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**Early warning of violence and conflict: land and human rights in South East Asia**

Expert Group Meeting, Bangkok, 16 - 18 November 2015

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# 1. Background

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on *Early warning in the Context of land related Human Rights Violations leading to an escalation of Human Rights Violations, Violence and Conflict* was convened in recognition of the key role played by violations of economic, social and cultural rights linked to land in igniting violence and conflict in South East Asia. This EGM built upon an earlier expert meeting convened by OHCHR in Geneva, in July 2015 which addressed more generally, how a deeper understanding of violations of economic, social and cultural rights as related to violence could be brought to bear on forecasting political instability, civil unrest and conflict.

Despite the obvious connection between economic, social and cultural rights and social unrest there is a persistent oversight in recognizing these human rights in existing early warning mechanisms. In recent years, the United Nations (UN) has expressed increasing commitment to consider and use the tools available to identify warning signals that can trigger unrest and conflict. There has been a proliferation of initiatives both within the UN and its various agencies, including the UN’s ‘Human Rights Up Front’ initiative, which encourages early, coordinated action to prevent violations of human rights or humanitarian law. Nonetheless, despite the attention being given to this topic, no unified methodology has been developed yet that could aid in the early, practical identification of tensions and allow for more specific and targeted interventions to prevent political unrest and conflict.

The main objectives of the EGM in Bangkok were to:

(1) explore the integral linkages between the denial of land related rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights, and an escalation in human rights violations, violence and conflict in South East Asia;

(2) conceptualise how the violation of these human rights can serve as a red flag to alert actors including states to escalating tensions and conflict;

(3) identify common, comprehensive risk factors to foster integrated responses to deter and address escalating tension.

# 2. Land and economic, social and cultural rights

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| The right to land is not an expressed right under international human rights law. However, increasing jurisprudence on land related issues is providing guidance on the relationship between access to land and economic, social and cultural rights. |

Participants discussed the various dimensions and connections between the enjoyment of a number of rights with a secure access to land. These rights include the **right to food, adequate housing, livelihood, water, sanitation, health and education, and identity as nationality.** The **right to adequate housing** with security of tenure is particularly relevant and often a precondition to some of the other identified rights. Evidence was highlighted that indigenous peoples in Australia and Canada with access to land enjoy better health, with markedly lower rates of suicide compared to their counterparts elsewhere who do not enjoy this right. The **right to equality** is also derivatively and directly linked to secure access to land, as many face discrimination due to lack of land tenure. For many indigenous peoples, the enjoyment of their **right to culture** depends on access to land, as well. Lack of secure access to land undermines **freedom of movement** and the **right to choose one’s own residence**.

Evidently then, and as underscored by all participants at the EGM, access to land and a secure tenure, are seminal in facilitating the enjoyment of all other human rights – not only economic, social and cultural rights. Conversely, a denial of access to land and land-related rights through dispossession, eviction or other measures results in a concomitant denial of a range of human rights including, as discussed, the right to a life of dignity. Case studies on the violation of land-related rights in the South East Asian region demonstrate the interconnected and indivisible nature of all rights, where calls for securing economic, social and cultural rights by activists have culminated often in severe denials of civil and political rights and freedoms. When communities struggle to secure their land related rights they have been known to face varying degrees of threats and violence, and even protracted conflict.

Drilling deeper, participants discussed how economic and development policies were undermining and jeopardising people’s access to land and livelihoods in several instances in the region. They repeatedly highlighted the negative impact of the principle of ‘eminent domain’ or ‘compulsory purchase’ legislation that enables governments to acquire land for the purpose of public interest. This includes acquiring land for development projects and the creation of Special Economic Zones. It was alleged that this state prerogative was frequently being used for devious political or economic agendas by state authorities to appropriate land under use by and occupation of communities and indigenous peoples. It was pointed out that governments were also encouraging foreign direct investment in the name of development and allowing corporations to lease large pieces of land for *inter alia* natural resource extraction, bio-fuel production or large scale farming. This usually resulted in the forced evictions of those previously using this land. Access to land was additionally undermined by the lack of adequate agricultural policies as well as climate change and environmental degradation.Theexample of thePhilippines was cited where following typhoon Haiyan, the Government declared no-build zones which effectively prevented many displaced communities from returning home and therefore causing a further and deeper displacement.

