

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Saudia Arabia joins the International Drought Resilience Alliance

UNCCD COP16 host raises water resilience issues on the global agenda

Bonn/Riyadh, 23 May 2024—The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the latest country to formally join the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), the global coalition mobilizing political, technical, and financial capital to prepare the world for harsher droughts. This addition brings the total membership of IDRA to 37 countries and 28 intergovernmental and research organizations, reflecting a growing commitment to address droughts in the face of climate change and unsustainable land management.

Launched at UN Climate Summit COP27 by the leaders of Spain and Senegal, IDRA rallies world leaders against one of the world’s most deadly and costly natural disasters, acknowledging that we are only as resilient to drought and climate change as our land is. The IDRA secretariat is hosted by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Eng. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen Al Fadley, Saudi Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, said: “We see IDRA as an opportunity to protect our societies and economies in the face of drought. As hosts of the largest-ever UN conference on land and drought this December, one of our priorities is to further the countries commitment to a drought-resilient future.”

His Excellency Minister Al Fadley emphasized that Saudi Arabia's hosting of COP 16 reflects the commitment of its leadership to environmental protection at the national, regional, and international levels, and adds to pioneering efforts like the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative.

Al Fadley also highlighted the urgent need to build drought resilience globally, while combating land degradation and desertification to counter their environmental, economic, and social impacts. He expressed hope that the Alliance would foster effective collective action and intensify global efforts to address these issues, ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources for future generations.

One-quarter of the world's population is already affected by drought, and three out of four people are projected to face water scarcity by 2050. In the Middle East and North Africa, 100 percent of the population will live with extremely high water stress by 2050.

Third Vice-President of the Government of Spain, Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge and IDRA Co-Chair Ms. **Teresa Ribera** encouraged more countries to follow in the steps of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, noting that drought resilience yields returns of up to ten times the initial investment: “The Alliance is as strong as the knowledge, experiences, and networks contributed by its members. I invite world leaders to join IDRA to transform the way humanity tackles drought, building our collective defenses before crises strike.”

UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. **Ibrahim Thiaw** concluded: “Droughts are a natural phenomenon, but we are turbo-charging them by degrading our lands and disrupting the climate. In the lead up the UNCCD COP16, I urge countries to raise their ambitions for healthy lands and drought-resilient societies and economies.”

A watershed year for land and drought

[UNCCD COP16](#), taking place in Riyadh from 2-13 December, will be the largest-ever meeting of UNCCD's 197 Parties, the first to be held in the Middle East region, and the largest multilateral conference ever hosted by Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom will also host the [2024 World Environment Day](#) global celebrations with a focus on land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience.

On 17 June 2024, Desertification and Drought Day will mark the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), one of the three Rio Conventions alongside climate and biodiversity.

Notes to editors

For interviews and enquires please contact: press@unccd.int. X / Instagram: @unccd

About IDRA

The International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA) is the first global coalition creating political momentum and mobilizing financial and technical resources for a drought-resilient future. As a growing platform of more than 30 countries and 20 institutions, IDRA draws on the collective strengths of its members to advance policies, actions, and capacity-building for drought preparedness, acknowledging we are only as resilient to drought and climate change as our land is. The work of IDRA is aligned with, and supportive



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



of, the mandate of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which hosts the IDRA Secretariat. For more information: <https://idralliance.global>.

About UNCCD

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the global vision and voice for land. We unite governments, scientists, policymakers, private sector and communities around a shared vision and global action to restore and manage the world's land for the sustainability of humanity and the planet. Much more than an international treaty signed by 197 parties, UNCCD is a multilateral commitment to mitigating today's impacts of land degradation and advancing tomorrow's land stewardship in order to provide food, water, shelter and economic opportunity to all people in an equitable and inclusive manner. <https://www.unccd.int/>