



Conference of the Parties

Sixteenth session

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2–13 December 2024

Information for participants

Note by the secretariat

The sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will be held from 2 to 13 December 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This document contains general information for participants. Additional information will be provided in due course on the UNCCD COP 16 web page¹ and the COP 16 website of the host country.²

1. Secretariat

The secretariat of the UNCCD is headed by the Executive Secretary, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, and based in Bonn, Germany, at:

Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
Langer Eugen
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany
Tel.: + 49 228 815 2800
Fax: + 49 228 815 2898/99
Email: secretariat@unccd.int

2. Host country authorities

The Government of Saudi Arabia has established an Organizing Committee in charge of preparations for COP 16.

For the most up-to-date information, participants are encouraged to visit the host country COP 16 website.

¹ Please check the following link: <https://www.unccd.int/cop16>.

² Please check the following link: <https://www.unccdcop16.org/>.



For any additional information, participants may contact:

Mr. Abdu Gasem Al Sharif

Director General

General Directorate of Climate Change and Environmental Agreements

Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture

Riyadh Eastern Ring Rd. Ext 12

Saudi Arabia

Tel: +966112038888 Ext. 1214

Fax: +966112038852

Email: agalshareef@mewa.gov.sa

abdu646@hotmail.com

Cc: Mr Yasser Saleh Alyami

National Focal Point to the UNCCD

Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture

Riyadh Eastern Ring Rd. Ext 12

Saudi Arabia

Tel.: +966563030002

Email: yalyami@mewa.gov.sa

3. Venue for the session

COP 16 will be held at the following address:

COP 16 Venue,

Al Imam Saud Ibn Faysal Rd, Hittin

Riyadh

Saudi Arabia

A high-level segment will be organized at the beginning of the session. High-level interactive dialogues, ministerial dialogue sessions and special events will be conducted throughout the session. COP 16 will formally begin on Monday, 2 December 2024. In preparation for COP 16, regional consultations of affected country Parties of the Convention's Regional Implementation Annexes will be convened prior to the session from 30 November to 1 December 2024 at the conference venue.

Working hours will normally be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. High-level interactive dialogues, ministerial dialogues and some special events are foreseen to take place throughout the COP 16 session at lunch time (from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.).

Meeting rooms will be made available for informal meetings without interpretation services, subject to arrangements being made with the secretariat.

4. Registration

Parties to the Convention, United Nations and specialized agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and intergovernmental organizations accredited to the Convention, and the media may register to participate in the sessions of the Convention.

Registration of participants in COP 16 will consist of the following steps:

Submission of request for registration online

A registration page has been designed to accommodate the participants' registration requests for COP 16. They are invited to pre-register from **15 July 2024** at the following link: <https://www.unccd.int/cop16/registration>.

In order to facilitate the verification of requests for registration at the conference, all participants are required to upload an official nomination letter confirming their capacity to attend the COP 16 session and a copy of their passport.

Participants are also required to upload a standard passport photo in order to accelerate on-site registration and conference badge collection.

Confirmation and validation email

Once the request for online registration has been cleared, the UNCCD secretariat will validate and send a confirmation of pre-registration for COP 16 to participants by email.

On-site registration

Once pre-registered, participants will be able to finalize their registration on-site and to collect their conference badges at the conference centre. Participants are to present their passport, including their pre-registration QR code – either printed or in electronic format – to the secretariat for conference badge issuance. The registration desk will be open at the following times:

- Friday 29 November to Saturday 30 November, from 09:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday 1 December to Thursday 12 December, from 8:00 to 6:00 p.m.
- Friday 13 December, from 8:00 to 1:00 p.m.

Participants are required to present their issued conference badges to security upon entry to the conference centre and requested to wear them at all times while at the conference centre.

