



## **Joint Statement by CHTC and IWGIA on the Appointment of the Minister of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs and Call for Full Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord**

**23 February 2026** | The International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) congratulate the newly elected government of Bangladesh and members of its cabinet. In this important political transition period in Bangladesh, we expect that the new government will work towards advancing inclusive governance, strengthening democratic institutions, and upholding the rights of all communities, including Indigenous Peoples.

We welcome the appointment of Dipen Dewan, an elected Indigenous parliamentarian from Rangamati constituency, as Minister of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs. At the same time, we also note with concern the appointment of a non-Indigenous State Minister within the same Ministry. Such an appointment is inconsistent with the CHT Accord, which explicitly stipulates that a Ministry on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs shall be established by appointing a Minister from among the tribals (indigenous). This undermines the spirit and intent of the CHT Accord to ensure meaningful representation of the Indigenous Peoples in the governance system and decision-making processes of the CHT. At a time when the full and effective implementation of the CHT Accord is overdue, respecting its provisions is vital to rebuild trust among the Indigenous Peoples and to uphold the commitments made under the Accord.

Nearly three decades after the signing of the CHT Accord, the core provisions of the Accord, recognizing the CHT as an Indigenous-inhabited region, demilitarization, meaningful devolution of authority to the Hill District Councils and Regional Council, effective functioning of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission, and rehabilitation of internally displaced Indigenous Peoples - remain unimplemented. Continued delay in implementing these key aspects of the agreement contributes to instability in the region, undermines the peace process and rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

We are also concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the CHT, which includes violence, arbitrary arrests, land grabbing, and loss of life. Prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into these incidents is urgent to ensure accountability and justice, and to prevent further occurrences.

In light of these concerns, to ensure sustainable peace and strengthen democratic and inclusive governance, and fulfill Bangladesh's national and international human rights obligations, we respectfully urge the newly elected Government of Bangladesh to:

- Review the recent ministerial appointment in accordance with the CHT Accord, and ensure future appointments remain consistent with the Accord;
- Reaffirm the Government's commitment to the full and faithful implementation of the CHT Accord and declare a roadmap;
- On a priority basis, ensure the effective functioning of the Land Dispute Resolution Commission and expedite resolution of land disputes;
- Take a firm stance in support of retention of the CHT Regulation 1900;
- Ensure a fair trial involving members of the Bawm community who are held without due process, and take immediate measures for the release of non-combatant Bawm women and children from jail;
- Establish an independent, impartial, and adequately mandated Commission to investigate the ongoing human rights violations in CHT; and
- Engage in sustained, meaningful dialogue with Indigenous representatives and their traditional organizations.

Honoring both the letter and spirit of the CHT Accord, we stand ready to support and engage constructively with your esteemed government in pursuit of upholding principles of justice, human rights, democratic values, and lasting peace in CHT. The CHT Commission is available to hold constructive dialogue and engagement with the Ministry of CHT Affairs.