

Geneva Road Map for Environmental Human Rights Defenders, 2020

Introduction

The Geneva Road Map is a collective effort to bridge and connect action for Environmental Human Rights Defenders.

As public attention grows to the changing conditions of environmental defenders, a number of research, civil society and multilateral initiatives are emerging to better understand, respond and bridge efforts.

The Geneva Road Map emerged from dialogue co-organized by academic partners, defender networks, CSOs, UN Special Rapporteurs and international organizations at the Palais Eynard, in February, 2020 (see complementary report). Results are feeding into international policy processes such as the IUCN motion process and the implementation of the Human Rights Council Resolution 40/11 on environmental human rights defenders as well as multiple other processes.



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What is the Geneva Road Map?

The Geneva Road Map is a **living document and platform** (currently) made up of **four action goals** and a commitment to **follow-up, build synergies and pool efforts** among both civil society and multilateral efforts.

As a follow-up to the Human Rights Council Resolution 40/11 the **Geneva Road Map** aims to ensure the effective implementation of the right to act for the protection of the environment and to promote free and safe spaces for information and discussion on environmental matters.

It aims to inform both human rights and conservation policy processes and kick-off more **systematic collaboration in the long-term**.

Each Action Goal include **general recommendations for action** as well as a **specific set of commitments of existing planned actions from now to mid 2021**.

The Geneva Road Map is conceived as a **collective platform and forum for debate** in which initiatives and commitments of States, civil society, research and academia or private actors can support each other through a process of continuous engagement and **yearly follow-up** currently projected to take place in conjunction with the Human Rights Council.

The Road Map is hosted by and to be accessed through the Portal for Environmental Human Rights Defenders:

<https://environment-rights.org/towards-a-geneva-road-map/>

4 Road Map Action Goals

The group united around four Action Goals to bridge efforts, guide reflection and stimulate synergies. These are the following:

1. **Reverse the tide** of marginalization and attacks against environmental actors
2. **Reinforce environmental rights**, enabling civic spaces and accountability
3. **Bridge initiatives** and enhance cooperation
4. **Break isolation** and effective access to protection

None are set in stone, yet seek to capture key challenges identified and flesh out avenues for action and coordination.

For each action goal the group brainstormed about **possible fields of action** as well as laying out already **planned next steps till July 2021**.

The Road Map comes with a call to international organizations, governments and civil society organizations to join forces and **support Road Map activities**.

Action Goal 1: Reverse the tide of marginalization and attacks against environmental defenders

How is the negative spiral of marginalization and attacks against defenders broken? To reverse the tide of violence, the dialogue identified the following series of issues and activities ranging from inclusive narratives, addressing root causes to the enhancement accountability. Suggested approaches and activities are listed here in their “raw” form with only slight editing to facilitate comprehension.

Inclusive Narratives

- Invest in reshaping a value-based narrative
- Show value of EHRDs for achieving the SDGs
- Use Stockholm +50¹ in 2022 to put environment as a key geopolitical issue
- Use momentum of Zero Tolerance Initiative to highlight the collective nature of EHRDs
- Display positive images of the actors across media
- Control and fight hate speech
- Promote human rights in the society
- Challenge the ‘development paradigm’
- Work with governments and other actors to celebrate the effort of defenders through public recognition awards and prizes and then connect all of these champions in a global network

Address the Root Causes

- Weak rule of law
- Lack of civic spaces
- Connect to Trade and investment
- Lack of consultation and FPIC
- Insecure land tenure

Enhance Accountability

- Monitor cases of impunity
- Expose attacks by companies, industries and associations/ investors and embassies
- Counter and denounce criminalization
- Hold accountable the crimes through effective justice systems
- Help spread awareness of crimes against human rights defenders
- Use communication functions (Special Rapporteurs and United Nations Working Group business and human rights directed at companies)

¹ 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment

- Engage in strategic litigation at UN treaty bodies
- Use the HRC EHRD resolution as a tool to rate state's capacity to provide a future to the country
- Effective mechanisms like a certification for organizations and individuals who are environmentally defender friendly
- Promote accountability of businesses and investors including the promotion of full and effective human rights due diligence processes
- Engage with companies and investors to commit to zero tolerance of attacks against EHRDs

Strengthen Data management

- Collect data on the threats and attacks and get these out in the open to increase public pressure
- Strengthen the voice of science
- Defining how a defender can get protection and escape social isolation/ criminalization

Consolidate group efforts

- Organize groups of support for defenders
- Support from government officials
- Build across actors and sectors
- Fund the frontline and local organizations

Promote Security

- Train EHRD on security management and also on monitoring and documentation human rights violations.
- Offer advocacy support
- Train in digital security and evidenced collection
- Ask defenders what they need and do it.
- Develop knowledge & learning network on the topic of collective community-led protection (ZTI)

Reverse the Tide – selected planned Road Map activities

- training in UN systems relevant to defenders in Asia (APNED)
- Develop follow-up process for EHRD Human Rights Council Resolution in 2021 (Geneva Road Map, ISHR)
- Event on environmental peace building Geneva 2021 (University of British Columbia)
- Advocacy on consumer goods forum highlighting attacks linked to supply chains and asking them to adopt Zero Tolerance approach, 2021 (ZTI)
- Communications to Special Rapporteurs and UN working groups on business and HR on company violations of HR (ZTI)
- Further evidence collection, documentation and publications (multiple)
- Build positive news and magazine with defender stories (multiple)

Action Goal 2. Reinforce rights, civil space, enable civic society spaces and accountability

How are enabling and safe conditions created for Environmental Human Rights defenders? Protecting environmental human rights defenders require the respect of human rights, enabling civic spaces and reinforced mechanisms of accountability. Suggested approaches and activities are listed here in their “raw” form with only slight editing to facilitate comprehension.

