



## BACKGROUND PAPER

# MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE ON FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION AND THE BONN CHALLENGE IN THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

21-22 June 2018 | Astana | Kazakhstan

## WHAT IS THE BONN CHALLENGE?

The Bonn Challenge, launched in 2011 and extended by the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests, is a global effort to bring **150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million ha by 2030**. The Bonn Challenge serves as an open, voluntary and flexible discussion and exchange platform for concrete action and cooperation to facilitate the implementation of forest landscape restoration. To date **47 contributors** have pledged more than **160 Mha** to the Bonn Challenge.

The Bonn Challenge offers a practical way of achieving international commitments including Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD – prominently ABT 15, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) goal and Paris Agreement, the UN Land Degradation Neutrality Goal, several of the UN Global Forest Goals and Sustainable Development Goals related to forest and lands.

## THE BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THE BONN CHALLENGE

Achieving the Bonn Challenge's goal of 350 Mha by 2030 would result in at least 0.6 Gt of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) sequestered a year on average, reaching at least 1.6 Gt a year in 2030 and totalling 11.8–33.5 Gt over the period 2011–2030<sup>1</sup>.

Benefits of implementing Bonn Challenge pledges go beyond carbon sequestration. Forest landscape restoration can also contribute to reversing degradation and increasing productivity in lands otherwise degraded, as well as improving resilience of landscapes for environmental services provision in favor of people and biodiversity.

Countries that are part of the Bonn Challenge belong to an international community that is striving to achieve the following:

- **Increase forested areas** and improve livelihoods with the benefits from productive forests, which include job creation, watershed rehabilitation, improved crop yield and livestock, among others.
- **Mobilize resources** by unlocking existing funding and opening up additional resources.
- **Access technical support** to implement and scale up national efforts as part of a growing community with a network of experts, including on mapping, economics, finance, carbon and diagnosis of success factors.
- Leverage domestic programs to **achieve global goals** like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and the commitments set out in the Rio Conventions.
- Become part of a global restoration movement, **gain recognition** as leaders in the global movement, and demonstrate how national priorities and actions contribute to international commitments.

<sup>1</sup> Dave, R., Saint-Laurent, C., Moraes, M., Simonit, S., Raes, L., Karangwa, C. (2017). Bonn Challenge Barometer of Progress: Spotlight Report 2017. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 36pp, p. 9. Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-060.pdf>



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## HOW TO MAKE A PLEDGE TO THE BONN CHALLENGE

In order to make a pledge to the Bonn Challenge, countries, companies, communities, institutions and others submit commitments to restore degraded lands they own or have the rights to manage to IUCN as the Secretariat of the Bonn Challenge. Members of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) provide support in the definition and implementation of pledges.

UNECE/FAO and other partners can support countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia to identify restoration potential and build political will, contributing to potential new pledges. Once a pledge to the Bonn Challenge has been confirmed, UNECE/FAO can help by unlocking and catalyzing necessary finance, as well as facilitating the planning and implementation of successful restoration on the front-end.

The first step is to **express interest** by consulting with the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and evaluate the alignment of a potential Bonn Challenge commitment with national or sub-national priorities and with the principles of forest landscape restoration.

This is followed by a process to **prepare and confirm the country's contribution to the target**, including defining the location and number of hectares, the nature of stakeholder support for the restoration initiative, and the planned suite of restoration strategies.

**Commitments are then publicized** through special high profile events and at [www.BonnChallenge.org](http://www.BonnChallenge.org). This triggers a process of exchange and the mobilization of support for the implementation of restoration actions (find some examples below).

## WHAT CAN BE PLEDGED TOWARDS THE BONN CHALLENGE TARGET?

Contributions reflect national and subnational aspirations and commitments that are registered under the Bonn Challenge, including:

- Enhancement and implementation of existing national or sub-national restoration initiatives (set out as of January 1, 2011) covering specified numbers of hectares – if these are explicitly:
  - Aligned with the forest landscape restoration principles published by GPFLR, and
  - Brought forward as contributions to the Bonn Challenge.
- New forest landscape restoration initiatives over a specified number of hectares.

## STATUS OF BONN CHALLENGE PLEDGES AS OF JANUARY 2018<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> The Bonn Challenge website. Available at <http://www.bonnchallenge.org/>



## WHAT ARE THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION?

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is the long-term process of regaining ecological functions and enhancing human well-being from deforested and degraded lands. Ultimately, FLR is the process of restoring “the goods, services and ecological processes that forests can provide at the broader landscape level as opposed to solely promoting increased tree cover at a particular location”<sup>3</sup>. FLR enriches more narrowly defined approaches to ecological restoration, afforestation and reforestation by focusing on a mosaic of potential land uses and restoration interventions, with an aim of bringing multiple benefits to people and nature. A forest landscape is any area that once grew or could benefit from growing trees and woody plants (such as saxaul or even bamboos). Such landscapes include agricultural areas where on-farm trees could improve productivity.

