UNEP’s Champions of the Earth award

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in news?

Recently, the United Nation Environment Programme’s Champions of the Earth award for the year 2025 was announced.

- **Launched in –** 2005
- It is the ***UN’s highest environmental honor*** which celebrates leaders from public, private, and civil society sectors.
- **Focus –** Tackling the ***triple planetary crisis*** - climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.
- Past honorees include scientists, policymakers, grassroots activists, and entrepreneurs who have reshaped environmental governance.
- **5 categories –**
  - Lifetime Achievement
  - Policy Leadership
  - Action and Inspiration
  - Entrepreneurial Vision
  - Science and Innovation

Winners of 2025

Laureate	Category	Reason for Recognition
Imazon (Brazilian research institute)	Science and Innovation	Developed **AI-driven geospatial tools** to monitor and curb deforestation, advancing forest protection and biodiversity conservation.
Manfredi Caltagirone	Lifetime Achievement	Championed transparency and **science-based action** on **methane emissions**, influenced the EU’s first methane regulation, and shaped global energy policy.

Mariam Issoufou (Architect)	Entrepreneurial Vision	Redefined sustainable, **climate-resilient buildings** by grounding architecture in local materials and cultural heritage, promoting eco-friendly urban design.
Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change (Youth-led NGO)	Policy Leadership	Secured a landmark advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) **affirming states' legal obligations** to prevent climate harm and protect human rights.
Supriya Sahu (India, IAS Officer)	Inspiration and Action	Led initiatives in **sustainable cooling, ecosystem restoration**, plastic waste management, and wildlife conservation, creating 2.5 million green jobs and expanding forest cover in Tamil Nadu. Also fighting climate change, adapting to its effects, and dealing with extreme heat. Her projects have shown that by combining **good government, natural methods, and both simple (low-tech) and advanced (high-tech) tools**, we can **protect people who are at risk** while also **cutting down on pollution that causes global warming.**

Previous Indian Winners includes –

- **Madhav Gadgil (2024) –** Received the *Lifetime Achievement* Award for his extensive work in environmental conservation and sustainable development, noted by.
- **Narendra Modi (2018) –** Awarded the *Policy Leadership* award by the UN for India's efforts in climate action, notes.
- **Jinali Mody (2025)** – Recognized as one of the Young Champions of the Earth for her *entrepreneurial work* in water treatment and circular economy, reports.
- **Purnima Devi Barman (2022)-** Wildlife biologist, for her work to protect the Greater Adjutant Stork (Hargila) with an all-female conservation group.

References

1. The Hindu | Surpiya Sahu wins UNEP award

2. UNEP | Champions of Earth Award