5. Credentials

The credentials of representatives of Parties and the names of alternative representatives and advisers must be issued either by the head of state or government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. To ensure full participation in the work of the conference, it is recommended that representatives of Parties be provided with full powers to participate in the session and, if necessary, to serve as officers of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, as well as of any committees or working groups of the session.

Credentials must be submitted to the UNCCD secretariat. The Bureau of COP 16 will examine the credentials and report to the session.³ Observer states and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations must also be accredited.

It is strongly recommended that participants send a copy of their credentials to the secretariat in advance, in order to facilitate their registration during the conference:

Email: secretariat@unccd.int

6. Information for the media

The accreditation procedure requirements for journalists and representatives of media organizations are different from those of other participants.

The following documentation is required to obtain the invitation letter once you register via the online portal: a duly completed online accreditation form accessible through the conference registration portal; a recent passport-sized photograph; a valid press card; a copy (picture and signature pages) of a passport (for foreign journalists) or national identity card (for local applicants); and a letter of introduction on an official letterhead from the bureau chief, media house or publisher that the journalist represents. For freelance journalists, a letter is required from the media organization assigning them to cover the conference.

Journalists are advised to refer to the press kit provided on the UNCCD website for updates or changes to these requirements.

³ See document ICCD/COP(16)/23, to be issued in-session.

For inquiries concerning accreditation or coverage of the event and for other media-related issues, please contact the UNCCD Press Office:

Tel.: + 49 228 815 2820

Email: press@unccd.int

7. How to reach the session venue

International flights to Riyadh

Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport (KKIA) is located 35 kilometres north of the city centre. It is the city's main airport and served approximately 27 million passengers in 2022.

KKIA services flights to 110 different cities in 50 different countries. This includes both direct and indirect flights. The number of destinations can vary based on seasonal schedules, airline operations and other factors.

With its impressive facilities, including a central control tower, multiple passenger terminals, and parallel runways, KKIA plays a crucial role in air travel in the region.

Transfer services from King Khalid International Airport

Currently, it is not possible to travel by public transport between KKIA and the city. Your alternatives are a taxi, rental car or a ride-hailing app.

Taxi

You can take a taxi from KKIA to Riyadh. The journey typically takes about 25 minutes and costs between USD 45–55. Further information about the various taxi companies available at KKIA may be found on the KKIA website.⁴

Car rental

Delegates may rent a car at KKIA upon arrival or in advance by checking the car rental desks open in various airport terminals. A ride from the airport to the city centre takes about 25 minutes. Further information on car rental companies offering transfer services at KKIA and prices may be found on the KKIA website.⁵

A number of ride-hailing apps operate in Saudi Arabia, including Uber and Careem. Just tap in your pick-up and drop-off locations and track your driver's arrival online. Payment can be made either by cash or credit card.

A UNCCD COP 16 information counter will be set up in the Arrival hall(s) of KKIA for conference participants. Participants will be presented with a welcome pack, which includes maps of the city as well as information brochures on the transport network and facilities.

Upon registration of delegates' departure dates at the UNCCD COP 16 information counter, transfer services will be organized by the host country on a commercial basis from various hotels to KKIA. Up-to-date information will be made available on the host country's COP 16 website.

How to reach the COP 16 venue

The COP 16 venue is in the vicinity of the famous Boulevard World (also known as BLVD World) located in the Hittin neighbourhood of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is situated on Al Imam Saud Ibn Faysal Road, adjacent to Boulevard City.

⁴ Please check the following link:

https://www.kkia.sa/en/Services/AirportServices/To_from_the_airport/Taxis/Pages/default.aspx.

⁵ Please check the following link:

https://www.kkia.sa/en/Services/AirportServices/To_from_the_airport/Car_Rental/Pages/default.aspx

The venue is easily accessible by taxi/shuttle from KKIA airport in 30 minutes, with a driving distance of approx. 30 kilometres.

As for local transportation, the venue is accessible via Riyadh's local transport system. Delegates at the conference are encouraged to use local transportation apps or services for the most accurate and up-to-date information on reaching the venue.