In response to these issues raised, participants questioned the responsiveness as well as the robustness of the human rights framework and mechanisms especially with regards to economic, social and cultural rights. They highlighted how these rights are seldom adequately recognised let alone prioritised. It was pointed out that a right to land is not expressly recognised by international human rights treaties and therefore, could not be invoked at the international level. However, it was emphasised that despite the absence of a specific right to land under international law, economic, social and cultural rights which can be closely related to land, such as the right to food, are already protected by the existing human rights framework. An early warning approach explicitly using economic, social and cultural rights can help strengthen and foreground these very rights throughout the UN system, and in turn help make connections where none existed, between different policy makers and agencies in this area.

# 3. Inadequate land governance and conflict

Participants discussed several case studies where inadequate land regulation could lead to or exacerbate conflict. In **Myanmar** for instance a number of different factors were raised which were potentially alarming includingquestionable land regulation allowing corporations to occupy land that was previously used by subsistence farmers and communities. These communities often do not have legal tenure over their land even though they have had long-term use of it, and are unable to register it at present due to prohibitive costs. This, combined with an under resourced judiciary incapable of working independently, lack of judicial oversight over decisions that award land to large businesses, and the subsequent large scope for corruption and undue influence, make for a politically incendiary situation. In addition, no environmental protection standards exist, and environmental impact assessments are usually only carried out by consultants employed by the companies and businesses involved. Protests against such land grabbing by corporations have mounted. Protestors are routinely arrested for trespassing, detained, and even killed, in several instances. One such case mentioned was that of a demonstrator shot dead while protesting against the Letpadaung Copper Mine in December 2014. Thus so far, no one had been held accountable. The potential for unrest and violence is especially potent in the resource rich ethnic minority states where access to land and resources have been at the heart of previous conflicts.

Two cases from **Malaysia** were discussed to illustrate tensions over land between contending groups due to the non-implementation of relevant legislation and inadequate access to justice. In Sabah/Sarawak (Borneo) much of the land of the indigenous population has been allocated towards plantations and dam projects leading hence to rampant strife. The second example concerned the situation in the Malay Pensinsula with the aboriginal Orang Asli community. Despite the designation of their land as an Aboriginal Reserve the Government has allowed extraction companies to operate in certain areas of this reserve resulting in tensions. While judicial mechanisms and some land mark cases regarding both these examples do exist, the judicial process is highly time consuming, complex and expensive. Moreover, despite a large number of complaints from indigenous peoples, there is still no tribunal to address land related issues; the National Commission for Human Rights in Malaysia can merely provide advice to the government. Consequently, the indigenous peoples and other concerned groups are becoming increasingly frustrated. They frequently organize blockades and protests resulting in arrests, detention and extrajudicial violence.

The case study from Cambodia highlighted a situation where the national land policy and registration system mainly served the interests of the elite, the state officials, and the business companies. Many human rights defenders have been arrested and imprisoned while trying to protect the access to land of their communities. A number of commissions have been created to address land disputes, however, they have been marked by little coherence, lack of transparency and information on their functioning, and a striking lack of fair representation of victims of land grabbing.

# 4. Land, businesses and conflict

Throughout the discussion, the repeated refrain was the increasingly strident role of businesses in leasing or appropriating land previously used by small subsistence farmers, thereby heightening the risk of land disputes and conflict. In their unrestrained desire for investment from overseas companies, governments are often rushing to sign investment treaties that neither respect and protect human rights, nor include provisions for sanctions for non-compliance including legal action against host governments in international arbitration courts.

As an illustration, Cambodia has accorded a large number of economic concessions to businesses for leasing land resulting thus in an unprecedented level of forced evictions and unplanned resettlements. This, accompanied by the ineffectiveness of institutions mandated to deal with land disputes, has culminated in a worrying increase in protests and demonstrations, as well as threats, intimidation and harassment by the judiciary and law enforcement.

One particular issue which ignites and exacerbates conflict is the often non-existent or inadequate participation of affected communities in decisions related to land. Equally weak or non-existent are any sound independent environment impact assessments (EIA), and those that exist are conducted by the companies often using their own private consultants. In Myanmar for instance, it was pointed out that the local inhabitants have often refused to participate in any EIAs, as they claim that these are mere ‘window dressings’. In Cambodia a similar trend was noted with companies rarely conducting EIAs. Other common factors in the region include the persecution of human rights defenders as anti-development and anti-national when they raise their voices against land grabbing by corporations.

