

UNCCD - United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification

UNCCD stands for United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Established in 1994, UNCCC is a sole legally binding [environment convention](#) that links development and environment to sustainable land management.


The UN Convention to Combat Desertification aims to combat desertification and the ill-effects of drought. Learn about this convention, UNCCD COP14, UNCCD 2018-30 Strategic Framework and basic facts for the [IAS Exam](#).

UNCCD - Basic Facts

The UNCCD is a [United Nations](#) convention aimed at addressing desertification and droughts.

UPSC PRELIMS FACTS

UNCCD



Name: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification


Opened for signature: 1994

Entered into force: 1996

Sector: Combating desertification and droughts

Has India ratified UNCCD? Yes (in 1996)

Nodal agency in India: Environment Ministry

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- It is a legally binding convention linking development and environment to sustainable land management.
- The UNCCD addresses particularly the arid, semi-arid & dry sub-humid areas, called **drylands**, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples are found.
- The convention was drafted and opened for signing in 1994. It became effective in 1996 after receiving 50 ratifications.
- The convention obliges national governments to take measures to tackle the issue of desertification.
- The convention's 2018 - 2030 Strategic Framework is a comprehensive international commitment to attain Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) aiming at:
 - The restoration of productivity of degraded land.
 - Enhancing the livelihoods of people dependent on them.
 - Mitigating the impact of droughts on vulnerable populations.
- The convention focuses on having a bottom-up approach to achieve its goals, by involving the local communities.
- The UNCCD is one of the three **Rio Conventions**, the other two being:
 - [Convention on Biological Diversity \(UNCBD\)](#)

- [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#)
- The three Rio Conventions work in close collaboration with each other.
- To spread the word about the UNCCD, 2006 was declared as "International Year of Deserts and Desertification".

UNCCD and India

India ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification in December 1996.

- The nodal ministry for the convention in India is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- India faces a huge desertification problem. A 2016 ISRO report stated that 29% of the land in India was degraded.
- The 14th Conference of Parties (COP) to the UNCCD was held in India in 2019.
 - The conference which was held in Greater Noida had the theme, "Restore Land, Sustain Future".
 - India is the COP president for 2019 - 2021.
 - India is also a part of the [Bonn Challenge](#), which is an international effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.

UNCCD - COP 14

The UNCCD COP 14 (14th edition of Conference of Parties) ended on 13 September 2019. This was the first time that India hosted an edition of the UNCCD COP. India is among the select few countries to have hosted the COP of all three Rio conventions on climate change, biodiversity and land.

Important Takeaway from UNCCD COP 14-

- The theme of the Conference was 'Restore land, Sustain future'.
- The Conference adopted the Delhi Declaration and expressed a range of issues which includes gender and health, ecosystem restoration, taking action on climate change, private sector engagement, Peace Forest Initiative and recovery of 26 million hectares of degraded land in India.

What is the Peace forest Initiative?

An initiative of South Korea to use ecological restoration as a peace-building process. The Peace Forest initiative aims at addressing the issue of land degradation in conflict-torn border areas and would go a long way in alleviating tensions and building trust between communities living there and between enemy countries in particular.

- The country parties have agreed to make the [Sustainable Development Goal](#) target of achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030, a national target for action.
- A one-stop shop for all actions on drought called Drought Toolbox is launched. It is a sort of knowledge bank which contains tools that strengthen the ability of countries to anticipate and prepare for drought effectively and mitigate their impacts as well as tools that enable communities to anticipate and find the land management tools that help them to build resilience to [drought](#).

- To address migration driven by land degradation an initiative 3S i.e. Sustainability, Stability and Security is launched by 14 African countries. The main aim is at restoring land and creating green jobs for migrants and vulnerable groups.
- The global Youth Caucus on Desertification and Land convened its first official gathering in conjunction with the UNCCD COP14 to bring together youth advocates from different parts of the world, to build their capacity, share knowledge, build networks, and to engage them meaningfully in the UNCCD processes.
- International coalition for action on Sand and Dust storms (SDS): The coalition will develop an SDS source base map with the goal of improving monitoring and response to these storms. SDS affects approximately 77% of UNCCD country Parties or approximately 151 countries.

UNCCD COP 14 High-Level Segment Meeting

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the High-Level Segment (HLS) of UNCCD COP14.

1. India to promote [south-south cooperation](#) and knowledge-sharing is establishing a center of excellence for forest research which will assist in addressing the issue of land degradation, climate change and [biodiversity loss](#). Read in detail about [Climate Change in India](#) on the given link.
2. COP participants to contribute to a global water action agenda that can support land degradation neutrality. Check out the detailed information on [Water scarcity](#) on the link provided here.
3. India advocated the need to eradicate the menace of single-use plastic.
4. India called upon the leadership of UNCCD to conceive a global water action agenda that is central to the Land Degradation Neutrality strategy.
5. India has proposed to set up a global technical support institute for the member countries of the UNCCD for their capacity building and support regarding the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Program.
6. India would raise its ambition of the total area that would be restored from its land degradation status, from twenty-one million hectares to twenty-six million hectares between now and 2030.

What is Desertification?

Desertification is the process by which the biological productivity of drylands (arid and semiarid lands) is reduced due to natural or manmade factors. Desertification does not imply the expansion of existing deserts. Some of the causes of desertification are deforestation, over-cultivation, overgrazing, imprudent irrigation practices, etc. Further information on [Desertification](#) is available on the linked page.

UNCCD 2018-30 Strategic Framework

The UNCCC 2018-30 strategic framework reaffirmed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which is an integral part of it and recognizing the important impact that UNCCD implementation will have on the overall achievement of their objectives. The following are the important points of UNCCC 2018-30 strategic framework:

1. Achieve UNCCD objectives and also the objectives of 2030 agenda for sustainable development.
2. Achieve particularly the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 15 by 2030.
3. Enhance the ecosystems; services.
4. The strategic objectives are:
 - Affected ecosystems improvement

- Desertification combating
- Sustainable land management
- Living conditions of affected population improvement
- Drought effects mitigation, adaptation and management
- Global environmental benefits generation
- Mobilization of substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to implement the objectives of UNCCD

UNCCD COP

The conference of the parties is the meeting of the ratifying governments. There has been 14 UNCCD COP till date. The latest being UNCCD COP14 that took place in New Delhi in 2019.

Some important initiatives introduced through UNCCD COPs are:

1. At COP14 Prime Minister of India announced that the country will restore an additional 5 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, raising the land to be restored in India to 26 million hectares.
2. Ankara Initiative of Turkey - It was introduced through UNCCD COP 12 that reiterated the very purpose of UNCCD and its objectives.
3. Changwon Initiative of the Republic of Korea - It was introduced in COP10 that aims to enhance the scientific process of UNCCD.

Frequently Asked Questions Related to the UNCCD

Is UNCCD legally binding?

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), adopted in 1994, is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.

What is Desertification?

Desertification is a type of land degradation in which a relatively dry land region becomes increasingly arid, typically losing its bodies of water as well as vegetation and wildlife. Desertification is a significant global ecological and environmental problem.

Is India a member of UNCCD?

India ratified the UNCCD Convention on 17th December 1996. This convention can be called as “Mother convention” of the other two Rio Conventions that emerged as a major outcome of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit viz. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).