

2018 EMG Nexus Dialogue Series: Biodiversity Mainstreaming in the context of Human Security and Wellbeing

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Ambassador Gerber,
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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my sincere pleasure to be with you this morning. I'm enormously grateful to the United Nations Environment Management Group for focusing on biodiversity mainstreaming in the context of human security.

For some twenty years, human security has underscored the interconnected aspirations of people to be free from fear, want and indignity. As such, it has compelled us to consider the broad range of human insecurities that undermine our ability to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

Today, whether it is the scourge of conflicts, the devastation of natural disasters, or the erosion of our biodiversity, these challenges, if not addressed in a proactive manner can result in grave human insecurities and lead to more intractable crises that often spillover into broader national, regional and international insecurities.

It is in this context that recent reforms of the United Nations recognize the multiplicity of today's challenges and seek to “end poverty and hunger everywhere; combat inequalities within and among countries; build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; protect human rights and promote gender equality; and ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources”.

Based on lessons learned from more than 15 years of programmes supported by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, as well as others, including member States, non-governmental entities, and most recently in partnership with the private sector, the application of human security provides us with a rich source of knowledge to draw upon.

Specifically, in this new development landscape, where challenges are complex and multidimensional, we must

- pursue integrated approaches that address poverty in all its forms and dimensions,
- consider the multitude of risks that can derail progress in the implementation of the SDGs, and
- leverage cooperation across sectors at the local, national and international levels so as to advance opportunities for future generations and protect the natural system upon which all life depends.

The human security approach, well-suited to the challenges unfolding today, and based on the common understanding agreed to by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, underscores the need to advance protection and empowerment strategies that are people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented. These principles, which are also reflected in the 2030 Agenda, are indispensable if we are to achieve the transformative promise of the SDGs.

Subsequently, the human security approach highlights the interconnected and cross-sectoral consequences of human activity on our planet's natural systems.

It offers an invaluable framework to identify and unpack the differentiated consequences and the compounding magnitude that losses in biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services

can have on people and their communities, as well as, the State, its institutions, and their capacity to deliver.

Whereas aggregate measurements may not delve deep enough, the human security approach drills down to ascertain the root causes of people's vulnerabilities, and considers risk drivers, such as climate change, persistent poverty, rapid urbanization, and the exploitation and weak management of natural resources.

It requires disaggregated analysis to uncover how biodiversity loss impacts subgroups within the population differently, as well as the ways in which it could accentuate inequality and the marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Human security moreover provides a framework of protection and empowerment that promotes synergies between good governance, proactive policy action and community-driven efforts for more sustainable solutions, with greater impact.

Finally, the human security approach, in recognizing the scope, complexity and sheer interconnectedness of the challenges we face, helps break down siloes and brings together all relevant stakeholders, including the most affected communities, towards multidimensional strategies that simultaneously address social, economic and environmental risks, consequences and responses.

Excellencies,

As you all know, without attention to the full scope of the 2030 Agenda and the intricate interactions among the SDGs, we will not achieve the transformative vision of a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable development that both empowers our people and protects our planet.

Therefore, earnest consideration of sustainability must prioritize the dependence of societies on the goods and services provided by our ecosystems. It must consider the multiplier effect that

environmental degradation and biodiversity loss can have on the different dimensions of human security. And it must account for our growing population and the increasing demands it imposes on our natural resources. Similarly, positive impacts of human activity on the environment, if the use and management of natural resources are well governed, must be included.

Sustainable and equitable development, in this context, therefore requires strong coordination across institutions and stakeholders, a disaggregated approach that recognizes inequalities of dependence on ecosystem services, and promotes integrated actions that shift our focus towards building resilience, as well as managing risks, mitigating their impact and preventing their occurrence, whenever possible.

To this end, the human security approach provides a valuable analytical and planning framework for untangling the interplay among environmental insecurity, social exclusion, human mobility, conflict and sustainable development.

By placing individuals at the centre of analysis, the human security approach helps to assess the needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of people and communities. This allows for a more detailed understanding of the level, trend and distribution of risks among groups, communities and regions.

Accordingly, a focus on human security helps to unpack and identify how deficits related to biodiversity and ecosystems are linked to economic, food, health and community insecurities. Moreover, it can highlight if and how these harmful effects are disproportionately borne by certain groups and thereby are contributing to growing inequities that could have detrimental effects on social cohesion and poverty reduction.

This drive towards localization, places emphasis on the development of community-based adaptation and mitigation plans. This in turn can address gaps in national, regional and international strategies that may be failing to adequately account for the multifaceted impacts of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

Effective community-based plans can then be replicated and scaled-up, as well as mainstreamed into national development plans.

Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe there is great deal that human security can bring to the biodiversity agenda.

First, its comprehensive analytical framework can help clarify how diverse issues ranging from deprivation in all its forms, to violence, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity, interact and require integrated and context-specific solutions.

Second, following from this analysis, human security can help broaden the range of stakeholders required to effectively address local, national and international threats to biodiversity beyond the environmental sector.

As such, human security can help define both a shared agenda and entry points that will have positive multiplier effects on the preservation of biodiversity, economic development, social integration, and people's well-being.

This can subsequently result in stronger buy-in of partners who understand how their respective roles contribute to and are interlinked in the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development.

And finally, by actively engaging those most affected, human security ensures that people are at the heart of our actions, their voices are heard, and their most pressing needs and vulnerabilities are addressed. This promotes responses that build on people's aspirations and capacities, and leads to an inclusive sustainable development trajectory that leaves no one behind.

Excellencies,

As we explore the interlinkages between biodiversity and human security, let me close by underlining my sincere hope that, based on our rich discussions over the next two days, the human security approach can be considered as a proven tool to help strengthen concrete mechanisms for international cooperation, for system-wide collaboration across the UN system, and for practical integrated policy advice for Governments to effectively mainstream biodiversity targets into national development plans.

I thank you for your attention.