



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



UNCCD
COP16
Riyadh | 2024

Media Advisory

UNCCD COP16: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2 to 13 December 2024

Landmark UN conference to accelerate global efforts for land restoration and drought resilience

Media Accreditation is open

Today, up to 40 per cent of the world's land is degraded, affecting half of humanity and with dire consequences for our climate, biodiversity and people's livelihoods. Droughts are becoming more frequent and severe, increasing by 29% since 2000 due to climate change and unsustainable land management. If current trends continue, restoring 1.5 billion hectares of land by 2030 will be necessary to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world.

In a pivotal year of environmental negotiations, with major conferences focusing on biodiversity, climate change and desertification, the [16th Session of the Conference of the Parties \(COP\)](#) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) represents a crucial milestone. Under the theme "Our Land. Our Future," the Conference will host representatives of governments, civil society and leading experts to advance global efforts to combat land degradation, desertification and drought while promoting sustainable development.

Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of UNCCD, COP16 will be the largest UN land conference to date, and the first UNCCD COP held in the Middle East and North Africa region, which knows first-hand the impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought.

WHAT: 16th Session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification

WHEN: 2 to 13 December 2024

WHERE: Boulevard Riyadh City, at Al Imam Saud Ibn Faysal Rd. Hittin, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

PROGRAMME: <https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cop-16-riyadh-saudi-arabia-2024/agenda?date=2024-12-02>

PARTICIPANTS:

- Senior leaders from some 100 countries
- Several former Heads of State who are members of the COP16 high-level advisory council (Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Senegal)
- Members of the Royal Family from Saudi Arabia and other countries



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- UN Deputy Secretary-General and over 30 heads of UN entities and international organizations
- Personalities from the world of art and sports, including UNCCD Goodwill Ambassadors, award-winning musicians, filmmakers and athletes
- Youth leaders including UNCCD Land Heroes and youth entrepreneurs
- Private sector, civil society and Indigenous leaders

UPCOMING KEY REPORTS

- **1 December:** Launch of the *Special report on land* by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research
 - Join the Opening [Press Conference](#) on 2 December at 13:15 with:
 - Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed
 - UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw
 - Incoming COP16 Presidency, and
 - Johan Rockstrom, Director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)
- **2 December:** Launch of the *Global Drought Atlas*
- **3 December:** Launch of the *Financial Needs Assessment for the Implementation of UNCCD*
- **3 December:** Launch of the *Economics of Drought Resilience Report*
- **6 December:** Launch of the *Primer on Urban-Rural Linkages and Land*
- **9 December:** Launch of the *Global Aridity Trends Report*

KEY FOCUS AREAS

COP16 will address critical themes, including land degradation, drought resilience, and sustainable land management. The primary goals for this conference include:

- Accelerate restoration of degraded land by 2030 and beyond
- Boost resilience to intensifying droughts and sand and dust storms
- Restore soil health and scale up nature-positive food production
- Secure land rights and promote equity for sustainable land stewardship
- Ensure that land continues to provide climate and biodiversity solutions
- Unlock economic opportunities, including decent land-based jobs for youth

THEMATIC DAYS

- **Land Day** (4 December): Focus on the role of healthy land in addressing climate change, job creation and poverty alleviation, with emphasis on nature-based solutions and private sector engagement
- **Agri-Food Systems Day** (5 December): Highlighting sustainable farming practices for resilient crops, healthy soils and ecosystem protection
- **Governance Day** (6 December): Exploring inclusive land governance and policies to strengthen equitable land management



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- **People's Day** (7 December): Emphasizing the involvement of youth, women and civil society in land-related decision-making
- **Science, Technology and Innovation Day** (9 December): Aims to accelerate scientific advancements for land health and resilience
- **Resilience Day** (10 December): Focus on policies and technologies that foster resilience to climate change
- **Finance Day** (11 December): Aims to showcase innovative financial mechanisms supporting land restoration and drought resilience

HIGH-LEVEL EVENTS

- Ministerial high-level dialogues
 - **Ministerial dialogue on drought resilience:** From Geneva to Riyadh and beyond: Enhancing global and national policy instruments for a proactive drought management approach (2 December, 15:00 - 17:00): Highlights the urgent need for innovative approaches to address the systemic impacts of drought
 - **Ministerial dialogue on finance:** Unlocking public and private finance for land restoration and drought resilience (3 December, 10:00 - 13:00): Addresses the critical need for increased investments to combat land degradation, desertification and drought
 - **Ministerial dialogue on migration:** Impacts of land degradation and drought on forced migration, security and prosperity (3 December, 14:00 - 17:00): Examines how sustainable land management and drought resilience can address the interconnected challenges of land degradation, forced migration and conflict

- **Business for Land Forum** (4 December 13:00 - 15:00)

The Forum will bring together global leaders to drive private sector engagement, foster public-private partnerships and highlight business leadership in sustainable land use, restoration and resilience.

- **Gender Caucus** (4 December 10:00 - 13:00)

The Gender Caucus promotes dialogue and showcases initiatives to advance gender equality, driving collaborative solutions to address desertification, land degradation and drought.

- **Youth Forum** (5-7 December)

The three-day forum empowers young leaders, fosters knowledge exchange and mobilizes action to restore and protect lands for a sustainable future.

- **Indigenous Peoples Forum** (7 December, 10:00 - 13:00)

The inaugural COP16 Forum will showcase Indigenous Peoples' role in land conservation, blending ancestral knowledge with global efforts to combat desertification.

- **Sport4Land Champion** announcement (7 December, Pavilion 1 Stage)

Launched at the 2024 Paris Olympics, the UNCCD #Sport4Land campaign mobilizes athletes to champion land restoration, unveiling new ambassadors and sparking global dialogue on sports' role in restoration.



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Media accreditation and logistics

- Accreditation for media representatives covering COP16 is now open. Journalists are encouraged to apply through the [Online Registration System \(ORS\)](#), the exclusive platform for obtaining accreditation and permissions.
- Further information for media is available at the [COP16 media page](#).
- Information on visa and accommodation can be found at: [UNCCD COP16 visa and accommodations](#)

Social media

- Follow: @UNCCD ([Twitter/X](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#))
- Primary hashtag: #COP16Riyadh
- Secondary hashtags: #UNCCDCOP16, #OurLandOurFuture, #UNited4Land, #HerLand, #Sport4Land, #Youth4Land

Key resources

- UNCCD [COP16 Trello Board](#), including [branding guidelines](#) and [key messages](#)
- UNCCD [COP16 website](#)
- [Host country website](#)
- [COP16 conference app](#) available in the Apple app store and Google Play
- [UN WebTV](#) – live broadcast of key plenary sessions with live interpretation in all six UN languages.
- [Press and media kit](#)
- [Social media kit](#)