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UN Convention to Combat Desertification: COP 14

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The 14th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) ended on 13th September 2019.

- Held in Greater Noida, this was the **first time that India hosted** an edition of the UNCCD COP.
- The **theme** of the Conference was '**Restore land, Sustain future**'.
- India being the global host for COP 14 **has taken over the COP Presidency from China for the next two years** till 2021.
- India is among the select few countries to have hosted the COP of **all three Rio conventions** on **climate change, biodiversity and land**.

Key Takeaways

- **Delhi Declaration:** Commitment for a range of issues, including gender and health, ecosystem restoration, taking action on climate change, private sector engagement, **Peace Forest Initiative** and **recovery of five million hectares** of degraded land in India.
 - The country parties have agreed to make the **Sustainable Development Goal target of achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030**, a national target for action.
 - **Peace Forest Initiative:** It is an initiative of **South Korea** to use ecological restoration as a peace-building process. It 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.
- **Drought Toolbox:** It is launched as a one-stop-shop for all **actions on drought**. 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.

- **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.
- **Initiative of Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S):** Launched by **14 African countries to address migration driven by land degradation.** It aims at restoring land and creating green jobs for migrants and vulnerable groups.
- **Cooperation From Youth:** 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.

High-Level Segment Meeting of the COP14

The Prime Minister of India inaugurated and addressed the high-level segment meeting of the COP-14.

- India seeks to propose initiatives for greater **South-South cooperation** in addressing issues of climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.
- 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.
- 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.
- India called upon the leadership of UNCCD to conceive a **global water action agenda which is central to the Land Degradation Neutrality strategy.**
- India advocated on the need to **eradicate the menace of single-use plastic.**

Land in trouble

The decline in the productive capacity of land due to climatic factors and human intervention is land degradation. A look at important conclusions from the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2016, which was the latest survey done on the subject

94.53
million hectares (mha)
Area of India undergoing the process of land degradation, as of 2003-05 – 28.76% of the total geographic area

96.4
million hectares (mha)
Area of India undergoing the process of land degradation, as of 2011-13 – 29.32% of the total geographic area

26 *million hectares (mha)*
The number of hectares of degraded land which India now aims to rehabilitate by 2030, up from the previous commitment of 21 mn hectares



Source: PIB