Human rights violations emanating from land related issues routinely include diverse forms of violence linked to forced evictions including the burning down or demolition of houses by the military and police as well as contamination of natural resources such as water. Dispossession or eviction was known to lead to loss of livelihoods with scant possibilities for decent work opportunities. Participants documented instances of people working on rubber plantations in dangerous conditions for paltry amounts of money. Companies in Cambodia for example are known to bring in labour from outside, creating grounds for further conflict. In other regions such as in Mindanao (Philippines), the small scale subsistence farmers are contracted to grow specific crops and compelled to sell them to a specific business enterprises. Often the farmers have little bargaining power and receive lower than market prices for their goods.

The escalating normalisation of militarisation or securitisation of areas used by business corporations including the increased use of security guards, was mentioned as a particular threat and a problem. The heavy presence of armed guards was also a strategy to intimidate and harass local populations, especially girls and women, and curtail mobility Guards are recruited from other communities or former/retired military personnel. In other instances, the State was known directly to provide military personnel to ensure law and order in economic and development zones to facilitate business projects. In areas of existing conflict, such as in some ethnic regions in Myanmar, businesses often pay taxes to armed groups as a safeguard against harassment, and thus indirectly fund the conflict.

There are expanding numbers of agrarian migrants who are forced to move to areas including indigenous lands in search of livelihoods. Such displacement invariably increases competition for resources, and fuels the potential for tensions and conflict as in the case of the conflicts between the Dayaknese and Maduranese in West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

# 5. Identity, land and conflict

The discussion focussed at length on contesting claims to land by different identity groups as the cause of violence, unrest and conflict. In the Philippines, the problem of landlessness and inequality produced by colonial powers sparked internecine hostilities and conflict. Colonial policies of the 1930s when the government opened up vast areas of lands for resettlement, especially on **Mindanao** Island, proved to be particularly detrimental to the island’s indigenous population. This has resulted in ongoing conflict between the land rights of indigenous peoples and others including ethnic groups, migrating populations and settler communities.A series of land reform policies have been implemented since then with minimal impact**.** Most recently, theComprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) was enacted after a protest rally of some 10,000 militant farmers in January 1987, demanding immediate land distribution. The protest ended in the security forces shooting dead 13 demonstrators. However due to a political compromise, the CARL does not fully address the problems and therefore runs the risk of generating further conflict. It allows corporations for instance, to distribute stocks or shares rather than land, to local inhabitants. This has resulted in considerable impoverishment of the local population and in some cases, led to violent protests and killings of demonstrators at the hands of security forces and private security guards.

Evidence from the **Philippines** revealed howconvoluted land governance, confusing agrarian reform processes, and poor documentation of land records had contributed to multiple claims being made, often violently, to the same piece of land. Monitoring in the **Bangsomoro** region had revealed 83 land related conflicts with a serious human impact. In Basilan for instance, seven incidents had resulted in the killing of 30 people and the injury of more than a hundred**.** While initiatives have been introduced to address conflicting land claims, any registration programme must be carefully implemented to avoid further violence and conflict because of people’s fear of being disenfranchised.

The case study from **Thailand** focused on the situation in the **Kaeng Krachan National Park** where the Karen people have been deprived of their livelihoods through forcible expulsion from their ancestral land in favour of mining activities.Physical attacks on community members by goons of the mining companies have resulted in the disappearance of one prominent activist; no investigation has been pursued by the military government, thus far.

In Indonesia, the customary land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples and local communities are in direct contradiction with the legal framework of the Government which supports state control of forest lands. This has been a clear cause for provoking conflict. Similarly, conflicting land claims fueling strife are evident in Myanmar. Part of the hostility directed towards the **Rohingya** is linked to their claim for recognition as an ethnic group in Myanmar and the resultant automatic entitlement to land. The Rakhine community view this as a direct threat to their historical control over land and resources including oil and gas reserves in the northern Rakhine State. This contest over land by the two groups has weighed against the Rohingya – a severely discriminated stateless group lacking in citizenship and subjected to continuing systematic human rights violations.