Shuttle buses from recommended hotels to the conference venue will be provided by the host country government. Further information on their schedule will be made available on the host country COP 16 website.

Local transportation in Riyadh

Bus

The bus network in Riyadh offers a comfortable and affordable way to get around the city. The Saudi Public Transport Company (SAPTCO) is the national bus company in Saudi Arabia and offers several bus routes in Riyadh.⁶

The buses run frequently, every ten minutes during the week on average, and more often on Friday afternoons. Passengers pay for bus fares using SAPTCO's rechargeable smart card. The smart card itself costs 10 Saudi riyals (SAR), while a two-hour bus ticket costs SAR 4.⁷ You can recharge a SAPTCO smart card at a ticket vending machine, via the SAPTCO app or with the bus driver.

Taxi

Taxis are the most common way of getting around the city, and there are many Riyadh taxi services to choose from. However, it is best to avoid hailing a cab from the street. In addition, taxis in Riyadh calculate their fares using a taximeter based on the time and distance travelled to your location, with no price difference for day or night trips.

Most companies and taxi service providers in Riyadh have easy-to-use mobile apps and websites, making it straightforward to book a taxi. The most popular local taxi company you can call for a pickup is Safwa Taxi – Green Taxis, reachable at +966 92 001 0068.

8. Accommodation

Participants are responsible for making their own accommodation arrangements and are encouraged to finalize their booking and payment as early as possible.

Information on hotels recommended by the host country for delegates will be posted on the UNCCD COP 16 web page and the host country website as soon as it becomes available.

9. Services available for participants at the session venue

Information on medical services and emergency numbers, postal, telephone, fax, photocopying and Internet services, catering, cafeterias, banking services, travel agencies and any other additional services available for participants will be published in the official journal of the session and on the host country COP 16 website.

⁶ Please check the following link: <https://www.riyadhbus.sa/web/guest/routes>.

⁷ Please check the following link: <https://www.riyadhbus.sa/web/guest/tickets>.

10. Immigration formalities and customs regulations

Visa regulations

Gulf Cooperation Council citizens⁸ and residents with valid residence permits do not need a visa to enter Saudi Arabia.

eVisa

Foreign nationals visiting Saudi Arabia from 63 eligible countries⁹ can apply for an eVisa.¹⁰

The eVisa is a one-year, multiple entry visa, allowing tourists to spend up to 90 days in the country. Passports must be valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date of entry into Saudi Arabia, except for citizens of the United States of America who may enter as long as their passport is valid regardless of the time remaining before expiration.

A United Nations letter of invitation to COP 16 and/or a document issued by a relevant home country authority that proves official participation may facilitate the visa application process. Applicants are advised to apply for the eVisa online several days before the date of travel to allow time for the application to be processed.

Saudi Arabia authorities will do their utmost to facilitate entry procedures for all participants.

Consulate visa

Foreign nationals from countries not listed among those eligible for eVisas can apply for a consulate visa through Saudi Arabia's embassies and consulates.¹¹

Delegates are strongly advised to seek information on visa requirements applicable to them from Saudi Arabia's diplomatic or consular missions in their home countries.

Visa on arrival

Delegates can also apply for a Visa on Arrival at Saudi Arabia's entry points if any of the following conditions apply:

- The tourist is from one of the 63 eligible countries for an eVisa.¹²
- The tourist holds a valid Schengen, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or United States visa.

Additional requirements for Visa on Arrival:

- The visa must be valid;
- The visa type must be either tourist or business;
- The visa must have been used at least once and have an entry stamp from the issuing country;
- Holders of permanent residence permits from the European Union, the United Kingdom or the United States are also eligible, along with their first-degree relatives.

⁸ GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

⁹ Please check the following link for a list of countries eligible for the eVisa:
<https://visa.visitsaudi.com/>.

