactment of the agreed upon amendments to the controversial provisions of the Land Dispute Resolution Act of 2001.

On 8 November 2012 the media reported that 10 functions were handed over to the three Hill District Councils of the CHT, according to the 1997 CHT Accord (Daily Star, 8 November 2012).

The CHTC considers this formal transfer a positive gesture by the Government towards implementation of the CHT Accord. However, CHTC also recalls that most of these functions were already transferred earlier to the HDCs. These were functions under the Health Engineering Department, BADC, Cotton Development Board, Ramgarh Hatchery and Government Shishu Shadan. Therefore, while this transfer may mark formalization of the transfers already made, CHTC is concerned that more important functions crucial to the implementation of the Accord remain far from transferred. These are; Law and Order, Land and Land Management, Police (local), Secondary Education, Youth Welfare, Environment, Tourism (local), Forests except reserved forests, Preservation of Statistics on Birth and Death.

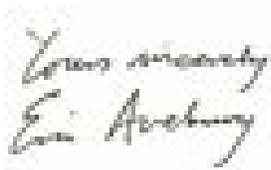
CHTC Further recalls that Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Adviser to the Prime Minister for International Affairs had earlier mentioned that transfer to the HDCs of all the functions proposed under the Accord would be completed by 30 August 2012 (Prothom Alo, 3 July 2012). Assuming that this had the support of the Honourable Prime Minister, CHTC calls upon her and Dr Rizvi to ascertain the reasons for such inaction for the sake of accountability and ensure immediate effective action to transfer all the remaining functions to the HDCs without any further delay.

CHTC also understands that as the Hill Districts Council Act has already been enacted, there is no need to transfer functions through the signing of any additional agreements. The CHTC supports the recommendation of the CHT Regional Council to transfer all remaining functions along with institutions, manpower and relevant financial resources of all levels by administrative order rather than delaying and complicating the matter in the name of separate agreements.

We also recall that on 7 November 2012, State Minister of the Ministry for CHT Affairs, Mr. Dipankar Talukdar, stated that the contradictory provisions of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act of 2001 would be amended in the winter session of Parliament. Earlier, an inter-ministerial meeting held on 30 July 2012 chaired by the Law Minister, Barrister Shafique Ahmed, adopted by consensus the 13-point recommendations for amendment of the Land Commission Act which had been jointly made by the CHT Regional Council and CHT Affairs Ministry. The meeting had recommended that the amendments be placed before Parliament in the next budget session.

The CHTC is deeply concerned that no progress has taken place in this regard, and urges that the agreed amendments be officially disclosed for public information and placed before the Parliament for adoption immediately, consistent with the Government's own commitments. The CHTC also urges the Government to implement the 1997 CHT Accord in full within its present tenure.

On behalf of the CHT Commission,



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