Engage Businesses

- Mobilize and work with responsible businesses and investors to take steps towards a Zero Tolerance approach² to violence in the supply chain
- Push embassies to encourage companies to respect EHRD
- Create strategy to make environmental defenders part of an international focus concerning trade and investment
- Engage the UN Working Group on business and HRs on the topic of EHRDs
- National mandatory environmental and human rights due diligence obligations for companies
- Advocacy work on HRD and business engagement (e.g. EU)

Promote ratification and implementation of Aarhus and Escazú Agreements³

- Raise awareness on the agreements
- Promote Escazú ratification and implementation
- Encourage EHRD efforts in Aarhus Convention
- Adopt environmental rights at constitutional level
- Support lawyers defending defenders, track progress on accountability and case follow-up
- Support NGOs to reach operational stage of Escazú
- Develop similar regional instruments where absent (Pacific and Africa).

Strengthen UN processes

- Promote Road Map action goals in UN processes
- Reinforce environmental rights
- Support defender-led litigation against transnational companies
- Promote events for large scale advocacy and increase publicity
- Make use of HR mechanisms e.g. Treaty Bodies and Universal Periodic Reviews
- Create a UN code of conduct for the protection of environmental defenders

² <https://www.zerotoleranceinitiative.org/>

³ The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus) The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú).

- Work with UNEP and Special Rapporteurs to promote implementation of environmental rights and advocate for universal recognition of this right

Enhance Civil Society Spaces

- Support jurisdictional solution and support
- Extend funding to civil society projects and spaces
- Turn up in new spaces and build understanding of these
- Network with EHRD and grassroots level CSOs to understand what is happening on the ground.
- Allow space for defenders to create, not defend. Let them create alternatives
- Encourage IUCN to set-up standard for enabling civil society spaces

Promote the Right to a healthy environment

- Promote the right to a healthy environment with everyone's dignity and wellbeing
- Stand for clean air, safe and non-toxic environments, clean water, healthy sustainability, health in biodiversity
- Strengthen tools like access to information, participation, Access to justice and effective remedies.

Implement international rights at the national level

- Include indigenous rights, right to a healthy environment, law as a heavy primary
- protection of EHRD should be according to the reality of each country

Reinforce rights, enabling civic society spaces and accountability– planned Road Map activities

- Workshops on mapping violence in supply chains/identifying companies responsible (University of Sussex)
- DDE (EU) event on Land and environment defenders
- Aarhus Convention-related processes in June 2020, March 2021, develop a quick response mechanism for EHRD
- COP26-related events
- IUCN World Congress related events on land and environmental defenders (CEESP)
- Strengthen use of UN mechanisms and procedures 2021

Action Goal 3. Bridge initiatives and enhance cooperation

How to counter the risk of multiple and fragmented efforts to support Environmental Human Rights Defenders?

Promote new connections

- Reinforce cooperation between Special Rapporteurs thematically and by country
- Promote widely the UN declaration on HRD and its definition of HRD
- Engage UN organizations to coordinate efforts on EHRD
- Consolidate, coordinate and create focal points across organizations with existing initiatives.
- Reinforce cooperation between mechanisms.

Strengthen regional and international connections

- Reinforce cooperation with regional organizations IACHR.ACPHR.COE.OSCE
- Connect across silos, seek to not connect with the usual suspects.
- International and regional conferences assembled by environmental defenders
- Promote and reinforce national or regional national networks of HRD
- Establish regional defenders and generate globally shared platform
- Regional networks of HRD
- Create an international alliance of defenders

Support New forms of engagement

- Promote dialogue spaces
- Support More scientist and activist involvement
- Decentralised working groups and dialogue spaces
- Engage with organisations from countries with similar cases and promote inclusiveness of communities
- Aim for diversity when working on human rights for diverse perspectives

National Human Rights Institutions

- include NHRIs in all discussions
- Have inclusive systems that involved defenders from a grass roots level.

