

INDIA TO REJUVENATE 50,000 HECTARES OF DEGRADED LAND

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar. File

A week ahead of a United Nations conference here that will see experts from over 90 countries deliberate ways to combat desertification, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said India had committed to rejuvenate 50 lakh hectares (5 million) of degraded land between 2021 and 2030.

India faces a severe problem of land degradation, or soil becoming unfit for cultivation. About 29% or about 96.4 million hectares are considered degraded.

This January, India became part of the “Bonn Challenge”, a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030. At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge and pledged to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020, and an additional 8 million hectares by 2030. India’s pledge is one of the largest in Asia.

Schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Soil Health Card Scheme, Soil Health Management Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana are seen as prongs to tackle this land degradation, said a press statement from the Environment Ministry.

A senior official in the Ministry told *The Hindu* that the 5 million hectares were part of the Bonn Challenge commitment. “It’s going to be combination of restoring forest land as well as cultivable land,” he underlined.

India for the first time will be hosting the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) from September 2 to 13.

A report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change earlier this month underlined that land everywhere was bearing the brunt of severe climate change impacts already and would lead to extreme food insecurity if steps weren’t taken.

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