Central to forest landscape restoration are the following core principles:

- **MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS:** Restoring an agreed, balanced package of landscape functions, not only increasing forest cover and not trying to re-establish the forests of the past.
- **LANDSCAPES NOT JUST SITES:** Working across whole landscapes containing mosaics of land uses, not just individual sites, so trade-offs can be balanced.
- **PACKAGES OF RESTORATION STRATEGIES:** Using a range of restoration options from natural regeneration to tree planting as appropriate.
- **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:** Active negotiation and collaboration among stakeholders.
- **PROTECTION OF NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS:** Avoiding further reduction or conversion of natural forest cover and other ecosystems.
- **LEARNING AND ADAPTING:** Tailoring to local conditions, continuously learning and adapting to changes in local conditions.

## BENEFITS OF FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

A landscape can be regarded as the heterogeneous mosaic of different land uses (e.g. agriculture, forestry, soil protection, water supply and distribution, biodiversity conservation, pasture provision) across a large area of land or a watershed. Forested landscapes are sources of wood and non-wood products, energy, food, shelter, incomes, human well-being and many environmental goods and services (biodiversity conservation, soil and water protection, recreational areas, carbon storage), which are often crucial for many economic sectors (food and agriculture, livestock, drinking water supply, tourism, energy and forest industry).

benefit of **natural capital**: fertile soils, carbon storage, water

benefit of **social capital**: jobs, income, cohesion and engagement

benefit of **financial capital**: financial performance

## EXAMPLES OF FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION INITIATIVES

The most appropriate restoration objectives and strategies will depend on local social, economic and ecological contexts and needs, as well as on national and global goals. Forest landscape restoration in the Caucasus and Central Asia could include the following examples of restoration strategies combined with other land uses at the landscape scale:

- The establishment of “green belts” around cities, such as Astana in Kazakhstan and Ashgabat in Turkmenistan.

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<sup>3</sup> Maginnis, S., Jackson, W. (2002). Restoring forest landscapes. *ITTO Tropical Forest Update* 12(4), pp 9-11.



- The creation of a pistachio growing centre in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan to combat land degradation and support the rehabilitation of arid lands.
- Large-scale agro-forestry to increase the productivity of severely degraded lands in the Loess Plateau in China.
- Rehabilitation and expansion of walnut-fruit forests in southern Kyrgyzstan.
- Afforestation measures to fight back desertification and the shrinking level of the Aral Sea, as in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.
- Regeneration and reforestation to aid recovery from wildfires, combined with efforts to enhance capacities on forest fire prevention and management in Georgia.
- The fixation of moving and advancing sands through the planting of sand-binding tree species to control desertification in Turkmenistan.
- Rehabilitation of saxaul rangelands through community management of grazing pressure, provision of water resources for rangelands, and herder agreements to enable degraded land restoration in the Kyzylorda region of Kazakhstan.
- Reforestation of 33 hectares of riverside with poplar, willow and apricot tree species on the Chui riverbed in the Issyk-Kul region of Kyrgyzstan.
- Combating soil erosion and salinization through tree planting, as in southern Tajikistan, Georgia and Turkmenistan.
- The conversion of 3,800 hectares of desert land into a peri-urban shelterbelt plantation, the Kökyar Protection Forest, to reduce the impact of dust and sand storms on Aksu City in northwest China.
- Afforestation of 217 landslide-prone areas across Kyrgyzstan as part of landslide disaster prevention strategy.
- Managing natural regeneration in key water catchments to secure urban water supply, as in the watersheds of Beijing and Rio de Janeiro.
- Nationwide reforestation of highly degraded landscapes, as in the Republic of Korea.

## POLITICAL AND TECHNICAL REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The international Bonn Challenge process was taken up by El Salvador in August 2015, six months after the 2<sup>nd</sup> international Bonn Challenge high level ministerial conference. This was the birth of an unprecedented development of what today are **5 regional processes** in Latin America, (East, West, Central and Southern) Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean and in the **Caucasus and Central Asia**.

