

Briefing on: UNEP Land Degradation Portfolio

20 February 2025

Land degradation refers to the many processes that drive the decline or loss in biodiversity, ecosystem functions or their benefits to people and includes the degradation of all terrestrial ecosystems.

Status on Land degradation

The land degradation crisis

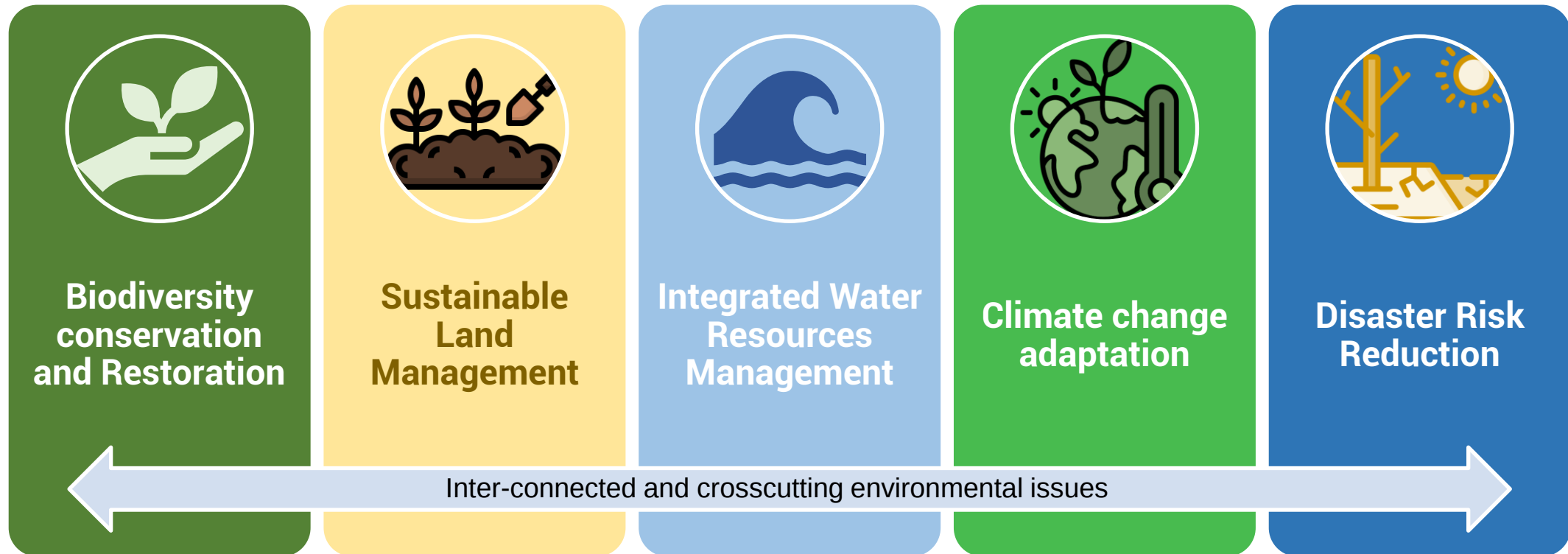
- Nearly **40%** of Earth's total land area is now degraded
- By 2050 up to **95%** could be degraded
- More than **50%** of agricultural land now degraded
- **24 billion tonnes lost** annually to soil erosion by wind and water (3.4 tonnes per person/per annum)
- The main causes of land degradation include unsustainable agriculture, deforestation, urbanization, unsustainable extractive practices - mining, which contribute to soil carbon decline, compaction, landslides, soil contamination and salinization.
- Climate change and biodiversity loss are closely linked to land degradation.



