Bonn Challenge & India's Goal

Mains: *GS- III – Environment*

Why in News?

India has restored 21.7 million hectares of degraded and deforested land between 2011 and 2020, according to the country's second progress report on the Bonn Challenge.

What about the Bonn Challenge?

- **Bonn Challenge** – It is a global initiative launched in 2011 by Germany and the IUCN.
- Aim – To restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2020, with an additional target of 350 million hectares by 2030.
- **Key Focus** –
    - Ecosystem restoration through planted forests, natural regeneration, silviculture, agroforestry, and mangrove restoration.
    - Carbon sequestration, and
    - Improving livelihoods.
- **Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)** – The Bonn Challenge promotes FLR, a concept introduced by *IUCN and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)* in 2000.
- FLR prioritises both biodiversity conservation with human livelihoods, ensuring sustainable management of landscapes.
- **Global Commitment Links** – The Bonn Challenge is a direct contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.
- It offers a practical way of achieving international commitments, including the
    - Sustainable development goals (sdgs),
    - Aichi biodiversity targets of the convention on biodiversity (CBD), and
    - Paris agreement.

What about the India's progress report on the Bonn Challenge & its findings?

- **Released by** – Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), based on inputs from state forest departments and the Department of Land Resources.
- **India's Commitment** – India pledged to restore 13 million hectares, later revised to 26 million hectares by 2030, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UNCCD COP14 in 2019 in India.
- **India's Progress So Far** – Between 2011 and 2017, India restored 9.8 million hectares of land, according to the *first Bonn Challenge progress report*.
- This success was driven by national schemes such as

    - Compensatory afforestation fund,
    - Green india mission,
    - National afforestation programme, and
    - Mahatma gandhi national rural employment guarantee scheme, along with dedicated state-level greening efforts.
- **Causes** – Land degradation occurs due to habitat loss, exploitation of natural resources, invasive alien species, climate change, desertification, and pollution.
- This affects ecosystems and their capacity to support biodiversity and communities that depend on them for their livelihood.
- **State Performance** – Telangana led with 4.18 million hectares restored, largely through agroforestry (3.6 million hectares).
- Other leading states included Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Job Generation** – It was estimated that the restoration efforts generated 1,224.51 million man-days of jobs.
- **Scale of Degradation –** In India, 1.45 million hectares (0.44%) of the total geographical area, experienced degradation between 2011-13 and 2018-19.
- While 97.85 million hectares (29.77%) of the country's geographical area are affected by land degradation and desertification.
- About 461.14 million tonnes of carbon (343.66 million tonnes, accounting for plantation mortality) were estimated to be sequestered due to the restoration.
- *Land Use, Land-use change, and the forestry* sector are among the key avenues for sequestering the planet-warming carbon dioxide.

What are the efforts taken by the Indian government for land restoration?

- **Green India Mission (GIM)** – GIM was rolled out in 2014 as one of the eight missions under India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- **Aim** – To combat climate change by increasing forest and tree cover, and the ecological restoration of degraded ecosystems and forests & to improve the livelihoods of communities dependent on forest produce.
- **Ek Ped Maa ke Naam** – It is a nationwide campaign, initiated by Prime Minister to inspire citizens to plant trees and raise awareness about the environment to promote ecological balance while strengthening the bond of gratitude with one's mother.

- **Aravalli Green Wall Initiative** – It was launched by the Prime Minister in 2025 to combat desertification and restore degraded land across four states.
- It aims to create a buffer zone of 5 km around the mountain range, covering 6.45 million hectares.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act** – Under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016, project developers, government or private, are obliged to pay a compensation amount and various other fees if the project involves diversion of forest land.

According to the Union Environment Ministry, afforestation has been carried out over around 3.20 lakh hectares through CAMPA-supported activities during the past five years.

- **Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana** – The objective is to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving, and developing degraded natural resources such as soil, vegetative cover, and water.
- The outcomes are prevention of soil erosion, regeneration of natural vegetation, rainwater harvesting, and recharging of the groundwater table.

What is the significance of the Bonn Challenge with respect to India?

- **Livelihood Generation** – The restoration initiatives have generated approximately 1.22 billion person-days of employment, significantly boosted rural economies and provided localized jobs.
- **Tackling Degradation** – According to the India Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, nearly 30% of India's total geographical area is affected by land degradation.
- Restoring these drylands and rangelands is critical to agricultural stability and livestock health.
- **Global Significance** – By participating, India has strengthened its role in international frameworks like the Paris Agreement, SDGs, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

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Reference

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