

# UN CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION KICKS OFF

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

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar addresses a press conference of the COP 14 UN Convention to Combat Desertification, in New Delhi on September 2, 2019. | Photo Credit: [PTI](#)

The 14th United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) to combat desertification kicked off in New Delhi on Monday with India taking over the presidency of the COP for two years.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address the convention next Monday, with senior ministers from nearly 70 countries expected to participate at that session.

“If human actions have created the problems of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss, it is the strong intent, technology and intellect that will make a difference,” Mr. Javadekar said at the inaugural session of the convention that is expected to conclude on the 13th of September.

The COP, which meets every two years, discusses ways and means forward to address global land degradation. One in four hectares of arable land is considered unusable due to unsustainable land management. These have put nearly 3.2 billion people in the world at risk.

Last week Mr. 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.

“More than 70 countries have robust national drought plans, compared to just three countries only 4 years ago. The agenda shows that governments have come to this COP ready to find solutions to difficult problems,” Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the Convention, said in a statement.

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.

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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