**Session: Environment Justice: A Human Rights based approach**

**Date: 28 August, 2019**

**Duration: 1hr**

**Format: Panel discussion**

**Background**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. In other words, your health should not suffer because of the environment where you live, work, play or learn.

The concept of environmental justice began as a movement in the 1980s due to the realization that a disproportionate number of polluting industries, power plants, and waste disposal areas were located near low-income or minority communities. The movement was set in place to ensure fair distribution of environmental burdens among all people regardless of their background.

**Environmental Justice Issues and Examples**

Examples of environmental burdens that may be considered under the umbrella of environmental justice cover many aspects of community life. These burdens can include any environmental pollutant, hazard or disadvantage that compromises the health of a community or its residents. For instance, one of the environmental justice issues and examples is inadequate access to healthy clean food and safe water. Certain communities, particularly lower-income or minority communities, often lack stores or other sources of healthy and affordable food and also lack amenities which provide them safe drinking water.

Air and water pollution are major environmental justice issues. Because many lower-income or minority communities are located near industrial plants or waste disposal sites, air and water quality can suffer if not properly monitored.

These communities may also contain older and unsafe homes. Older homes are more likely to have lead-based paint that can chip and find its way into the dust and soil surrounding the home, leading to illness. These houses may also be prone to structural problems, mold or other hazards that put residents at higher risk of health problems.

Right to a clean environment is a basic human right and that access to natural resources is the right of communities, such as tribals, who are primarily dependent on them.

The session will experience how different communities in India are dealing with and facing environment injustice for past many years, how India is stepping forward towards environment justice by enacting National Green Tribunal Act 2010 and hence providing the provisions for establishment of NGT for effective and expeditious disposal of environment related disputes, and through the National Mission for Clean Ganga, how surrounding communities are benefitting for livelihood and health and cases of companies which have proactively taken care of the rights of the community before initiating operations.