

UN builds momentum for restoring forests as world enters key decade for ecosystems

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Some areas of Niger have been degraded due to unsustainable land practices.

Climate Change

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is leading a push for the world to scale up efforts to restore landscapes and forests over the next decade, with eyes on a target to salvage 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands, an area bigger than India in total.

The world has made considerable progress in the past decade, according to the new edition of FAO's international forestry journal *Unasylva*, entitled *Restoring the Earth* - the next decade, since 63 countries, subnational governments and private organisations have already committed to restoring 173 million hectares, and regional responses are making significant advances in Africa and Latin America.

Meet the challenge

The goal is to meet the “Bonn Challenge” - the world’s largest voluntary forest landscape restoration initiative, which was launched in 2011. It is a global target to bring 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands into restoration by 2020 and 350 million by 2030.

“Societies worldwide will need to be convinced of the global restoration imperative by rational economic argument, compassion for current and future generations, and an emotional connection to nature”, according to the authors of one article in the journal.

The Unasylva issue looks at prospects for meeting the Bonn Challenge and mechanisms for measuring and accelerating progress, and examines work going on in China, Kenya, Brazil, Madagascar, Cambodia and Sao Tome and Principe.

It also discusses how restoration work can be scaled up, including various initiatives that are underway to increase funding and boost local stakeholders and technical assistance.

Enormous potential

“These have enormous potential to be mainstreamed because of their cost-effectiveness, adaptability, applicability to many ecosystems and contexts, and ease of implementation”, the opening editorial in Unasylva said.

Next year sees the start of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, which runs from 2021 until the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030.

“There is a great opportunity for the Bonn Challenge process and its contributing regional platforms to provide a model for aspiring actors to embrace or reinforce restoration efforts in other ecosystems, such as wetlands and coral reefs,” senior officials at the International Union for Conservation of Nature wrote in one of the articles in Unasylva.

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