

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY
5 JUNE 2024

Key Messages



Todd Brown/UNEP

All over the world, ecosystems are threatened. From forests and drylands to farmlands and lakes, natural spaces on which humanity's existence depends are reaching a tipping point. This is why [World Environment Day 2024](#) focuses on land restoration, halting desertification and building drought resilience under the slogan "Our Land. Our Future. We are #GenerationRestoration."

Successful land restoration requires an approach that uses knowledge, drive and ambition across all generations. Everybody alive now is part of a generation that is the first to witness the devastating effects of environmental degradation and the last to take measures to counter it and be on track to achieving global goals on climate and biodiversity. We can be the generation that finally makes peace with land. We can be #GenerationRestoration.

Drought, desertification and land degradation are a growing threat to the planet and people.

- ◆ Globally, more than [2 billion hectares of land](#) are degraded – an area nearly the size of India and the Russian Federation combined.
- ◆ Every year, an estimated [12 million hectares of land](#) are lost to degradation, impacting food and water supplies across the globe.
- ◆ 55 million people are directly affected by droughts every year, making it the most serious hazard to livestock and crops in nearly every part of the world.

The disappearance of once-productive land is having a devastating effect on the least fortunate.

- ◆ Land degradation affects [3.2 billion](#) people, or 40 per cent of the world's population. It disproportionately harms those who are least equipped to cope: rural communities, smallholder farmers and the poor.
- ◆ Land degradation could reduce global [food productivity by 12 per cent](#), causing food prices to soar by up to 30 per cent by 2040.
- ◆ By 2030, drought, land degradation and desertification could force [135 million people](#) to migrate as the climate crisis worsens. Land degradation threatens human rights to life, health, food, water and a healthy environment.
- ◆ Young people are part of a growing category of [involuntary migrants](#) called 'environmentally displaced people' as environmental degradation fuelled by climate change forces them to migrate due to inability to make a decent living from their land.
- ◆ In fragile contexts, land degradation can fuel conflict and violence due to displacement and competition over scarce resources between different communal groups such as farmers and herders.

The global economy is struggling under the weight of drought and land degradation.

- ◆ An estimated [US\\$10 trillion in global Gross Domestic Product](#) could be lost by 2050 if ecosystem services continue to decline.
- ◆ Globally, [12 million hectares of land](#) capable of producing 20 million tonnes of grain are lost due to drought and desertification each year, potentially leading to food insecurity for millions of people.
- ◆ Land degradation can interrupt the natural processes of the Earth, causing [soil erosion](#) and clean water shortages. It is also the driving force behind a crisis that is pushing [1 million species](#) to extinction.

Climate change and a broken food system exacerbate drought and desertification.

- ◆ Climate change exacerbates desertification and land degradation by increasing the frequency and severity of droughts, heatwaves and wildfires.
- ◆ Deforestation and soil degradation further feed climate change by damaging forests, drylands and grasslands, which are major stores of planet-warming carbon molecules.
- ◆ Agriculture is a major driver of land degradation. The expansion of farming has cleared or transformed an estimated [70 per cent of grasslands and 50 per cent](#) of savannahs worldwide.

To counter desertification and land degradation, the world must restore damaged ecosystems.

- ◆ Every dollar invested in ecosystem restoration—the process of halting and reversing degradation—[results in up to US\\$30](#) in ecosystem services and helps the world achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), humanity's blueprint for a better future.

- ◆ Restoring [15 per cent](#) of converted land in the right places could avoid 60 per cent of expected species extinctions.
- ◆ Ecosystem conservation and restoration could help [counter climate change](#) and climate-related disasters by reviving the full capacity of forests, peatlands, drylands, wetlands and rivers to store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and absorb disaster impacts.
- ◆ Urban areas occupy just [three per cent](#) of the Earth's land surface, but they are home to more than half its people. They are a powerful force in the global ecosystem accounting for some [75 per cent of global resource and energy use](#); produce more than half of global waste; and at least 60 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Due to their outsized impact, cities can play a huge role in land restoration efforts and building drought resilience.

Globally, there has been encouraging progress in recent years in the effort to restore degraded landscapes.

- ◆ Countries are making progress in delivering on their commitments under the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), a global push to revive damaged natural spaces. Countries have vowed to restore 1 billion hectares of degraded land and make similar commitments for marine and coastal areas.
- ◆ Currently, between [765 million and 1 billion hectares](#) are earmarked for restoration. Almost half of the area to be restored is in sub-Saharan Africa, with significant commitments also in Asia and Latin America.
- ◆ The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration's [World Restoration Flagships](#)—a series of pioneering initiatives—already show how restoration delivers a wide range of environmental benefits, including increased productivity, carbon sequestration and biodiversity preservation.
- ◆ The [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), a landmark pact to protect nature signed in 2022, includes a target that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration.

World Environment Day is a chance to shine a spotlight on solutions to drought, desertification and land degradation.

- ◆ Since 1973, [World Environment Day](#) (WED) has raised awareness about critical environmental issues, from climate change to the depletion of the ozone layer. The Day has helped spur governments, businesses, civil society groups and individuals to take action, and address these challenges.
- ◆ WED 2024 is [hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#) with a focus on land restoration, halting desertification and building drought resilience.
- ◆ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) spearheads WED, which is celebrated annually on 5 June.

Indigenous Peoples, women and youth play an important role in reviving damaged ecosystems and countering land degradation, desertification and drought.

- ◆ Indigenous communities are the unsung heroes of conservation. [36 per cent of remaining intact forests](#) are on Indigenous Peoples' lands and on average, ecosystems managed by [Indigenous Peoples](#) tend to be less degraded
- ◆ In developing countries, [women make up 45 per cent of the agricultural labour force](#), ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to up to 60 per cent in parts of Africa and Asia. Involving women is critical for the success of ecosystem restoration.
- ◆ Engaging youth and investing in [youth-run green enterprises](#) is crucial to land restoration efforts and sustainable land use.

Everyone can be part of the WED 2024 campaign and contribute to efforts to restore lands for present and future generations.

- ◆ The beauty of ecosystem restoration is that it conveys a message of action and hope, and it can happen at any scale. Here is how to join the action:
 - Register and get involved in restoration activities, events or actions between April and June.
 - Highlight your activity on the [World Environment Day Activity Map](#) and receive a registration card.
 - Get involved in land and soil restoration work using UNEP's practical guide.
 - Spread the word and inspire others by sharing how you are helping to revive lands, using the hashtags #GenerationRestoration and #WorldEnvironmentDay.
 - Visit the [website](#) to access resources, latest updates, stories, news and tips.
 - Use communication assets from the campaign and share them among your friends, peers, partners and networks to highlight solutions and best practices.
 - Share and amplify World Environment Day messages within your community on how to get involved in land restoration efforts in various settings, from office buildings, schools, and gardens to agriculture fields, parks, and even streets.
 - Invite others in your networks to register and join.

For more information

- ✉ worldenvironmentday@un.org
- 🌐 unep.org
- 🌐 worldenvironmentday.global

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
2024