¹⁰ The following link may be used to apply for an eVisa: <https://visa.visitsaudi.com/>.

¹¹ Please check the following link for a list of Saudi Arabia's embassies and consulates around the world: <https://www.mofa.gov.sa/ar/embassies/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹² Please check the following link for evisa: <https://visa.visitsaudi.com/>

Health regulations

Saudi Arabia has specific health regulations for visitors, especially those travelling for Hajj or Umrah. The key requirements and recommendations for travellers in 2024 can be found on the official website of the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia.¹³

Delegates at the conference are invited to make ensure that all vaccinations are up-to-date and properly documented in their vaccination certificates before travelling.

Customs regulations

Information on the customs regulations in force in Saudi Arabia can be obtained from any Saudi Arabian embassy¹⁴ or consulate or at the following link: <https://zatca.gov.sa/>.

Any participant who fails to comply with the customs requirements regarding entry into Saudi Arabia may be prevented from entering the country by the local authorities.

11. Intervention at official meetings

United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/237 on the pattern of conferences requests the Secretary-General to, inter alia, continue his efforts to ensure the highest quality of interpretation and translation services in all six official languages.

In the interests of ensuring that meetings run smoothly, participants are reminded of the need to maintain a normal speed when delivering speeches or making statements, allowing the required high-quality simultaneous interpretation services to be provided to the entire satisfaction of all participants.

12. Side events

Participants who wish to organize side events during the conference are requested to apply to the secretariat using the following telephone, fax and/or email contacts:

Tel.: +49 228 815 2800

Fax: +49 228 815 2898/99

Email: sideevent@unccd.int

The application form can be downloaded from the UNCCD COP 16 web page at <https://www.unccd.int/cop16/special-and-side-events> and should be submitted before **1 September 2024**.

The secretariat is only responsible for room allocation. Time slots and rooms will be accommodated according to availability on a first-come, first-served basis.

The contact information of the company(ies) that will provide interpretation services from English/French/Spanish and vice versa and catering services for side events on commercial basis will be posted on the UNCCD COP 16 web page and the host country website as soon as available.

A list of services available from local providers will be made available on the host country's COP 16 website.¹⁵

Participants are reminded that no side events may be organized during the COP 16 official working hours (see item 3 above) or the high-level segment of the conference.

A calendar of special, side and parallel events during COP 16 will be published in the official journal of the session and will also be available on the host country's COP 16 website.

¹³ Please check the following link:

https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/HealthAwareness/Pilgrims_Health/Documents/Health-Regulations-En.pdf.

¹⁴ Please check the following link for a list of Saudi Arabian embassies and consulates around the world: <https://www.mofa.gov.sa/ar/embassies/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹⁵ Please check the following link: <https://www.unccdcop16.org/exhibitors>.

For any additional information on side events, please refer to the guidelines posted on the UNCCD website.¹⁶

13. Exhibition facilities and pavilions at COP 16

At COP 16, UNCCD stakeholders will have the opportunity to organize exhibitions and/or pavilions in two distinct zones: The Blue Zone and The Green Zone. Exhibitions will be open to the public to explore land-related exhibitions on innovative technologies, networking, restoration efforts and inclusive activities for all segments of society.

The UNCCD secretariat would like to invite Parties and organizations accredited to the UNCCD that are interested in organizing pavilions in the Blue Zone to contact: bluezone@unccdcop16.org and cop16.bluezone@mwan.gov.sa.

For more information about the pavilions in the Green Zone and registration, please visit the host country website at: <https://www.unccdcop16.org/general-8-1> and/or contact: greenzone@unccdcop16.org

Registration for an exhibition space may be made at the following link: <https://www.unccdcop16.org/exhibitors>.

14. Security matters at COP 16

Beginning 2 December 2024, access to the conference centre premises and the surrounding area will be strictly limited to persons properly accredited to COP 16 by the UNCCD.

