

Global Forest Goals Report 2026

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Biodiversity

Why in News?

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat recently released the Global Forest Goals Report 2026.

The assessment warns that the world is falling short of its forest restoration targets, with fuelwood demand emerging as a critical driver of degradation.

Findings of the Report

Forest Cover and Loss

- **Global Decline** - Total forest cover dropped from 4.18 billion hectares (2015) to 4.14 billion hectares (2025).
- **Primary Forest Depletion** - Nearly 16 million hectares of primary (untouched) forests were lost in the last decade, with South America witnessing the steepest decline.
- **Agricultural Expansion** - Remains the single largest driver of global deforestation due to land conversion for crops and livestock.

The Fuelwood and Energy Crisis

- **Fuelwood & Charcoal** - Rising demand for wood-based energy has overtaken other factors as a primary cause of forest degradation (the thinning of forests without total removal), particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia.
- **Poverty Link** - This highlights the persistent gap in access to clean cooking energy and the link between energy poverty and environmental health.

Climate and Restoration Challenges

- **Climate Pressures** - Intensifying droughts, record-breaking heatwaves, and wildfires are accelerating the weakening of forest ecosystems.
- **The Restoration Gap** - While 91 countries pledged to restore 190 million hectares, only **44 million hectares (approx. 23%)** were actually restored by 2025.
- **Asia's Leadership** - Asia emerged as the best-performing region in restoration, accounting for over **31 million hectares** of the total restored area globally.

Implications and Recommendations

- **Carbon Sink Weakening** - Degradation reduces the ability of forests to sequester carbon,

creating a dangerous feedback loop for global warming.

- **Biodiversity Threat** - The loss of primary forests is irreversible in human timescales and threatens millions of endemic species.
- **Sustainable Supply Chains** - The report calls for "deforestation-free" global supply chains and stronger governance to regulate timber and charcoal trade.

For Reference: [Down to Earth | IAS Parliament](#)

