

US Blocks Global Drought Framework

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | International Relations

Why in News?

During the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17), the United States drew a "red line" against establishing any international drought instrument (whether legally binding or voluntary).

Key Highlights

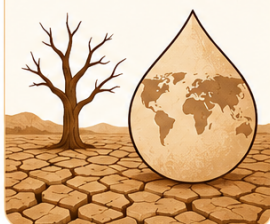
- **US Opposition** - The US declared it would not accept any formal international drought framework or protocol, arguing that drought management falls under domestic and bilateral sovereignty.
- **Africa Group stand** - Developing countries, led by the Africa Group, strongly opposed the US position.
- They contending that fragmented national initiatives cannot address the cascading, transboundary nature of droughts or unlock predictable international funding.
- **COP16** - The standoff is a continuation of unresolved talks at UNCCD COP16 (Riyadh, 2024), where parties failed to agree on a binding drought protocol vs. a non-binding framework and deferred the decision to COP17.
- **Existing Tools** - The US argued that existing initiatives, such as the UNCCD's **Drought Toolbox** and the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) international early warning systems, are underutilized.
- It should be implemented before creating new international bodies or instruments.
- **Chile's Proposal** - Chile introduced a voluntary, case-study-based "**Pilot Implementation Mechanism**" to assess implementation gaps without imposing new financial or legal obligations.
- However, the Africa Group expressed skepticism, noting that previous intersessional assessments had already documented these gaps.

US BLOCKS GLOBAL DROUGHT FRAMEWORK

● U.S. opposition stalls key UNCCD initiative to create a global drought monitoring and response system. ●

WHAT HAPPENED?

The United States has blocked consensus on a global drought framework under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP16 in Riyadh.



THE FRAMEWORK

Aims to establish a global drought monitoring and early warning system to:

-  Track drought conditions globally
-  Improve early warning systems
-  Enhance preparedness and response
-  Support vulnerable communities

U.S. OBJECTIONS

-  Objected to language on “phasing out” fossil fuels and emission targets.
-  Raised concerns over financial commitments.
-  Opposed what it called “overreach” beyond UNCCD’s mandate.
-  Sought to protect national sovereignty and economic interests.

WHY IT MATTERS?

-  Droughts are intensifying due to climate change, affecting food security, water resources, and livelihoods.
-  A unified global framework is crucial for coordinated action and support.
-  Delay weakens global resilience to one of the fastest-growing climate threats.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The U.S. stance reflects a broader divide in global climate negotiations—between collective action and national priorities.



Droughts don't respect borders. Global solutions need global solidarity.



“No one is immune to drought. Together, we can build resilience. Divided, we deepen the crisis.” – UNCCD

About UNCCD & COP17

- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**
 - **Adopted in** - 1994.
 - It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and land management to sustainable development.
 - **Rio Convention** - Formally recognized as one of the three **Rio Conventions** (alongside UNFCCC for climate and CBD for biodiversity).
- **COP17 Context (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)**
 - **Host** - Convened in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia** (August 2026) under the theme "*Restoring Land, Restoring Hope*".
 - **Focus**- Coincides with the UN *International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (2026)*, targeting
 - Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN),
 - Drought resilience, and
 - Global land restoration.

Reference

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