



United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Data

For Prelims: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Data, [UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#), [Land Degradation](#), [Greenhouse Gas Emissions \(GHG\)](#), Land Degradation Neutrality.

For Mains: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Data, Environmental pollution and degradation, Environmental impact assessment.

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the [UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#) has announced the launch of its **first-ever Data Dashboard**, which shows that Land Degradation is advancing at an astonishing rate across all regions.

- It compiled national reporting figures from 126 countries to provide a comprehensive overview of the [Land Degradation](#) situation globally.
- The 21st session of the UNCCD will take place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in November 2023. This session will focus on reviewing global progress towards achieving **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** and addressing related issues.

What is Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)?

- LDN is a simple idea and a powerful tool, means to secure **enough healthy and productive natural resources** by **avoiding Degradation** whenever possible and restoring land that has already been degraded.
- At its core are **better land management practices** and better **land-use planning** that will improve economic, social and ecological sustainability for present and future generations.
- LDN provides significant **benefits in terms of mitigation and adaptation to climate change**. Halting and reversing land degradation can transform the **land from being a source of [Greenhouse Gas Emissions \(GHG\)](#)** to a carbon sink, by increasing carbon stocks in soils and vegetation.

What are the Key Highlights of the UNCCD Data on Land Degradation?

- **Land Degradation Trends:**
 - From 2015 to 2019, the world lost over **100 million hectares** of productive land annually, which is **twice the size of Greenland**.
 - Land degradation is **worsening rapidly on a global scale**.
- **Regional Variances:**

- Eastern and Central Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean experience **severe degradation**, impacting at least **20% of their total land area**.
- Sub-Saharan Africa, Western and Southern Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean have **experienced land degradation rates faster** than the **global average**.
- In sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 163 million hectares and 108 million hectares, respectively, have **succumbed to land degradation since 2015**.
- **Bright Spots:**
 - Some countries have shown progress in combating land degradation. For instance, **In sub-Saharan Africa, Botswana reduced land degradation from 36% to 17%** of its territory.
 - The country has **committed a total of 45.3 million hectares to LDN**, including both measures to avoid further degradation as well as restoration interventions in selected land degradation hotspots.
 - In the Dominican Republic, **the proportion of degraded land has decreased from 49% to 31% between 2015 and 2019**, with ongoing efforts to restore 240 000 hectares in the Yaque del Norte River basin and in cocoa production areas in San Francisco de Macoris province.
 - While Uzbekistan reported the highest proportion of degraded land (26.1%) in the Central Asia region, it also saw the largest decrease – **from 30% to 26% compared to 2015**.
 - Between 2018-2022, Uzbekistan carried out saxaul planting to eliminate salt and dust emissions from the **drained bottom of the Aral Sea**.
- **India's Statistics:**
 - Degraded Land Area in India has been increased from **4.42% in 2015 to 9.45 % in 2019**.

What are the Recommendations of UNCCD to Achieve LDN Targets?

- The UNCCD data emphasizes the need to restore 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land by 2030 to achieve LDN targets outlined in the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- The UNCCD highlights that although global trends are concerning, it is still possible to **meet or exceed LDN goals through stopping further degradation** and accelerating restoration efforts.
- Many countries have set voluntary LDN targets for 2030, and funding is crucial for these efforts.

What is Land Degradation?

- **About:**
 - Land degradation is caused by **multiple forces, including extreme weather** conditions, particularly drought.
 - It is also caused by **human activities that pollute or degrade** the quality of soils and land utility.
- **Impact:**
 - [Desertification](#) is a consequence of severe land degradation and is defined as a process that creates arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.
 - It accelerates [Climate Change](#) and biodiversity loss, and contributes to droughts, wildfires, involuntary migration and the emergence of [Zoonotic Infectious Diseases](#).

What are the Efforts to Curb Land Degradation?

- **Global Efforts:**
 - The [Bonn Challenge](#): To bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
 - [Great Green Wall](#): Initiative by [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\)](#), where eleven countries in Sahel-Saharan Africa have focused efforts to fight against land degradation and revive native plant life to the landscape.
- **India's Efforts:**
 - [Integrated Watershed Management Programme \(IWMP\) \(Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana\)](#)
 - The [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme \(MGNREGS\)](#),

- Soil Conservation in the Catchment of River Valley Project,
- National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA).
- [Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas by ISRO \(Indian Space Research Organisation\)](#).

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

▪ About:

- **Established in 1994**, it is the 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.
- The UNCCD works with the other two Rio Conventions to address the interlinked challenges of land, climate and biodiversity:
 - 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.

▪ UNCCD and Sustainable Development:

- Goal 15 of 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”.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions

Prelims

Q. What is/are the importance/importances of the ' United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification' ? (2016)

1. It aims to promote effective action through innovative national programmes and supportive international partnerships.
2. It has a special/particular focus on South Asia and North Africa regions, and its Secretariat facilitates the allocation of major portion of financial resources to these regions.
3. It is committed to bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating the desertification.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. The process of desertification does not have climate boundaries. Justify with examples. **(2020)**

Q. In what way micro-watershed development projects help in water conservation in drought-prone and semi-arid regions of India? **(2016)**

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