Throughout the discussions the group kept returning to the question and meaning of indigeneity in the context of South East Asia. How long do communities need to live in a particular place before being recognised as indigenous? The concept of indigeneity becomes particularly contentious as indigenous groups are accorded special rights including *Free, Prior and Informed Consent[[1]](#footnote-1)* (FPIC) compared to minority or ethnic groups who may be living in the same area and are equally affected by projects and policies. In some cases communities and individuals may not also have the necessary identification or documentation to access special measures thus causing tensions between groups. Acknowledging the special relationship of indigenous groups to land, participants suggested that perhaps it was a question of ensuring that other non-indigenous communities also have the possibility to be consulted and participate in decision-making related to the land they inhabit and work.

Stigmatisation and labelling of particular identity groups who struggled for their traditional rights to land were branded as backward and anti-development by government officials and some development agents - a common feature in the region under discussion. This was particularly highlighted as a common practice in Cambodia. Similarly, in Laos in the 1990s, particular identity groups were told to jettison their ethnic identity to help build the nation.

# 6. Women, land and conflict

Throughout South East Asia, women have limited control over land due to gender inequality and socio-cultural norms which are in turn reflected in discriminatory laws, policies and practice. Women are therefore more vulnerable to and affected by land dispossession and land conflicts.  In Indonesia, the vulnerability of potential eviction arising from less secure access to land increases the risk women face of forced migration, child marriage, low and disrupted education, as well as violence and trafficking. The importance of developing indicators that take into account the injustices women face alongside the disparities in health, education and land/property ownership, need special emphasis. The Philippines case-study showed how theconflict in Bangsomoro, fuelled by systematic land dispossession, continued to further marginalize women through early and forced marriage, forced displacement, sexual abuse, and curtailed freedom of expression and mobility.

And yet, women across the region have played a significant role in struggling for their rights for access to and control over land as members of marginalised communities and as individuals. Despite waging heroic struggles in the South East Asian region women human rights defenders linked to land have encountered serious obstacles, and violence. Participants reported increasing criminalization of the activities on women’s rights and land issues in the region including gender based violence, against women protesting against land grabbing including at the household level. In general, women human rights defenders are often perceived as challenging socio-cultural norms and traditional stereotypes, which may isolate them from male support even in their communities.

# 7. Risk factors

Based on case studies and the discussion during the EGM, participants identified a number of risk factors contributing to an increased potential for violence, conflict and severe human rights violations on land related issues in the region. The matrix developed by UNEP and shared in the meeting provided a valuable basis for discussion.

## Inequality

Participants continually raised a number of inequality related risk factors including unequal land ownership and distribution, lack of access to natural resources, and the failure to distribute fairly the benefits from investment or development project. The growing inequality is further fuelled by a lack of systemic policies to provide compensation, decent work opportunities and alternative settlements to those affected or dispossessed of land.

## Land governance

Risk factors under this rubric covered weak and overlapping land governance systems including parallel legal systems in areas controlled by armed groups. Additionally, the lack of explicitly recognised and enforceable land entitlements for different groups including indigenous peoples, small subsistence farmers and women posed further risks as these often trigger forced evictions. Participants also noted that often existing and skewed legislation and policies made it difficult for vulnerable communities to register their land. Tensions are known to be further exacerbated through the numerous forced evictions in the region which are arbitrary and discriminatory and do not respect human rights. It was noted that low enforcement and implementation of human rights compliant measures and complaint mechanisms particularly if not in the interests of large corporations were factors for rising unrest and disputes.

## Access to justice

It was consistently underscored that limited access to justice is a crucial risk factor for conflict regarding land related violations of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as of civil and political rights. Violations of human rights are especially egregious against those protesting land acquisitions. Participants suggested examining the basic key elements of an effective process that allows for claiming rights. This could include amongst other, the number of cases brought to both judicial and non-judicial bodies including NHRIs; the number of decisions that comply with human rights standards and principles; And the nature of *de jure* or *de facto* discrimination preventing people from accessing justice. At the internationallevel, factors could include non-ratification of the optional protocol of the ICESCR in particular that would allow the presentation of individual complaints around violations of ESCRs in front of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Due diligence and prevention of human rights violations

The lack of effective and meaningful participation of people in decision-making and the failure to implement the FPIC in relation to indigenous populations were identified as risk factors. However, it was also noted that the implementation of FPIC can generate conflict between indigenous and other communities who are excluded from decision-making processes related to the land they inhabit and work.  Other factors potentially fuelling tensions include the lack of transparency in decision-making and limited access to information including maps of proposed development projects. Of particular significance is the lack of enforcement of the requirements for independent Environmental Impact Assessments prior to development projects.

