



## World Day to Combat Desertification and Droughts

**For Prelims:** World Day to Combat Desertification and Droughts, UNCCD, Forest Stewardship Council, Forest Stewardship Standard for India.

**For Mains:** Issue of Desertification and land degradation and steps to deal with the issue.

### Why in News?

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on 17<sup>th</sup> of June.

- On this day, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) organized **Desertification and Drought Day**.
  - The Union Minister released **Forest Stewardship Council's Forest Stewardship Standard for India (FSC FSSI)**.
    - FSC is a globally recognized certification system which sets criteria for audit of companies associated with timber related products.

### What are the Key Highlights of World Day to Combat Desertification and Droughts?

- **About:**
  - It is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and cooperation at all levels.
- **This Year's Theme:**
  - **Rising up from drought together.**
    - It emphasizes the need for early action to avoid disastrous consequences for humanity and the planetary ecosystems. [//](#)



- **Significance:**
  - Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the **1992 Rio Earth Summit**.
  - Two years later, in 1994, the **General Assembly established the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#)**, the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management, and declared **17 June "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought"**.
  - Later on, in 2007, the UN General Assembly declared **2010-2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the fight against Desertification** to mobilize global action to

fight land degradation, led again by the UNCCD Secretariat.

## What is Desertification?

- Degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.
- It does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dryland ecosystems - which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use.
- Additionally, poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land.

## What is Drought?

- Drought is generally considered as a deficiency in rainfall /precipitation over an extended period, usually a season or more, resulting in a water shortage causing adverse impacts on vegetation, animals, and/or people.
- Drought can also be caused due to forest fires, making the soil unsuitable for cultivation and making the soil water deficit.
- Land degradation in addition to Climate change results in increase in droughts.

## What is the Status of Desertification and Droughts?

- The number and duration of droughts has increased by 29% since 2000, as compared to the two previous decades (World Meteorological Organization 2021).
- 55M get effected every year due to droughts and by the year 2050, three-fourth population will get affected.
- 2.3 billion people already face water stress. More and more of us will be living in areas with extreme water shortages, including an estimated one in four children by 2040 ([United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund](#)). No country is immune to drought (UN-Water 2021).

## How to Tackle it?

- Need for accelerated Reforestation and tree generation.
- **Water management** — saving, reuse of treated water, rainwater harvesting, desalination, or direct use of seawater for salt-loving plants.
- Buttressing the soil through sand fences, windbreaks etc.
- Need for enriched and hyper fertilization of soil.
- **Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)**, enabling native sprouting tree growth through selective pruning of shrub shoots. The residue from pruned tress can be used to provide mulching for fields thus increasing soil water retention and reducing evaporation.

## What is United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)?

- Established in 1994, it is sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- It addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- The Convention's 197 parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.
- It is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation. The UNCCD secretariat facilitates cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly around knowledge and technology transfer for sustainable land management.
- The Dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, to meet these complex challenges with an integrated approach and the best possible use of natural resources. The UNCCD collaborates closely with the other two Rio Conventions:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- **UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework:**
  - It is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build.
- **UNCCD and Sustainable Development:**
  - **Goal 15 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), 2030** declares that “we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations”.

## What are the other Related Initiatives?

- **National Initiatives:**
  - **[Integrated Watershed Management Programme:](#)**
    - It aims to restore ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources with the creation of Rural Employment.
  - **Desert Development Programme:**
    - launched in 1995 to minimize the adverse effect of drought and to rejuvenate the natural resource base of the identified desert areas.
  - **[National Mission on Green India:](#)**
    - It was approved in 2014 with the objective of protecting, restoring and enhancing India’s diminishing forest cover with a deadline of 10 years.
- **Global Initiatives:**
  - **Bonn Challenge:**
    - The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
    - At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 21 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2030.
      - The target now revised to restore 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030.

**[Source: PIB](#)**

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