

CLOSING REMARKS OF THE CHAIR



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Bangladesh remains one of the most land scarce countries in the world. We need to understand whether our level of development is just. We have a report that tells the government that by 2050, Bangladesh will not have agricultural land. Based on extreme climatic changes, our country will lose one-third of its land mass.

Second, when the Land Act took away the landlords, very little change happened because management of land was turned over to the government. Forest management is still an issue due to the antiquated 1927 Forest Act which was enacted during the time of British colonial rule.

A High Court ruling directed the Forest Ministry to restore a 44-acre forest (which is now only three acres). The High Court told the Forest Ministry to form a supercommittee, but until now, no such committee has been formed.

So when we go to the international level to present this, our position is weak if we do not implement the same in our country.

Worldwide, there is tenurial tension between government forest departments and forest dwellers, but there have been little gains on improving this. In Nepal, they brought back a forest through a model of community forestry program. In the Philippines, they have a good model of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

So what actions can be done? If we can collect good models, we can help government agencies implement these good models. We need to invest on collecting these good practices. We really need to be serious in saving our wetlands, forests, and traditional practices of people living in these areas.

Our work seems like an endless task, we always have a hurdle to overcome. But we are on the right path and cannot lose hope. If we lose hope, then the people we work for are going to be more hopeless.