## Civil and political rights

Critical indicators of risk identified are the criminalisation of dissent including freedom of expression and association, shrinking political space for civil society engagement, and the repression of human rights defenders, particularly those working on land related issues. In relation to the latter, arbitrary arrests, disappearance and extrajudicial executions were some of the egregious and yet common human rights violations mentioned. At the same time, it was recognised that the other side of mounting repression against HRDs was a resort to arms and the formation of armed militias. The need to track these transitions was underscored.The shrinking democratic space included growing restrictions on NGOs for receiving funds.

## Gender issues

A number of gender related risk factors includes both *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination against women such as being unable to inherit property, exclusion from political processes and lack of representation. Violence against women, especially sexual violence by security personnel and development project staff were cited as immediate triggers for escalating unrest and confrontation.

## Displacement

Participants continually raised the issue of displacement both as a consequence of violence and land related human rights violations, and as a risk factor in escalating unrest and conflict. Displacement increases pressure on resources including in urban areas and ignites tensions with host communities. Moreover, those displaced can become disenfranchised and disillusioned with political processes. Of particular concern are the youth and children who are either stateless or in IDP camps such as the children of Filipino migrants working in Sabah (Malaysia-Borneo). To fully assess this as a risk factor, the human rights actors need to work closely with humanitarian organisations who manage IDP camps.

## Increased securitization/militarisation

The increased securitisation and militarisation of areas particularly those occupied by businesses, was repeatedly raised as a crucial risk factor for increased violence and conflict, and an escalation in human rights violations. In the Philippines and other countries under discussion, there has been an unprecedented increase in military personnel to protect the mining activities of corporations and transnational businesses. This in turn has encouraged local youth to take up arms to defend land rights. Therefore in general, the presence of weapons and war arsenal is visibly higher in areas subjected to land acquisition. Another risk factor or red flag could be an increase in military spending in the overall national budget. This increase could signal heighted social tension and an inappropriate state response that could lead to violence and conflict.

# 8. Early warning mechanisms at international and national levels

The United Nations has played a role in early warning from as far back as 1994 when the Special Rapporteur on Rwanda warned of the impending genocide. However the 1999 the Carlsson Report on Rwanda (S/1999/1257) and the Secretary General’s report on Srebrenica emphasized the failure of the UN to pay proper attention to warning signs and undertake appropriate steps in response. The 2009 report of Charles Petrie on UN Action in Sri Lanka highlighted yet again the inadequate response of the UN in appropriately addressing an emerging crisis.

The report on Sri Lanka in particular led to the creation of the Human Rights Up Front (HRUF) Action Plan in 2013 which seeks to change the UN’s response to crises situations at different levels. HRUF requires the UN system to be alert to deteriorating human rights situations and supports early warning and better coordination, including by generating political support for early warning and preventive action. At the country level, the UN country teams are expected to undertake periodic analysis of risk factors to raise awareness of the human rights situation and the risk of serious violations. This risk analysis is supported by OHCHR’s human rights analysis. If concerns are identified, the UN programming and advocacy are required to be adapted through the development of a UN country strategy to mitigate risks.

At the regional level, the UN now conducts Regional Quarterly Reviews (RQRs), wherein countries are scanned for early warning signs and targeted for special focus should any of them reflect a potential for serious violations and crisis. These RQRs can recommend measures to be taken at the country level or request action at the Headquarter level where the Principals of UN entities (Senior Action Group, SAG) meet periodically on a regular basis to consider situations of potential concern, as well as on an ad-hoc basis to address the most serious, urgent or complex situations.

Other early warning mechanisms include those from the humanitarian sphere through the inter-agency standing committee. Every six months the IASC produces an early warning report jointly prepared by a UN analysts group, examining the upcoming six month period to ensure readiness to respond. This process brings together information from across the UN’s humanitarian system as well as from INGOs, and shares individual analysis and methodologies to address situations of serious concern. This in turn, informs decisions on where resources and attention should be focused. As such, the report seeks to deliver a detailed and synthesized assessment of potential situations of concern and the readiness status to respond, including updated contingency plans and related Advanced Preparedness Actions.

While the Readiness Analysis includes obstacles in the enjoyment of economic social and cultural rights, such as food shortages, yet in the assessment of risks and resulting presumed humanitarian needs as well as a deterioration of the human rights situation, OHCHR has found it difficult to ensure that human rights information is properly factored into the preparedness steps being proposed. Currently, the principal focus of OHCHR’s effort is to provide a human rights risk analysis at the global level for consideration with humanitarian partners.