Passes for all government delegations, other participants from intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities, the media, and non-governmental organizations, CSOs, academic institutions and the private sector will be issued at the registration centre located in the conference venue until 13 December at 1 p.m. The security arrangements for COP 16 are set out below.

The United Nations Security and Safety Service, in close cooperation with host country law enforcement agencies, will be responsible for the security of everyone on the conference centre premises. The host country and host city authorities will be responsible for all arrangements relating to security and movement outside the conference centre, including the registration centre, as is standard practice for official conferences.

The host country security authorities will provide protection to Heads of State or Government, as well as to a limited number of other government officials, through the assignment of protection detail personnel. Arrangements for such assignments, to be made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, are to be initiated by the embassies of the relevant countries in Riyadh. In the case of Heads of State or Government, the respective embassies should contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs if they have not already done so.

A delegation whose Head of State or Government is attending COP 16 may wish to contact the United Nations Security and Safety Service, in particular with regard to the accreditation of and issuance of grounds passes to the national security detail.

Contact person: Mr. Said Jannoun
Event Security Coordinator
United Nations Security and Safety Service
Email: jannoun@un.org

Conference centre access

Access to the conference centre during COP 16 will be strictly restricted to those persons who are properly accredited and wearing a grounds pass issued for COP 16. To avoid

¹⁶ Please check the following link: <https://www.unccd.int/cop16/special-and-side-events>.

last-minute difficulties, all governments are requested to ensure the proper accreditation of their delegations and accompanying parties.

Within the conference centre, there will be certain additional restrictions on movement, including the possible issuance of secondary passes for the Plenary Hall. A restricted area has been designated that encompasses the V/VIP lounge, the President's Office, the Executive Office as well as an additional reserved space for a Host Country V/VIP Suite, which will be controlled by the United Nations Security and Safety Service.

All deliveries must be completed between 4 and 6 a.m. and be scheduled and cleared by the United Nations Security and Safety Service and the Saudi police.

Access to the conference centre will be as follows:

(a) Delegations and United Nations staff: entrance from the main pedestrian gates through the security screening/accreditation building into the conference centre premises;

(b) Representatives of non-governmental organizations and business sector entities and local staff: entrance from the main pedestrian gates through the security screening/accreditation building into the conference centre premises;

(c) Media representatives: entrance from the main pedestrian gates through the security screening/accreditation building into the conference centre premises;

(d) V/VIP: entrance from the designated V/VIP gate into the conference centre;

(e) VIP: entrance from the designated gate and main pedestrian gates through the security screening/accreditation building into the conference centre premises.

Loss of grounds passes or personal items

Loss of a grounds pass for COP 16 or any personal item at the conference centre must be reported to the accreditation centre and/or the United Nations Security and Safety Service.

15. General information about the session venue

Information about Riyadh

Riyadh is the capital and largest city of Saudi Arabia. It is also the capital of the Riyadh Province and the centre of the Riyadh Governorate. It is the largest city on the Arabian Peninsula and is situated in the centre of the An-Nafud Desert on the eastern part of the Najd plateau.

The city sits at an average of 600 metres above sea level and receives around 5 million tourists each year, making it the 49th most visited city in the world and the 6th in the Middle East. Riyadh had a population of 7.0 million people in 2022, making it the most populous city in Saudi Arabia, 3rd most populous in the Middle East, and the 38th most populous in Asia.

The city is divided into 15 municipal districts, which are overseen by the Municipality of Riyadh, headed by the mayor and the Royal Commission for Riyadh, which is chaired by the Governor of the Province.

Currency

The official currency of Saudi Arabia is the Saudi riyal (SAR).

USD 1 = approximately SAR 3.75 (as of 1 July 2024)

EUR 1 = approximately SAR 4.03 (as of 1 July 2024)

Currency can be exchanged at banks, exchange offices, or ATMs throughout the country. Major credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants and shopping centres.

