

**Forum:** Environment Commission I

**Issue:** Preventing desertification

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**Position:** Chair of Environment Commission I

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## Introduction

Desertification affects many countries around the world today although various measures have been implemented by the relevant UNOs and UGOs for the past few decades. Many factors, such as man-made activities and climate changes contribute to the current progress in desertification. Desertification affects the local ecosystems, causing thousands of species to be endangered. It also has an impact upon humans; in some of the poorest regions in the world with desertification, for example, the population suffers from s poverty and hunger, which partially stemmed from desertification. In order to resolve this issue, protection of wild lives, the reverse of the lost environmental properties and ways to slow down desertification need to be addressed.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Desertification

The transformation of arable or habitable land to desert, as by a change in climate or destructive land use

### UNCCD

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (with 193 member states)

### IFAD

International Fund for Agricultural Development

### FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization

### EEA

European Environment Agency

## **ECLI**

Environment Liaison Center International

## **ICARDA**

International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas

## **Agenda 21**

The UN program on sustainable development, which proposes the global, national and local actions by the UNOs and the governments

## **General Overview**

### **Desertification**

Desertification occurs mainly by climate changes and man-made activities, such as overgrazing, over-drafting of ground water, diversion of water for consumption and industrial/agricultural uses, etc. It causes problems, such as loss of land productivity, reduction of agricultural yields, impoverishment of natural vegetation, reduction of biodiversity, expansion and eventual invasion of alien plant species, receding of groundwater levels, water scarcity and poverty.

### ***History***

The UN became aware of the issues regarding to desertification in 1947, right after its establishment. Desertification firstly took place in over-populated, agriculture-based countries, such as China, Mexico and South Africa, etc. These countries now show great improvement on the condition; new conventions were established and many resolutions were passed for an action in 1970s to 1990. However, other LEDCs, especially in the Middle East and Africa suffer from desertification today. Some populations are considered as the environmental refugees since they are forced to move from their native lands due to the environmental condition. Further immediate aid is needed for such countries.

### ***Possible solutions***

The resolution on this topic should mention some ways to achieve the long term goals, such as slowing down the pace of desertification, encouraging the inclusion of the principles of sustainable development among nations in their national policies, reversing the loss of environmental resources, preserving biodiversity, and calling for more international co-

operations. Actions mentioned in a resolution should be sustainable, based on the reflection of the previous actions and focused on the countries with the most need such as the countries in Sub-Saharan region.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1992	The UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) Agenda 21 calls on the General Assembly to prepare a legally-binding instrument on the problem of desertification.
1994	The UN Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in Paris on June 17.
2002	The World Summit on Sustainable Development was hosted in Johannesburg.
2004	The comparative research project, "Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands (SUMAMAD)" was launched.
2006	The UN General Assembly proclaims 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Plan of action to Combat Desertification, 19 December 1989 (**A/RES/44/172**)
- United Nations Conference on Desertification, 16 December 1976 (**A/RES/31/108**)
- Convention on Biological Diversity, 14 December 2009 (**A/RES/64/203**)

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