



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



# Briefing on human rights and the environment

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# Agenda

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- A. The environment-human rights nexus
- B. UNEP-OHCHR Memorandum of Understanding
- C. UNEP's Programme of Work
- D. Rights-based environmental action
- E. Key developments
- F. Key materials
- G. Upcoming events/opportunities
- H. UNEP's pledge for Human Rights@75
- I. Next steps

# The environment-human rights nexus

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The importance of the environment-human rights nexus dates back decades. It's recognized in the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and numerous constitutions and legal systems around the world recognize the right to a healthy environment.

Human rights and the protection of the environment are intrinsically linked.

- 🌿 Human rights cannot be enjoyed without a clean, healthy and sustainable environment;

- 🌿 Effective environmental protection depends on the promotion, protection and respect for human rights.

There's an emerging wave of judicial decisions highlighting the interconnection between human rights and the environment.



# UNEP-OHCHR Memorandum of Understanding

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# MoU key priorities

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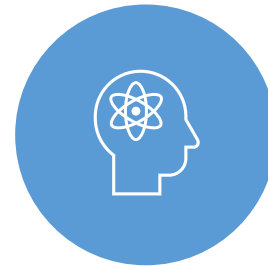
Mainstreaming human rights and the environment into UN systems and processes



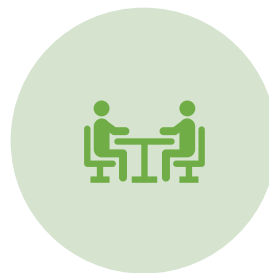
Advocating for the universal recognition and advancement of the human right to a healthy environment



Supporting rights-based environmental action on the ground



Developing targeted awareness raising and knowledge materials



Working with relevant stakeholders, including States, other UN entities, civil society, among others



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# UNEP's Programme of Work

## Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025:

- Support for the implementation of Agenda 2030
- Foundational subprogramme on environmental governance – advancing human rights relating to the enjoyment of a healthy environment
- Gender equality, rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples, dialogue with MEAs, science-policy interface

## UN Environment Assembly:

- Resolutions **4/17** on gender equality and **4/20** on the Montevideo Programme V
- 5 UNEA-6 resolutions refer to UN General Assembly resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment



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# Rights-based environmental action

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🌿 The Human Rights Council has stressed and the IPCC has affirmed, that it is critical to [apply a human rights-based approach](#) to guide global policies and measures designed to address environmental crises.

🌿 The essential attributes of a human rights-based approach are the following:

- As policies and programmes are formulated, the main objective should be to fulfil human rights.
- The *rights-holders* and their entitlements must be identified as well as the corresponding *duty-bearers* and their obligations in order to find ways to strengthen the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations.
- Principles and standards derived from international human rights law – especially the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [core universal human rights treaties](#), should guide all policies and programming in all phases of the process.

🌿 Supporting rights-based environmental action and advancing the right to a healthy environment will be strategic priorities for OHCHR under its new four-year Office Management Plan.

# Key developments



# The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment



Human Rights Council resolution 48/13



General Assembly resolution 76/300

# Integration in MEAs

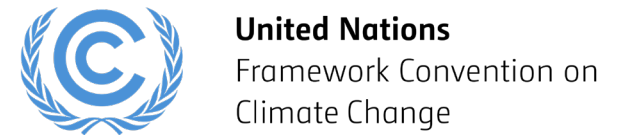
🌿 [Bonn Declaration](#) for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), September 2023



🌿 [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (KMGBF), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), December 2022



🌿 COP27 and COP28 outcome documents, such as [Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan](#), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), November 2022