Environmental organizations and Networks

- HR - Environment invite each other more
- HR community share lessons learned with environmental orgs
- Reaching diverse environmental communities
- Support in joining zero tolerance and be a part of the coalition
- Create a comprehensive coalition initiative of all progress and pre-existing groups to create an action plan with collective calendar
- Connect all good existing groups: URG, N1M, UNEP, Frontline, Global Witness,

- Link national human rights institutions between local and national level. Assist connecting between HRD and these institutions

Build effective platforms

- Have an open platform as a clearing house.
- Road map action goals, bridge initiative and enhance cooperation- join this group with env.def and find support to energize, an open platform to share work and news
- Online services to better deal with existing problems

Bridge initiatives and enhance cooperation: planned Road Map activities

- Consultation and Inputs to the revision of UNEPs policy on EHRDs (UNEP, ZTI)
- ICCA consolation council meeting, Marseille June 2020 (ICCA)
- IUCN World Congress events on defenders, shared programme. January, 2020 (IUCN members and commissions, ZTI)
- Publish Special Issue of Policy Matters IUCN to reach more international IUCN members (IUCN CEESP)
- Human Rights Council annual day on the rights on the child – on children’s environmental rights defenders (Child Rights Connect)
- Human Rights Council Resolution on topic of children’s environmental rights will be negotiated in September 2020 (Child Rights Connect)
- Toolkit on children human rights defenders (Child Rights Connect)
- The access initiative (WRI) - workshops on Escazú in Jamaica (WRI)
- Environmental defenders in Asia Pacific meetings in 2020 & 2021 (Kalikasan PNE, N1M)
- N1M forest defenders conference (N1M)
- SDG parallel report on SDG 16 (HLPF) Nepal/Bangladesh/Peru ()
- LED Coalition advocacy plan (ILC)
- Zero Tolerance initiative activities around, UN Business and Human Rights Forum (FPP)
- LED coalition urgent appeal protocol (ILC)
- Defend (and environmental defenders) coalition - data beyond killings methodology (ILC)
- Collective data aggregation and analysis & reach more academics – (ICC, ELaw)
- Defender participation and video making (Sengwer, others)
- Networking, linking to other events and local grassroots organization (multiple)
- Building tool kits for human rights defenders (multiple) including handbooks for communities on collective protection
- International human rights emergency media clearing house (multiple)
- Create a multimedia platform that defenders can contribute to and access (tbc)

Action Goal 4. Break isolation and ensure effective access to protection

How can the common isolation of defenders be broken and better access to protection be enhanced? The Geneva dialogues stressed strengthening local-international connections, deepening action on the ground, adapting tool kits and improving networks through more direct engagement with defenders themselves.

Strengthen International to local connections

- Involve environmental defenders in decision making processes and have emergency funds for protection of EHRDs that face threats in their line of work
- Bring UN agencies and embassies on board
- Identify training for key actors/NGOs/associations in different regions as focal points/ bridges between defenders and support networks (Access often depends on trust and relationships).
- UN special bodies to review situation of environmental defenders to highlight their concerns.
- Push embassies and diplomatic missions to be more proactive and reach out to remote EHRDs
- Identify blind spots and defenders in isolation

Enhance action on the ground

- Enhance actual protection measures, not only perspectives and networks
- Look at and support collective protection mechanisms and increase investments in protection
- Share successful strategies by conflict type
- Provide support funds for families of affected defenders
- Strengthen information, communication and awareness raising among target communities
- Special education to police force about the rights of defenders
- Implement tools of communication with isolated groups of defenders

Toolkits that make sense to defenders

- Make access easier to support and opportunities for defenders networks
- Develop practical action toolkits, using existing kits and systems and translate into local languages and culturally appropriate
- Improve resources for community-led protection.
- Information sharing and training systems for EHRD
- All NGOs and UN mechanisms to translate, create audio format for their info and access
- Support paralegals and train up security specialists within communities
- Make toolkits that can self-disseminate/implement

Representative Networks

- Build coalitions of HRDs including EHRD and connect to existing ones
- Work with global alliances of national human rights institutions to publicize and disseminate good practices at the national level to protect defenders
- Build capacity of environmental networks to recognize and respond to threats
- Reach across intersectional divides.
- Activists who are working class are still less likely to report violations or see their complaints being responded to.
- Create space for defenders to network with each other
- Facilitate peer to peer exchanges amongst local communities on risk and protection methodologies
- Support defender solidarity meetings
- Propose any international meeting is at least 50% defender.

Bridge initiatives and enhance cooperation: planned Road Map activities

- IUCN World Conservation Congress training session on protecting defenders (Earth Justice, IUCN NL)
- Broaden discussions on including rangers and land defenders as EHRD (Earth Justice, LED Coalition)
- Provide report on situation of defenders during Universal Periodic Review (multiple)
- Nov 2020 UN WG on Business and Human Rights - session on responsive business conduct in context of climate emergency (UNEP + OECD)
- launching policy guidance on bridging business and the environment ()
- Collect map evidence of rights violations using mobile app Brazil/ Peru ()
- Online defender solidarity organizing and gathering (multiple)
- Run up to N1M conference 2021 (N1M)
- Social media campaign such as Extinction rebellion/ Sengwer rights ((multiple)
- Need for activities on digital security
- Data beyond killings – (LED coalition)
- Further research funding application (University of Geneva, University of Sussex, University of British Columbia)
- Concept paper on emergency funds and discussions with funders/insurance (N1M/PLB/UBC)
- Support defenders to apply to emergency funds for threatened defenders in Brazil (University of Sussex)
- Emergency funding in Brazil (N1M/David Gordon/DD Coalition)