

**DATE - 16th June 2021**

# **Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought**

## **Context:**

Recently, the Prime Minister delivered a keynote address at the United Nations (UN) “High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought” via video conference.

He spoke as the President of the 14th Session of the Conference of Parties (CoP) of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The Dialogue will encourage all member states to adopt and implement Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and National Drought Plans.

## **Imp Points:**

### **Land Degradation:**

Land degradation is a process in which the value of the biophysical environment is affected by a combination of human-induced processes acting upon the land.

Land degradation is caused by multiple forces, including extreme weather conditions, particularly drought.

It is also caused by human activities that pollute or degrade the quality of soils and land utility.

### **Impact:**

Desertification is a consequence of severe land degradation and is defined as a process that creates arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

It accelerates climate change and biodiversity loss, and contributes to droughts, wildfires, involuntary migration and the emergence of zoonotic infectious diseases.

### Steps Taken by India:

- India is on track to achieve its national commitment on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) (Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3).
- LDN is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.
- India is working to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- This would contribute to India's commitment to achieving an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (a part of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) target under the 2015 Paris Agreement).
- Over the last 10 years, around 3 million hectares of forest cover has been added.
- For Example: The Banni region in Rann of Kutch in Gujarat suffers from highly degraded land and receives very little rainfall.
- In that region, land restoration is done by developing grasslands, which helps in achieving land degradation neutrality.
- Challenges Faced by Developing World:

1. Today, land degradation affects over two-thirds of the world.

2. India is assisting fellow developing countries to develop land restoration strategies.

3. A Centre of Excellence is being set up in India to promote a scientific approach towards land degradation issues. It is at Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education.

4. ICFRE, based in Dehradun, is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

### Global Efforts to Check Land Degradation:

1. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD): It was established in 1994, the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
2. The Delhi Declaration of 2019, signed by 14th CoP of the UNCCD, called for better access and stewardship over land, and emphasised gender-sensitive transformative projects.
3. The Bonn Challenge: To bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
4. Great Green Wall: Initiative by Global Environment Facility (GEF), where eleven countries in Sahel-Saharan Africa have focused efforts to fight against land degradation and revive native plant life to the landscape.

### India's Efforts to Check Land Degradation:

India is focusing on sustainable land and resource management for livelihood generation at community level for making the local lands healthier and productive for providing a better homeland and a better future for its inhabitants.

The National Action Programme for combating desertification was prepared in 2001 to take appropriate action in addressing the problems of desertification.

Some of the major programmes which address issues related to land degradation and desertification, being implemented currently are as follows:

1. Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana)
2. National Afforestation Programme (NAP)
3. National Mission for Green India (GIM)
4. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS),
5. Soil Conservation in the Catchment of River Valley Project, Soil Health Card Scheme, etc

# Resolution 75/260 of UNGA:

## HIV/AIDS

### Context:

The Union Health Minister addressed the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The Resolution 75/260 of UNGA deals with the Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS.

### Key Points of address:

HIV/AIDS Prevention Model: India's unique HIV prevention model is centered around the concept of 'Social Contracting' through which the 'Targeted Interventions Program' is implemented with support from civil society.

The program is aimed at behavior change, communication, outreach, service delivery, counselling & testing and ensuring linkages to HIV care.

Legal Framework: The HIV & AIDS Prevention and Control Act, 2017, provides a legal and enabling framework to safeguard the human rights of infected and affected populations.

Free Treatment: India is providing free anti-retro-viral treatment to close to 1.4 million people.

### Anti-retro-viral therapy:

It is a combination of daily medications that stop the virus from reproducing.

The therapy helps in protecting CD4 cells thus keeping the immune system strong enough to fight off the disease.

It, besides reducing the risk of transmission of HIV, also helps in stopping its progression to AIDS (a spectrum of conditions caused by infection due to HIV).

## National AIDS Control Program:

The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) launched the first phase of the National AIDS Control Programme in (1992-1999). NACO is a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It was constituted in 1992 to provide leadership to HIV/AIDS control programmes in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.

India is gradually transitioning the people living with HIV to Dolutegravir (a safer and efficacious anti-retro-viral medication regimen).

## Other Initiatives:

Project Sunrise: The initiative was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2016, to tackle the rising HIV prevalence in north-eastern states in India, especially among people injecting drugs.

The Red Ribbon: The red ribbon is the universal symbol of awareness and support for people living with HIV. Wearing a ribbon is a great way to raise awareness on and during the run up to World AIDS Day.

90-90-90: 90% of those who are HIV positive in the country know their status, 90% of those who know their status are on treatment and 90% of those who are on treatment experience effective viral load suppression.

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM): The Global Fund is a 21st-century partnership organization designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics

## Official language

### **Context:**

The Tulu speakers, mainly in Karnataka and Kerala, have been requesting the governments to give it official language status and include it in the eighth schedule to the Constitution.

In 2020, there was a demand to include Tulu in the new National Education Policy (NEP).

## **About:**

## **Official Language or Languages of a State:**

Part XVII of the Indian Constitution deals with the official language in Articles 343 to 351.

Article 345 of the Constitution says “the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State”.

## **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution:**

1. The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in Article 344 (1) and 351 of the Constitution. 2. Languages are added through Constitutional Amendments.

### **‘Tulu’ Language:**

1. Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.

2. This region is informally known as Tulu Nadu. There has been a demand for separate statehood for Tulu Nadu

As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India.

3. The oldest available inscriptions in Tulu are from the period between 14th to 15th century AD.

4. Tulu was introduced as a language in school by the Karnataka Government a few years ago.

## **Tulu Art and Culture:**

1. Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.

2. Tulu also has an active tradition of cinema with around 5 to 7 Tulu language movies produced a year.

### **Advantages of Recognition under Eighth Schedule:**

1. Recognition from the Sahitya Akademi.
2. Sahitya Akademi is also called India's National Academy of Letters, which preserves and promotes literature contained in different Indian languages.
3. Translation of Tulu literary works into other languages.
4. Members of Parliament (MP) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) could speak Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies, respectively.
5. Option to take competitive exams in Tulu including all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam.
6. Special funds from the Central government.
7. Teaching of Tulu in primary and high school.

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