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How UNEP's portfolio is currently addressing land degradation

Key pathways:

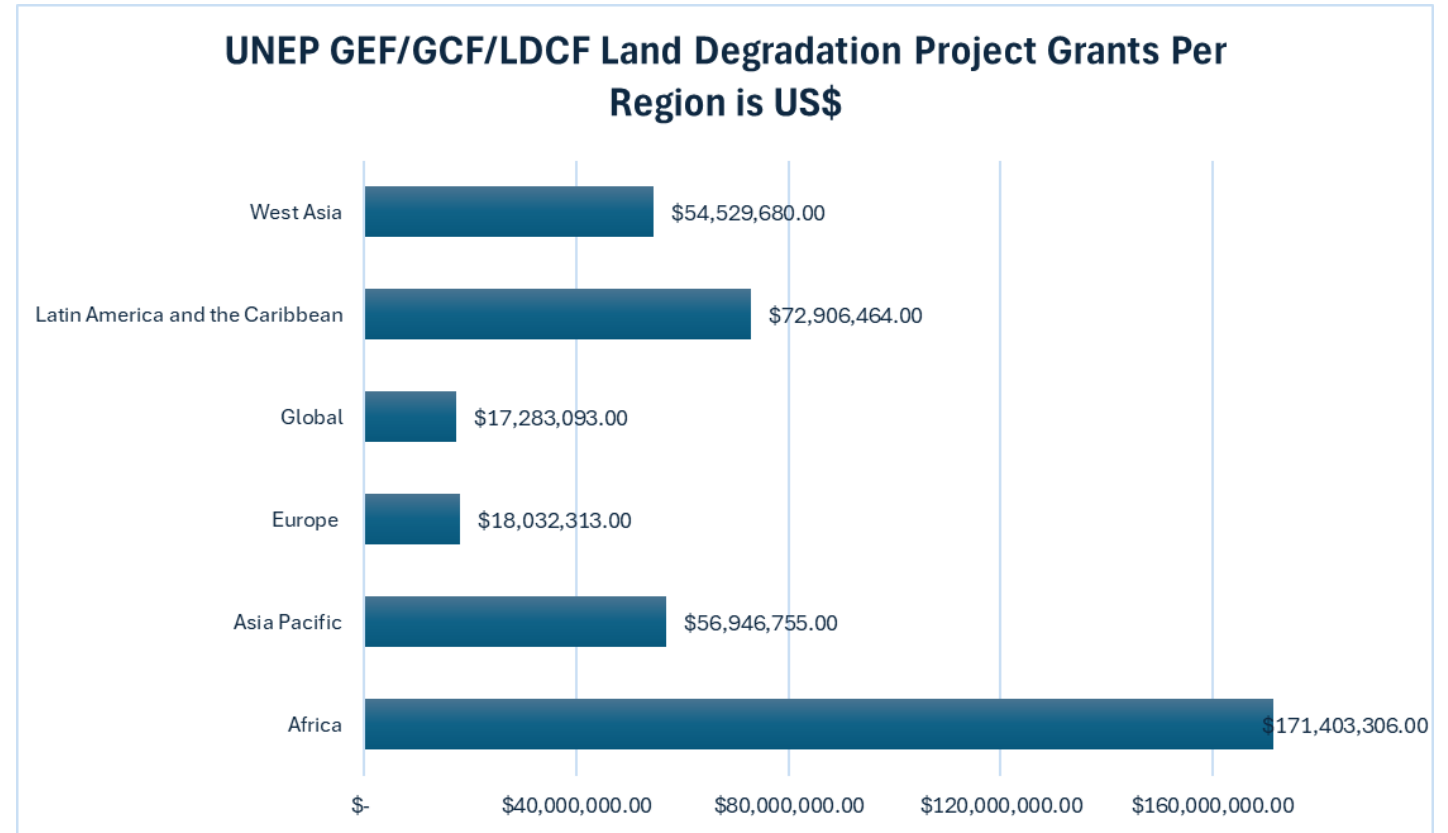


UNEP portfolio addressing land degradation

