

Combat desertification - UNCCD COP17

Prelims: Current events of National and International Importance | Environment

Why in news?

COP17 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification opened in Ulaanbaatar

17th Conference of the Parties (COP17)

- The **17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** opened in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia.
- Mongolia, the host country, says 77% of its land is affected by desertification and land degradation.
- It will be held under the theme of **Restoring Land, Restoring Hope**.
- It opened with calls to turn land restoration pledges into finance and action.
- The talks return to the unresolved question of a global drought framework, after countries failed to agree on a legally binding drought deal at COP16 in Riyadh.

Major Agenda

- The role of COP17 presidency is to build consensus and facilitate discussion till a drought decision would be gaveled.
- Negotiations were pushed to COP17, making Ulaanbaatar the next test of whether governments can bridge the divisions that stalled the deal in Saudi Arabia.
- The priority at COP17 was to accelerate implementation of the target to restore 1 billion hectares by 2030, while expanding access to finance through innovative mechanisms.
- It is therefore seeking to broaden the pool of actors involved in implementation, including private-sector investors, local communities, Indigenous peoples and civil society, while encouraging new financing mechanisms for land restoration and drought resilience.

COP16

- Countries have pledged to restore about 1 billion hectares of degraded land, while the global degradation problem is estimated at 1.5 billion to 2 billion hectares.
- The most politically difficult issue before the conference is the global drought protocol left unresolved at COP16 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, (the outgoing COP16 presidency).
- In 2025, the countries failed to agree on a legally binding deal to tackle drought.
- Some parties, including the African Group, pushed for a binding protocol, while others favored a non-binding drought framework.

- Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership was launched at COP16.
- It was the one mechanism through which countries could move from commitments to action.
- The mechanism had received over \$12 billion in pledges by the end of COP16.
- The partnership is intended to help countries move from responding to drought after it strikes to building resilience before it hits, including through drought preparedness, early-warning systems and access to finance.
- But the challenge at COP17 will be to ensure that the pledges translate into projects and support reaching communities most vulnerable to drought.

About UNCCD

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21.
- It was adopted in Paris, France, on 17 June 1994 and entered into force in December 1996.
- It is the only internationally legally binding framework set up to address the problem of desertification.
- It has 197 parties, making it near universal in reach.
- The Holy See (Vatican City) is the only state that is not a party to the convention.
- The Convention is based on the principles of participation, partnership and decentralization—the backbone of good governance and sustainable development.
- It is for Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.



Reference

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