



## United Nations Forum on Forests

**For Prelims:** [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), [UN Economic and Social Council](#), [United Nations Forum on Forests \(UNFF\)](#), [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#).

**For Mains:** United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

### Why in News?

- The **eighteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF18)**, held in New York from **May 8-12, 2023**, brought together delegates from around the world to discuss the relationship between [sustainable forest management \(SFM\)](#), **energy**, and **the achievement of the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

### What are the Major Highlights of UNFF18?

- **Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Tropical Region:**
  - In a recent development, experts have underscored the significance of practicing **SFM in tropical regions**. With the surge in bioenergy consumption since 2013, there has been a **mounting strain on forests, making the need for sustainable sourcing of tropical timber even more crucial**.
    - The rise in bioenergy usage, driven by the **global push for renewable energy sources**, has inadvertently created additional pressure on tropical forests. As bioenergy relies on **biomass, such as wood pellets and chips**, as fuel, the demand for timber has intensified. This has raised concerns about the **potential negative impact on forest ecosystems**, biodiversity, and the overall sustainability of these regions.
    - By implementing sustainable practices, such as **selective logging and reforestation**, the long-term health and vitality of these forests can be safeguarded.
- **Forest Ecosystems and Energy:**
  - Forestry director of the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), highlighted the significant **contribution of forest ecosystems to renewable energy requirements**.
    - **Over five billion people** worldwide benefit from non-timber forest products, with forests providing **55% of these renewable energy needs**.
- **Forests and Climate Change Mitigation:**
  - The **Emissions Gap Report's findings** underscore the immense climate mitigation potential that forests hold. Through processes such as [carbon sequestration](#), **forests act as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing substantial amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere**.
    - By preserving and sustainably managing forests, **nations can leverage this natural capacity** to help bridge the emissions gap and achieve climate targets.
    - Forests have the potential for reducing **5 gigatonnes of emissions**.
- **Challenges and Countries Perspectives:**
  - **India:** India presented a case of a UNFF country-led initiative on long-term SFM and

expressed concerns regarding [wildfires](#) and the limitations of current forest certification schemes.

- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia highlighted the importance of preventing forest fires and **urban expansion encroaching on forested areas**.
- **Suriname:** Suriname, claiming to be the **most forested and carbon-negative country**, shared its experiences of economic pressures impacting its green cover and environmental policies.
  - The country committed to deriving **23% of its net energy from renewable sources by 2025** and achieving [carbon neutrality](#) by 2060.
- **Congo and the Dominican Republic:** These countries stressed their commitment to forest conservation measures and called for **strategies to reduce pressures on natural forests while improving livelihoods**, given their heavy reliance on fuelwood.
- **Australia:** Australia **mentioned that some species rely on fire for germination** and shared information on mechanical fuel load reduction trials. The country emphasised the need to make wood residue markets financially feasible.
- **Other Perspectives:** Countries like Zhimin and Satkuru suggested replacing **plastic sticks with residues of compacted bamboo or sawdust** to produce **briquettes and pellets**, offering sustainable alternatives for energy production.

## What is the United Nations Forum on Forests?

### ▪ About:

- The **UNFF** is an intergovernmental policy forum which promotes “**management, conservation and sustainable development of all types** of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end.
- UNFF was established in **2000 by the UN Economic and Social Council**. The Forum has universal membership, and is **composed of all Member States of the United Nations**.

### ▪ Major Related Events:

- **1992** - UN Conference on Environment and Development adopts the “Forest Principles” and Agenda 21.
- **1995/1997** - **Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (1995)** and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (1997) are established to implement the Forest Principles from 1995 to 2000.
- **2000** - UNFF is established as a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council.
- **2006** - UNFF agrees on **four Global Objectives on Forests**.
  - The Four Global Objectives on Forests:
    - Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management (SFM);
    - Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits;
    - Increase significantly the area of sustainably managed forests;
    - Reverse the decline in official development assistance for SFM
    - Mobilise increased financial resources for implementation of SFM.
- **2007** - UNFF adopts the **UN Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (Forest Instrument)**.
- **2009** - UNFF adopts decision on financing for sustainable forest management which calls for creation of a Facilitative Process to assist countries in reversing a 20-year decline in forest financing.
  - The Facilitative Process has an initial focus on [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) and Low Forest Cover Countries \(LFCCs\)](#).
- **2011**- The International Year of Forests, “**Forests for People**”.

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**

**Prelims**

**Q1. The FAO accords the status of 'Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)' to traditional agricultural systems. What is the overall goal of this initiative? (2016)**

1. To provide modern technology, training in modern farming methods and financial support to local communities of identified GIAHS so as to greatly enhance their agricultural productivity.
2. To identify and safeguard eco-friendly traditional farm practices and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems of the local communities.
3. To provide Geographical Indication status to all the varieties of agricultural produce in such identified GIAHS.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

**Q2. At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006? (2021)**

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- (c) Ministry of Rural Development
- (d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

**Ans-(d)**

**Q3. A particular State in India has the following characteristics: (2012)**

1. It is located on the same latitude which passes through northern Rajasthan.
2. It has over 80% of its area under forest cover.
3. Over 12% of forest cover constitutes the Protected Area Network in this State.

**Which one among the following States has all the above characteristics?**

- (a) Arunachal Pradesh
- (b) Assam
- (c) Himachal Pradesh
- (d) Uttarakhand

**Ans: (a)**

---

### **Mains**

**Q.** "The most significant achievement of modern law in India is the constitutionalization of environmental problems by the Supreme Court." Discuss this statement with the help of relevant case laws. **(2022)**

**Source: DTE**

