Background and rationale

Efforts to protect human rights, prevent and reverse environmental degradation, and respond to climate challenge are closely linked across conceptual, normative, and policy frameworks. The Agenda 2030, Paris Agreement, Rio+20 Declaration, international human rights treaties and other global and regional legally binding documents highlight these important links between the protection of human rights and the shared planet on which we live and depend for our well-being. They call for integrated natural resource management, climate change and human rights-based public administration approaches that deliver results across multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities.

For example, SDG 13 on Climate Action refers to international human rights instruments; the right to health, including the rights to safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment [UDHR art 25(1); ICESCR art 12; CRC art 24; CEDAW art 12; CMW art 28], the rights to adequate food and safe drinking water [UDHR art 25(1); ICESCR art 11] and the right of people to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources [ICCPR, ICESCR art 1.(2)]. Climate change and linked environmental risks are among the greatest threats to human rights, posing a serious obstacle to fundamental rights to life, health, food and an adequate standard of living for communities across the world. Climate change and related environmental issues are already affecting temperatures, hydrological conditions, ecosystem functioning, and agricultural productivity in many regions. Displacement and linked issues of conflict, crisis, and weather-related disasters also threaten the human rights of some communities, including groups living in the rapidly melting Arctic, low-lying coastal areas, and similar at-risk locations.

The environment is emerging as a new human rights battleground. 2015 was the worst year for killings of environmental defenders – people and rangers struggling to protect their land, forests and rivers through peaceful actions. As demand for products like timber, minerals and palm oil grows, some governments, companies and criminal gangs are exploiting land with little regard for the people who live on it. In some cases, communities that take a stand are under threat with limited influence on decisions impacting their future. Environmental degradation, unsustainable natural resource management, weak public administration, power imbalances, and conflict combine with negative impacts for women and men living in poverty.

Integrated solutions that address local and transboundary challenges are required, bringing together global, regional and national stakeholders from governments, civil society, academia, development organizations and the private sector. By applying human rights approaches to environmental governance, and convening experts and policy makers from the human rights, environmental, economic, and social development communities, siloed-thinking can be replaced with multi-stakeholder partnerships that help eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities and exclusion. Inclusive, transparent and accountable decisions-making is needed to ensure a sustainable environment for all, including children, women and indigenous peoples.
Seminar Objective
This interactive seminar is designed to contribute to the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment by: facilitating a better understanding of the relevant human rights obligations; explaining the benefits of a human rights-based approach to environmental policies and programming; and creating a forum in which the human rights, environmental, conflict prevention and disaster risk reduction communities can share views and experiences.

The Seminar will highlight successful policies and programmes that have already started to apply a human-rights based approach to environmental public administration in ways that capitalize on synergies across the social, environment, and economic pillars of the sustainable development framework. In this way, insights and experiences shared during the Seminar can inform new and ongoing initiatives to implement the SDGs.

To achieve these objectives, the following framing questions will guide Seminar discussions:
- What are the conceptual and normative links between human rights and environmental degradation, including the impact of climate change?
- What are some of the challenges that communities and countries face with respect to human rights, environmental protection, conflict and sustainable development?
- What is the role of public administration and procedural rights, including public participation, transparency, and access to justice in protecting human rights and strengthening environmental governance; what tools can assess and strengthen these rights?
- How have governments strengthened partnerships with public, private and civil society actors to address the environment-human rights nexus, and how can they be scaled-up?
- What are some of the broader social and economic benefits that can be catalyzed by integrating human rights into natural resource management, public administration, and implementation, and what are the implications for poverty, inequality, and the SDGs?

Outcome
At the end of the Seminar, participants will have a better understanding of the importance of integrated human rights, and environmental governance approaches ensuring a development trajectory within the Earth’s planetary boundaries and in line with human rights norms. Participants will have access to additional knowledge and resources on some of the challenges, opportunities, and solutions needed to advance the 2030 Development Agenda and SDGs.

The discussion will underscore the importance of public administration and partnerships among government, civil society, private sector, and multilateral institutions, including UN agencies. Such partnerships are key to the transformative and integrated approach required to protect human rights, ensure environmental sustainability, and respond to climate change challenges.

Audience
Senior policymakers and experts from multilateral, bilateral, and civil society groups will speak and attend representing human rights, environmental, and linked SD communities.

Format
The Seminar will combine presentations with a partial Davos-style moderated roundtable discussion format. The moderator will provide a brief overview of the session objectives and the framing questions detailed above before giving the floor to each panel speaker. Depending on time constraints, there will be additional inter-active discussions, follow-up questions, and comments from the floor, before brief closing comments by the moderator and panellists.
Preliminary Agenda
Human Rights, Environment and Climate Change Seminar
Stockholm, Sweden - 1 December 2016
12:30-16:00
(all speakers to be confirmed)

Facilitator – Olof Drakenberg or Camilla Ottosson (Sida) (Tbc)

- Welcome and introduction by head of TEMA/INTEM (10 min)
  Info on the agenda, objectives, and the format for discussion: dynamic mix of presentations and Davos style interview format depending on speaker comfort levels (5 min)

- John Knox, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment (via video-link from US) (10-15 min) global overview and experiences
- Alternative speaker – Johanna Sandalh from Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)

- Joan Carlin (tbc) – AIPP (10-15 min) regional context, indigenous, environment, human rights

- Rose (Kenya NGO) – (10 min) country context, possibly by video link

- Johanna Lissinger Pietz, Swedish Ministry of Environment and Energy

- SEPA on the role of public administration, human rights and environmental governance

- UNDP – using an Environment and HR approach: opportunities/challenges 10-15 min

- Discussion – questions and reflections to panel – (30 min)

Other potential speakers, who will be invited to Stockholm for the EGP Technical and Advisory Board meetings being organized the same week include:

- Sueli Giorgetta (UNITAR);
- Charles Di Leva (World Bank);
- Caroline Digby (University of the Witwatersrand);
- Carl Bruch (ELI);
- Flaviano Bianchini (Source International);
- Nicola Barnfather (DFID);
- Governments Officials from Mozambique, Kenya, Mongolia, and Colombia

ii UNEP "Climate change and Human rights” Dec 2015

iii Global Witness ”Dangerous Ground” June 2016