In Latin America the regional policy process of the Bonn Challenge has developed a strong and visible face of practical implementation and an extensive exchange of national experiences. The following countries hosted regional Bonn Challenge events for Latin America: El Salvador (2015), Panama (2016), Honduras (2017), Guatemala (2018), Cuba (planned 2019). In Africa, regional Bonn Challenge high level events were organized by Rwanda (2016), Malawi (2017), and Congo/Brazzaville (2018) building on the Ministerial Kigali Declaration. In Asia, Indonesia organized the first regional meeting in 2017, and Sri Lanka will host the second regional meeting in 2018. The Mediterranean region organized a regional FLR meeting in March 2017, which fueled political will that led to the adoption of the **Agadir Commitment**. In **June 2018 Kazakhstan will host a Ministerial Roundtable** on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

There are also technical regional initiatives in support of the Bonn Challenge. **AFR100** (the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative) is a country-led effort to bring 100 million hectares of deforested and degraded landscapes across Africa into restoration by 2030. A dynamic network of political, technical, and financial partners facilitate action towards the 100 million ha restoration target. To date 21 African nations have signed onto AFR100 and committed a combined 63.3 million hectares of land – an area nearly the size of Madagascar – to be restored. Twelve technical partners and nine financial partners support partner countries to assess restoration opportunities, develop strategies, and accelerate implementation on the ground.



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**20x20 Initiative** (Latin America and the Caribbean) is a country-led effort to bring 20 million hectares of land in Latin America and the Caribbean into restoration by 2020.

## FINANCING RESTORATION

The demand for restoration is growing, matched by a marked increase in financial and technical support for the Bonn Challenge.

In 2016, IUCN, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO, launched The Restoration Initiative (TRI), a project to support 10 countries in Asia and Africa in achieving their restoration objectives. TRI is supported by a US\$ 54 million grant from the GEF, with over US\$ 200 million in co-financing. Myanmar, Pakistan and China are part of TRI and will benefit immensely from the technical expertise it offers.

The GEF intends to continue and expand its support for restoration in the coming GEF-7 restoration cycle. A recent analysis by the GEF Secretariat found restoration and reforestation to be the most frequently occurring theme among GEF countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and National Action Plans (NAPs) – present in 98% of GEF-eligible countries' policy frameworks.

By integrating forest landscape restoration into ongoing environment and development programmes, countries can maximise the impact of their investment. This has been seen in India where the Green India Mission has leveraged US\$ 6 billion by aligning afforestation programmes with its National Agroforestry Policy, REDD+ Policy, and Joint Forest Management and National Afforestation programmes.

## THE HISTORY OF THE BONN CHALLENGE

At the first global workshop on the implementation of forest landscape restoration, which took place in April 2005 in Petrópolis, Brazil, co-hosted by the Governments of Brazil and the United Kingdom, participants agreed to the **Petropolis Challenge** “to restore forest landscapes to benefit people and nature and contribute to reversing the trends of forest loss and degradation.” Key elements to meet the challenge were the issue of a Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) and to build a learning network around restoration. In November 2009, a High Level Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration was convened in London by the Government of the United Kingdom and IUCN to bring together ministers and other high level representatives from government, the private sector, indigenous peoples' organizations and civil society to produce the **London Challenge**, which focused on the themes of Restoration and Climate Change, and Restoration and People, and outlined a work plan for the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration. In February 2011, the **UN Forum on Forests** (UNFF) called on Member States and others to build on the work of the GPFLR to further develop and implement forest landscape restoration. Action on restoration contributes to the **Global Objectives on Forests**, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, particularly **Global Objective 1** which calls for reversing the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation. The **Bonn Challenge** was launched in September 2011 at a ministerial event hosted by the Government of Germany and IUCN and supported by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR).

Leaders from all sectors called for the restoration of 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020. The Bonn Challenge is an implementation vehicle for existing international commitments including **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Target 15** which calls for restoration by 2020 of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate-change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification, and the **UNFCCC REDD+ goal** to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss. This is to be achieved through reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and through conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The Rio+20 Summit in 2012 agreed the land degradation



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neutral global goal, in support to the **Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD)**, to which the Bonn Challenge also contributes.

In a demonstration of continuing global momentum for restoration, the **New York Declaration on Forests from the 2014 Climate Summit** – which was endorsed by more than 100 governments, civil society and indigenous organizations, and private enterprises – included the Bonn Challenge target and extended this goal by calling for restoration of at least an additional 200 million hectares by 2030. The Bonn Challenge will also contribute to achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**. It can be a resource for countries, associations, enterprises and others who manage land and wish to meet national goals on restoration of degraded and deforested lands while contributing to achieving these international commitments and being recognized for doing so.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Learn more about the Bonn Challenge at:

[www.bonnchallenge.org](http://www.bonnchallenge.org)

Learn more about the United Nations Economic Commission Europe at:

<http://www.unece.org/forests/welcome.html>

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