EU insists GoB to implement the Accord particularly resolution of land disputes and withdrawal of temporary camps

In reply to the letter of CHT Commission co-chair Honourable Lord Avebury dated 31 August 2011, Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton said that the EU is strongly committed to peace and stability in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and to safeguarding the inhabitants’ rights. The EU has repeatedly insisted that the Government of Bangladesh take tangible steps to deliver on its promise to implement the Accord, most notably regarding the resolution of land disputes and the withdrawal of temporary army camps. This has been a recurrent theme of our political dialogue meetings with Bangladesh, and the issue was taken up during the joint visit of Commissioner Piebalgs and the German Development Minister Dirk Niebel, which took place in June of this year.

Catherine Ashton also expressed that the EU has also raised its concerns with the Bangladeshi authorities following the violent events that took place in Longodu in February and in Ramgarh in April of this year. The EU has underlined that the victims should have adequate redress and those responsible should be brought to justice.

Catherine Ashton added that on 13 July 2011, the European Commission adopted a €24-million programme to support local development in the CHT. The EU contribution, which will be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)–managed CHT Development Facility, will aim at building capacity in regional, local and traditional institutions as well as communities with a view to delivering better services and managing development activities. By empowering local institutions, the EU seeks to facilitate the implementation of the governance provisions as foreseen in the Peace Accord of 1997.

Catherine Ashton also said that there may be contacts on these matters at the highest level in New York next month in the margins of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). If these materialise, the EU will certainly raise the CHT and other humanitarian and human rights issues.

For kind your information and details, please find the letter of Catherine Ashton wrote to Lord Avebury attached herewith.