Within the UN secretariat and agencies, participants raised the ongoing obstacles in incorporating human rights into early warning systems as these currently are based primarily on economic and political analysis. Practical obstacles include a lack of capacity and a failure to prioritise human rights. However several positive internal developments were identified including the *Human Rights up Front mechanism*; the *human rights due diligence policy* that sets out measures that all UN entities must undertake to ensure that any support provided to non-UN forces is consistent with the UN Charter and international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law; and the emphasis on building coherence in the UN system. Regarding the latter, there is a revised guidance note outlining the responsibilities of the Resident Coordinators and UN country teams to uphold human rights. However, the note focuses disproportionately on civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights are only minimally mentioned. It is important to frame the human rights analysis accurately and comprehensively. The non-recognition of economic and social rights as a potential root cause of future civil strife and conflict may compromise the realisation of the SDGs 2030 agenda. The importance of NGOs and human rights advocacy groups to reach out beyond the human rights mechanisms to engage with Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and programming staff, was underscored.

There are a number of existing human rights mechanisms that can play a more visible role in signalling early warning. Discussion at the EGM focussed on the preventative role that could potentially be played by the Special Procedures and the treaty monitoring bodies as well as the UPR mechanism.

At the national level, the example of the NHRI in the Philippines was shared which is addressing ESCR violations and thereby contributing to early warning through its policy, protection and promotion activities. Having signalled access to land as a risk factor, the NHRI focuses on identifying vulnerable populations in need of special protection. It develops advisory tools on land, housing and property rights, and internal displacement, and helps local governments to incorporate human rights into policies including on resettlement. There are however many practical obstacles including of accessing communities well before problems escalate into a full blown conflict.

# 9. Challenges

**The risk of a repressive state approach:** It was frequently observed that providing key information and alerts regarding escalating tensions to governments could in fact prompt a backlash from State authorities by way of response. It was mentioned that Oxford Analytica[[2]](#footnote-2) is advising mining companies in the Philippines to increase militarisation as they were becoming the target of violence by affected local populations.

**The limited potential of NHRIs**: While NHRIs are often well placed to monitor economic, social and cultural rights related to land, they often suffer from lack of capacity and outreach and are consequently unable to access the remoter areas. NHRIs may not comply with the Paris Principles and lack a strong legislative framework to conduct enquiries. They may also only have an advisory role with no prosecutorial powers.

**Data gathering at the local level:** Whilst there is greater information to develop an early warning system at the local level, it is often a question of how to safely access and use this knowledge.

**The diversity of conflict and unrest:** Participants identified a number of different types and stages of conflict and unrest ranging from emerging tensions, to repeating cyclical periods of conflict and peace, to entrenched conflict within which there are spikes of intense activity. How then would an early warning system apply to all variations of the context? In response many participants highlighted the importance of monitoring all of the risk factors over time and alerting policy makers, amongst others, to the changing scenarios.

**Difficulties in working with other movements:** Attention was repeatedly called to the work of diverse social movements including those focussing on environmental issues and climate change for building coherence, synergies and cooperation. The challenges of working together due to varying methodologies, protection concerns and priorities, are real. Collaboration can be impaired by an inability to share data, or by concerns that active engagement on human rights issues may lead to curbing of access to certain sensitive areas, especially regarding land issues. Participants at the same time emphasised that there is progress, and it is possible to build new alliances in spaces such as the annual Business and Human Rights Forum in Geneva.

# 10. Concluding remarks

Most participants believed that the warning signs flowing from a denial and violation of economic, social and cultural rights are self-evident. The human rights community is well aware that the ESCR violations are both a cause and a consequence of political unrest and conflict. The challenge instead is on how to integrate the warning signs from economic, social and cultural rights violations into early warning systems and to use them to increase the robustness of the broader UN risk management and preparedness system. It was recommended that the relationship between economic and social rights and conflict, as well as its impact in undermining economic growth, needed to be better understood. Strong emphasis was placed on the importance of applying this analysis to other political processes and global fora such as the Committee on World Food Security, Climate Change Summits, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Habitat III Agenda, global health epidemics, and for engaging more meaningfully with the UN agencies for effective and timely action.

1. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.oxan.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)