

COP15 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) conference

May 13, 2022

In news– COP15 of the UNCCD Conference is **being held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**, from 9 to 20 May 2022.

About COP15 of UNCCD-

- **The COP15 theme, 'Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity'**, is a call to action to ensure land, the lifeline on this planet, continues to benefit present and future generations. ☐
- It has brought together leaders from governments, the private sector, civil society and other key stakeholders from around the world to drive progress in the future sustainable management of one of our most precious commodities: land. ☐
- It will build on the findings of the second edition of the Global Land Outlook and offer a concrete response to the interconnected challenges of land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss as we step into the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. ☐
- Drought, land restoration, and related enablers such as land rights, gender equality and youth empowerment are among the top items on the Conference agenda.
- **COP14 was held in New Delhi and it witnessed the adoption of The New Delhi Declaration: Investing in Land and Unlocking Opportunities.**

What is UNCCD?

- UNCCD is a **Convention to combat desertification and**

mitigate the effects of drought through national action programs that incorporate long-term strategies supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements.

- **The UNCCD is one of the three Rio Conventions**—along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**).
- **The negotiation of the UNCCD was called for in Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, or Earth Summit).**
- The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996.
- It is the **only internationally legally binding framework set up to address the problem of desertification.**
- **The objective of UNCCD is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects** of drought in countries experiencing serious drought **particularly in Africa.**
- The Convention is based on the principles of participation, partnership and decentralization.
- It has 197 parties, making it near universal in reach.
- To help publicise the Convention, **2006 was declared “International Year of Deserts and Desertification”** but debates have ensued regarding how effective the International Year was in practice.
- The Conference of the Parties (COP) oversees the implementation of the Convention and is the supreme decision-making body, and it comprises all ratifying governments.

Drought in Numbers, 2022 report-

- It was released during CoP15 to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- As per this report, the frequency and duration of drought is increasing at an alarming rate across the world since the onset of the 21st century.

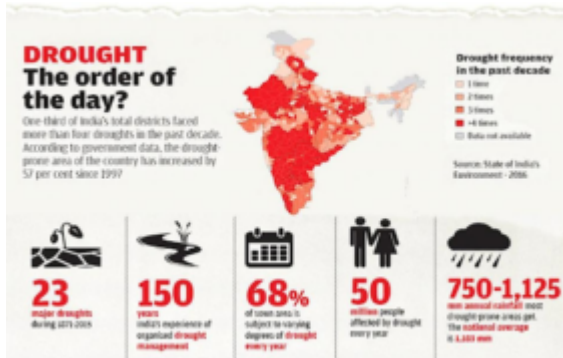
- The latest assessment analysed droughts and impacts on life and livelihood over 122 years covering 196 countries. **It said an entire new generation is growing up being “water scarce”.**
- **In April 2022, the UNCCD released its second Global Land Outlook that said some 16 million square kilometres of land the size of South America will be degraded if current trends continue.**
- According to this assessment, up to 40 per cent of all ice-free land is already degraded.
- **In 2022, according to the UNCCD assessment, more than 2.3 billion people face water stress.** Out of this, almost 160 million children are exposed to severe and prolonged droughts.
- **By 2050, droughts may affect over three-quarters of the world’s population** and an estimated 4.8-5.7 billion people will live in areas that are water-scarce for at least one month each year, up from 3.6 billion today.
- **Water scarcity impacts women and girl children the most.** The UNCCD report said in dry lands they “spend as much as 40 per cent of their caloric intake carrying water” every day.
- **Within the next few decades, 129 countries will experience an increase in drought exposure mainly due to climate change alone** 23 primarily due to population growth and 38 mostly due to the interaction between climate change and population growth.

Drought in India-

- As per this report, **India** has featured in the assessment as **one of severely drought-impacted countries. Nearly two-thirds of the country suffered drought during 2020-2022.**
- **India features on the Global Drought Vulnerability Index**, which is part of the assessment.
- Geographically, India’s drought vulnerability compares

with that of sub-Saharan Africa.

- The assessment said that **the effect of severe droughts was estimated to have reduced India's gross domestic product by 2-5 per cent over the 20 years from 1998-2017.**



- **India's drought-prone area has increased by 57 per cent since 1997.**
- One-third of India's districts have faced more than four droughts over the past decade and 50 million people are affected by drought every year.
- **According to the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India**, released by the Space Applications Centre of the ISRO in 2021, some 97.85 million hectares – nearly 30 percent of the country's land – underwent land degradation during 2018-19.