

Bonn Challenge [UPSC Environment & Ecology Notes]

Bonn Challenge

The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million by 2030.

- The Challenge was launched by the Government of Germany and the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#).
- Initially, the Bonn Challenge was launched with the 2020 goals at Bonn, Germany in 2011.
- Later, at the 2014 UN Climate Summit, the goals were extended to 2030 by the New York Declaration on Forests.
- As of June 2021, 74 commitments have been made by various national governments, private companies, etc. The pledges total to 210 million hectares.
- The Bonn Challenge is aligned with the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), the Aichi Targets, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) goal.
- The Challenge helps countries in the achievement of national priorities of food and water security and rural development. At the same time, it aids countries in achieving their commitments to mitigate land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss.
- The Challenge exhorts the achievement of their stated goals through an approach to restoration called **forest landscape restoration (FLR)**. FLR restores ecological integrity while enhancing human well-being.

Why is Restoration of Degraded Land Important?

Degradation of land reduces the ability of the land to support life. It causes loss of the productive capacity of the soils for the present and future generations. Land degradation and [deforestation](#) causes food insecurity, increased food prices, climate change, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and environmental hazards. Currently, land degradation is occurring at an alarming rate worldwide.

- According to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), about 25 percent of the total land area has been degraded.
- Degraded land contributes to climate change since it releases soil carbon and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere.
- Unsustainable agricultural practices also cause land degradation.
- At the current pace of degradation, by 2050, it is estimated that about 95% of the earth's land could become degraded (GEF).
- About 3.2 million people are adversely affected by land degradation globally, with the most affected including rural communities, smallholder farmers and the economically backward sections.
- Women and children are among those affected severely by land degradation.

- With the world's population rising, there is going to be severe pressure on land for food security, fuel, fibre, etc.
- Climate change exacerbates variations in yields and income from agriculture, threatening the resilience of agro-ecosystems and stability of food production systems.
- Bringing back degraded and deforested lands can help stabilise the climate while sustainably supporting global and local economies.

Read more on the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#), a UN convention to combat desertification in the link.

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is the ongoing process of restoring the ecological functionality of degraded and deforested landscapes while enhancing the well-being of people who coexist with these places.

- FLR emphasises both biodiversity conservation and human livelihoods.
- It involves utilizing the land in a sustainable manner such as by planting new trees, creating wildlife reserves, regenerating forests, creating ecological corridors, engaging in agroforestry, engaging in riverside plantings to preserve waterways, managed plantations and agriculture.
- The approach draws on the best science as well as traditional and indigenous practices to decide on the intervention to be taken.
- The process seeks to regain, improve and maintain a degraded or deforested landscape's vital ecological and social functions in the long-term, and build its resilience to ecological and societal changes.

Bonn Challenge and India

India joined the Bonn Challenge in 2015 with a pledge to restore 13 million hectares of degraded land by 2020 and an additional 8 million hectares by 2030.

- In 2018, India presented the first ever country progress report by any country and reiterated its commitment to the Challenge.
- The report was published jointly by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the IUCN.
- It compiled data from government sources, NGOs and the private sector.
- As per the report, India has brought an area of 9.8 million hectares under restoration since 2011.
 - Of this, about 94% was contributed by government agencies alone while NGOs and private companies accounted for 3.6% and 2% respectively.
- India hosted a South Asia regional consultation on the Bonn Challenge and forest landscape restoration in August 2017, which was attended by government and non-government representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

- In June 2019, the Indian government launched a flagship project on enhancing capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) and Bonn Challenge in India.
 - The objective of the project is to develop and adapt best practices and monitoring protocols for Indian states and build capacity within the five pilot states (Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Nagaland and Maharashtra.) on FLR and Bonn Challenge.
 - The project will be expanded to the rest of the country in later phases.

Who launched the Bonn Challenge?

The Bonn Challenge was launched by Germany with the IUCN.

Is India part of the Bonn Challenge?

Yes, India pledged its commitment to the Challenge in 2015.

What is the progress in the Bonn Challenge?

According to the IUCN, the Bonn Challenge has succeeded in achieving 60% of the 2020 targets and 35% of the 2030 targets.

What percentage of the planet's land is covered by forests?

According to the FAO State of the World's Forests 2020 report, forests cover about 31% of the global land area.