Over **70 ongoing projects** across **132 countries**

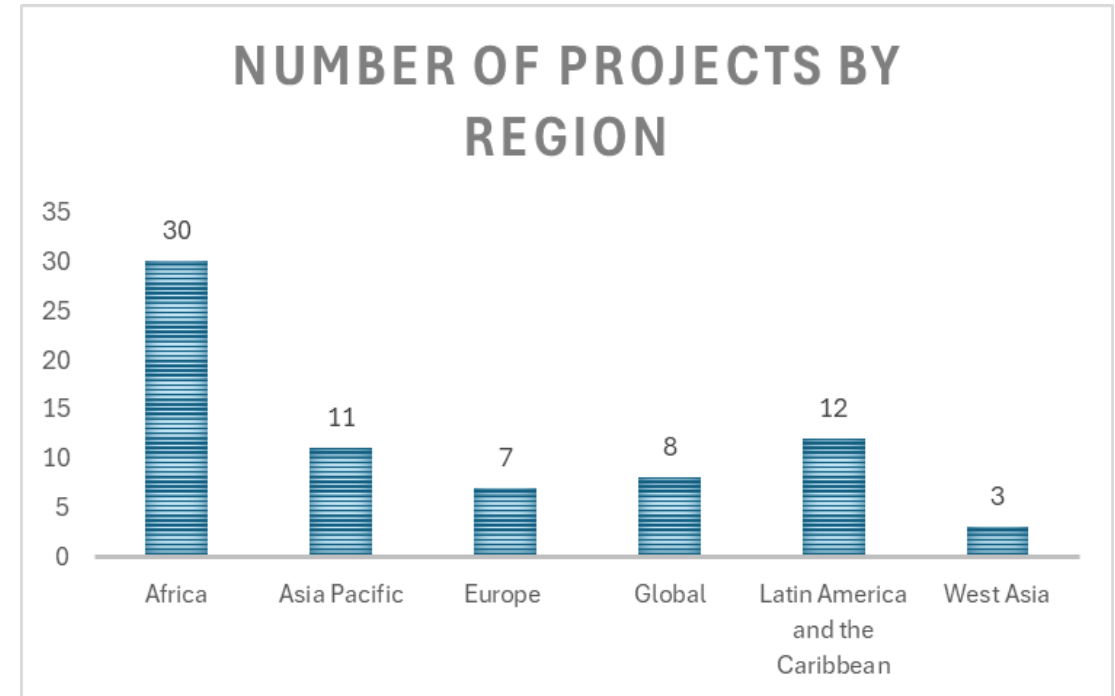
Total grant of over **US\$391 Million** with Land Degradation components.

- **US\$266 Million** from the GEF
- **US\$125 Million** from the GCF and LDCF projects