Weather

Saudi Arabia experiences a **desert climate**, characterized by hot days and cooler nights. During the summer season (May to September), it is extremely hot with temperatures exceeding 40°C (104°F). Winter season (October to April), however, is more pleasant, with daytime temperatures ranging from 20°C to 30°C (68°F to 86°F). Nights can be cooler, especially in desert areas.

In Riyadh, December falls within the winter season. The weather is generally characterized by high temperatures and low rainfall. The daytime temperatures hover around 23°C (73°F), while nights can cool down to about 11°C (52°F). The city usually receives low rainfall, averaging around 10 millimetres for the month. Typically, around four days of rainfall are expected in December.

These conditions make December a prime time to visit Riyadh if you are inclined towards comfortable temperatures and drier conditions.

Electricity

Saudi Arabia uses a dual-voltage power distribution system. In residential and light commercial buildings, the country uses 127V, whereas 220V is required for larger commercial and industrial applications. However, the government approved plans in August 2010 to move the country to a 230V/400V system. The change to the new voltage in the existing areas will take place within a period of 25 years from the date of the resolution's effective date. As of now, all power sockets in Saudi Arabia provide a standard voltage of 220V with a standard frequency of 60Hz.

In Saudi Arabia, power plugs and sockets (outlets) of type A, type B, type C and type G are used. If your devices do not have a type G plug, then you can use a universal adapter.

Local time

Saudi Arabia follows Arabia Standard Time (AST), which is UTC/GMT +3 hours. There is no daylight saving time in 2024.

Business hours

Business hours are usually from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday to Thursday.

In Riyadh, the working hours of hospitals and health care centres are as follows:

Hospitals: Outpatient clinics and other departments follow the single-shift system and are open from Sunday to Thursday between 07:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. After these working hours and on Fridays and Saturdays, some departments are open as per shift schedules prepared by the hospital management.

Primary health care centres are open from 08:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Urgent care centres with extended work shifts are open from 08:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.

On-duty health care centres (operating for 16 and 24 hours) are open from 4:00 p.m. daily, except on Fridays and Saturdays, when they are open from 8:00 a.m.

Hospitals in Riyadh

Dallah Hospital

<https://www.dallah-hospital.com/english/home>

Dr. Sulaiman Alhabib Hospitals

<https://hmg.com/en/pages/home.aspx>

Al Hammadi Hospital

<https://alhammadi.med.sa/Default.aspx?lang=en>

Specialized Medical Center
<https://www.smc.com.sa/>

Consulting Clinics
<http://khccgroup.com/>

Government offices are usually open Sunday to Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The working hours of post offices in Riyadh vary depending on the type and size of the post office:

Saudi Post parcel stations are open 24/7.

Small post offices: operating hours are from 8 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

Larger post offices: operating hours are from 8 a.m. to 8:45 p.m.

Saudi Post Central Post Office in Riyadh: this post office is open from Monday to Thursday and on Sunday from 8:00 to 21:00. On Saturday, it operates from 16:00 to 21:00. It is closed on Friday.

Banks are typically open from Sunday to Thursday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Shopping malls and souks (traditional marketplaces) are open late into the evening, especially during weekends. Further information on the opening hours of restaurants and shopping centres may be found on the host country web page.

Travel information

Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, offers a unique blend of modernity and tradition that makes it a fascinating destination to visit. Whether you are interested in history, nature, shopping, or cultural experiences, Riyadh has something to captivate every traveller.

Information on the cultural activities foreseen throughout the conference, including the weekend, will be included in the session's official journal.

Further information on travel and tourism is available on the official website of the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia at: <https://www.visitsaudi.com/en>. Practical information and useful recommendations such as accommodation, restaurants, public transport, festivals, cultural events, etc., are made available to the public at large.

Further information on the conference is available on the UNCCD COP 16 web page at <https://www.unccd.int/cop16> and on the host country website at <https://www.unccdcop16.org/>.