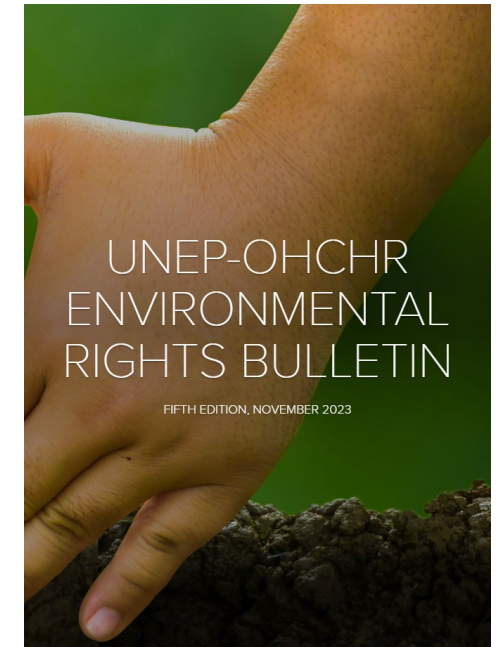
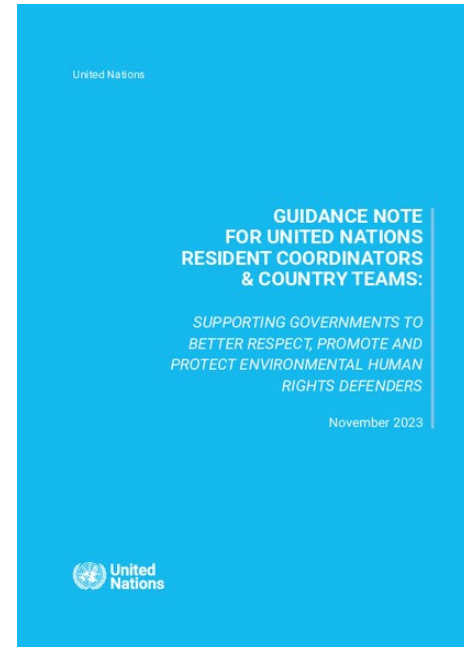
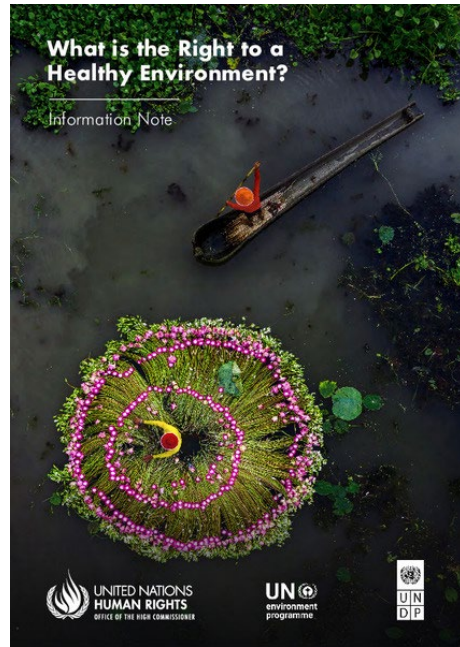


# Integration in human rights treaty bodies

- 🌿 [General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change](#), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), May 2023;
- 🌿 [General Comment No. 26 on Land and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), December 2022;
- 🌿 [General Recommendation No. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls](#), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), October 2022.



# Key materials



# Upcoming events/opportunities

- ❖ **Summit of the Future**, 22-23 September 2024, New York
- ❖ **CBD COP16**, 21 October-1 November 2024, Colombia
- ❖ **UNFCCC COP29**, 11-22 November 2024, Azerbaijan
- ❖ **INC 4 & 5**, 23-29 April 2024, Canada | 25 November-1 December 2024, Republic of Korea
- ❖ **UNCCD COP16**, 2-13 December 2024, Saudi Arabia

- ❖ Support to ASEAN process for a **Regional Framework on Environmental Rights**
- ❖ Support to the **Global Alliance on National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)**
- ❖ **Interagency coordination** within the Environment Management Group (EMG) Issue Management Group on Human Rights and the Environment (IMG)

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**FREEDOM,  
EQUALITY  
AND JUSTICE  
FOR ALL**

**UNEP's pledge:**

1. Advance the right to a healthy environment
2. Support Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs)
3. Support Member States in protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples
4. Commit to the principles of equity, nondiscrimination, equal participation, accountability and access to justice
5. Commit to work with partners, including OHCHR and UNDP.



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# What's next

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- 🌿 UNEP and OHCHR to continue joint programming and activities, collaborating with relevant stakeholders
- 🌿 Identify and further work on strategic priorities, such as protection of EHRDs, just transition and business and human rights
- 🌿 Deepen collaboration with UNEP's and OHCHR's field presences, working with Resident Coordinators and Country Teams
- 🌿 Advance the right to a healthy environment, including promoting its implementation and integration into UN processes and environmental decision-making



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# Thank you

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