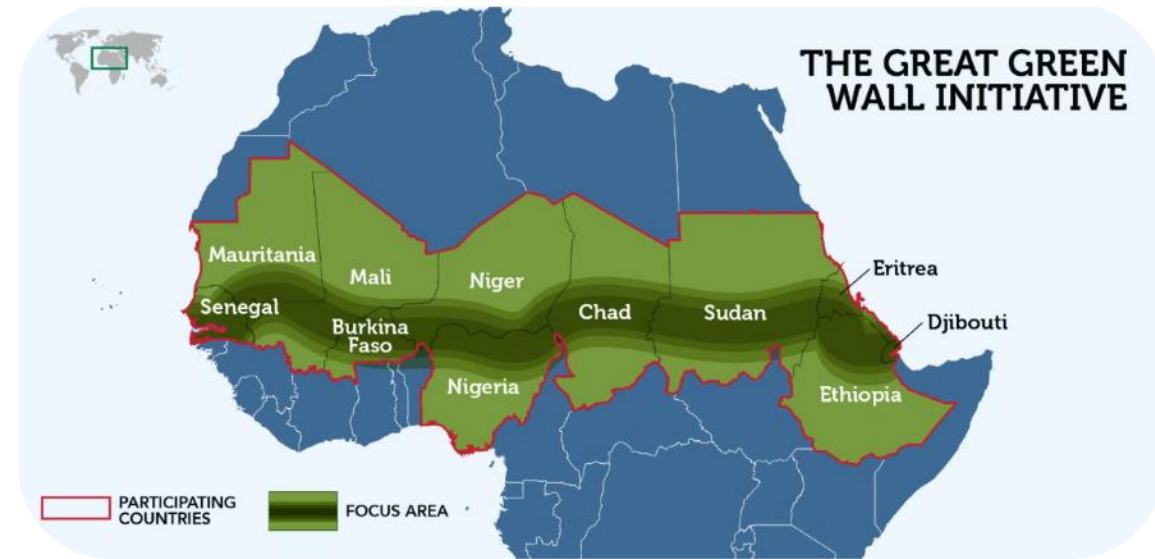


UNEP portfolio addressing land degradation

Regional distribution: Africa (30), Asia-Pacific (11), Europe (7), Global initiatives (8), Latin America and the Caribbean (12), and West Asia (3).



UNEP portfolio addressing land degradation



SPOTLIGHT: Great Green Wall Initiative

GEF/LDCF Grant: US \$ 77,888,167

Scope: **Regional:** Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal

Objective: To restore landscapes and ecosystems services for resilient communities living in arid and semi-arid environments across the Great Green Wall region of the Sahel using a transnational and integrated approach, supported by good adaptation activities, strengthened local, regional capacity for SLM, NRM and knowledge-sharing.

Targets:

- **2,621,000 ha** protected areas created or under improved management
- **6,335,000 ha** under sustainable land management in production systems
- Expected total beneficiaries: **5,050,260**

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SPOTLIGHT: Restoration and Sustainable Land Management

Sustainable use of land (Tanzania)

- ▶ **43,384 ha** of degraded land under restoration.
- ▶ **28,705 ha** forest under participatory forest management.
- ▶ **10,226 ha** grasslands improved by sustainable grazing.
- ▶ **3,299 ha** restored using Climate Smart Agriculture



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SPOTLIGHT: Coastal and Marine Area Management

Protected area network (Palau)

- ▶ Minimizing sediment/debris flow from degraded land into coastal waters to prevent habitat loss & harm to marine life.
- ▶ **39** Protected Area Network sites (29 Marine; 10 Coastal).
- ▶ **4,068 ha** coastal land sustainably managed (including mangrove).
- ▶ **121,400 ha** marine area protected (including estuary).

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Impact Summary (2024)

- **43,133 hectares** of terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.
- **4,130 hectares** of marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.
- **275,334 hectares** of land restored.
- **1,377,390 hectares** of landscapes under improved practices excluding protected areas.
- **6,130 hectares** of marine habitat under improved practices excluding protected areas.
- **2,927,076** direct beneficiaries



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Wastewater initiatives

Technical assistance, advocacy, partnerships and knowledge sharing towards:

- **Wastewater Reuse:** for irrigation, afforestation, reforestation, groundwater recharge.
- **Pollution Prevention:** Highlighting the social-economic-environmental impacts.
- **Restoring Ecosystems:** protecting and restoring ecosystems, including wetlands to mitigate effects of land degradation.

SPOTLIGHT: Wastewater to combat drought

Constructed Wetland (Iraq)

- **5,000 m³ /day** wastewater processed using NbS
- Supports agriculture; restores Abu Zarag wetlands
- Cost-effective, scalable solution



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Adaptation initiatives

Projects have land degradation as a major component of the adaptation approach.

145,703 ha land rehabilitated

2, 315,015 direct beneficiaries



SPOTLIGHT: Ecosystem based Adaptation

EbA Capacity building (Djibouti)

- Participatory regional adaptation plan
- **28,000** people to benefit from canals and micro-dams construction
- Skills development for climate resilient livelihoods

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Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives

Provide tools and expertise, foster partnerships and demonstrate replicable approaches in the areas of Eco-DRR

Provide environmental policy analysis in complex or insecure contexts, including transboundary contexts

- ~40,000 ha in protected and restored in threatened ecosystems
- Enhanced local resilience; 329,975 people (47% women) benefited across in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean

SPOTLIGHT: Ecosystem Restoration

Payments for Environmental Services (Haiti)

- 150,000 ha to be under improved management
- 410,000 people to benefit (52% women)
- Collaborative approach: 16 UN and non-UN partners across Peace, Humanitarian and Development nexus
- Harmonizing policies and regulatory frameworks, green finance solutions

UNEP portfolio addressing land degradation

UNEP Support to over 120 UNCCD Country Parties on National Reporting to the Convention



UNEP has provided essential technical support to over 120 UNCCD Country Parties throughout three National reporting cycles (2014, 2018, and 2022) to effectively prepare and submit their National Reports to the Convention.



For the 2026 UNCCD National Reporting Process, UNEP will be supporting over 100 Countries with technical support for preparation of their UNCCD National Reports.



The UNCCD National Reporting process tracks the UNCCD implementation; provides crucial data on the state of land for Country Parties; enables policymakers to make informed decisions.

UNEP publications and tools/initiatives on land degradation

UNEP Publications

- Factsheet: “[Land Degradation](#)”; causes and impacts of land degradation, and importance of sustainable land management practices (Sep 2017)
- Report: “[A case of benign neglect: Knowledge gaps about sustainability in pastoralism and rangelands](#)” (Mar 2019)
- Atlas: “[Sanitation and Wastewater Atlas of Africa](#)” (2021); role of sanitation and wastewater management in addressing land degradation across the continent.
- “[Nature-based Solutions for Peace: Emerging Practice and Options for Policymakers](#)” (2024) on potential of nature for resilience, peace and development; launched at UNCCD COP-16.

UNEP policy tools/initiatives

- The **UNCCD [Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System \(PRAIS\)](#) portal** offers a consistent methodology for countries to submit their National Reports; promoting accountability and informed policy-making.
- The **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) initiative**: focuses on preventing, halting, and reversing ecosystem degradation worldwide.
- The **Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative**: raises awareness on economic benefits of SLM; provides methodologies for economic assessments of land degradation; offers capacity-building resources.

Contribution to relevant UNEA resolutions

UNEP/EA.6/Res.14 - Strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality and enhance drought resilience

- Shift from reactive to proactive drought management, taking into consideration the importance of monitoring and early warning systems;
- Strengthen investments in the development, adaptation and scaling up of technologies relevant to combating desertification and land degradation.

UNEP/EA.4/Res. 10 - Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation

- Support Member States to develop and implement voluntary targets regarding land degradation neutrality, including the definition of national baselines, targets and associated measures, to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 in line with SDG 15, target 3.1.
- Encouraging research and development, facilitating knowledge sharing, and providing guidance and support to member states.
- Identifying and promoting best practices in biodiversity conservation and land management, as well as facilitating access to finance and technology for developing countries.

Contribution to relevant UNEA resolutions

UNEP/EA.6/Res.7 - Combating sand and dust storms

- support addressing the challenges of sand and dust storms through the UN Coalition on combatting Sand and Dust Storms, building on the UNEP “Global assessment of sand and dust storms”.
- organize workshop in the sidelines of UNEA-7, to explore gaps and areas for improvement at regional and sub-regional levels.
- a progress report on: - 1. Capacity Development / Technical Assistance 2. Normative Support 3. Policy Advice, and 4. Risk Analysis.

UNEP/EA.2/Res.24 - Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands

- links to SDG 15 which aims to protect, restore promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- calls for raising global awareness of sustainable pastoralism and rangelands; strengthening the science-policy interface; conducting a worldwide gap analysis.

UNEA/EA.2/Res.21 -

- Support member states in developing national policies and measures to address sand and dust storms. This includes providing technical assistance, promoting knowledge sharing, and facilitating access to finance and technology.

Exploring future directions:

- 1.How to strengthen connectivity within existing portfolio for enhancing impact?
- 2.What might growth of the Land Degradation portfolio look like?

Thank you



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