



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**UNECE**

BACKGROUND PAPER

# **FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION AND THE BONN CHALLENGE IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**



**BONN  
CHALLENGE**



## WHAT IS THE BONN CHALLENGE?

The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring **150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million ha by 2030**. It was launched in 2011 by the Government of Germany and IUCN, and later endorsed and extended by the New York Declaration on Forests in 2014. 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, **62 contributors** have pledged more than **172 million hectares** to the Bonn Challenge.

The Bonn Challenge is a direct contribution to the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**<sup>1</sup> and offers a practical way of achieving international commitments, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the goals under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and the Paris Agreement, the Rio+20 Land Degradation Neutrality Goal, several of the UN Global Forest Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## STATUS OF BONN CHALLENGE PLEDGES AS OF DECEMBER 2019<sup>2</sup>



## REGIONAL INITIATIVE ON EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA - ECCA30

ECCA30 provides regional support of the Bonn Challenge for Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and seeks to bring 30 million ha of degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2030. The initiative was launched during the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in New York, in September 2019. It facilitates access to technical and financial support and reinforces regional cooperation and capacity exchange on forest landscape restoration (FLR). Further, the initiative will help countries to receive international and regional recognition for their restoration ambitions. **All pledges to the Bonn Challenge are automatically counted towards ECCA30 for countries of the region.** The Secretariat of ECCA30 is run by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the World Research Institute and the World Bank. The Secretariat serves as the main contact to confirm contributions and to facilitate the coordination of pledgers and partners engaged in technical and financial assistance, knowledge sharing, progress tracking and reporting.

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

Contributions reflect national and sub-national 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 areas (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 area (number of hectares).

## 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 right to manage, to IUCN as the Secretariat of the Bonn Challenge. Members of the **Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR)**<sup>3</sup> provide support in the formulating of pledges and their implementation.

UNECE and FAO together with other partners can support countries of Eastern and South-East Europe in identifying restoration potential and building political capacity, contributing to potential new pledges. Once a pledge to the Bonn Challenge has been confirmed, UNECE, FAO and IUCN can assist 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 joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and evaluating 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 of **preparing and confirming the country's contribution to the Bonn Challenge**, including defining the location and area (number of hectares), the nature of stakeholder support for the restoration initiative, and planned restoration strategies.

Once a pledge has been identified, it is important to send a letter confirming the area to the Bonn Challenge Secretariat to [bonnchallengesecretariat@iucn.org](mailto:bonnchallengesecretariat@iucn.org).

**Commitments are announced** at special high-profile events and through the website: [www.BonnChallenge.org](http://www.BonnChallenge.org). Each pledge-maker will have a dedicated page to showcase their restoration ambition to potential partners and donors. This triggers a process of exchange and the mobilization of financial and technical support for the implementation of restoration commitments.

## EXPERIENCE OF UNECE MEMBER STATES PLEDGING TO THE BONN CHALLENGE

During the Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge for the Caucasus and Central Asia, hosted by Kazakhstan in June 2018, six countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) committed to restore over **2,5 million ha** of degraded land. Over the years the commitment reached about **3 million ha** through the pledge of Azerbaijan. Countries of the region also endorsed the **Astana Resolution**,<sup>4</sup> which strengthens regional cooperation on landscape restoration.

The regional **strategy for landscape restoration and greening infrastructure**, is one of the main tools to facilitate the achievement of the declared goals. The strategy, which covers all countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, is striving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase resilience to climate change, improve rural livelihoods and biodiversity, reduce pollution and put development on a more sustainable basis through forest landscape restoration.

1 [www.decadeonrestoration.org](http://www.decadeonrestoration.org)

2 The Bonn Challenge website. Available at [www.bonnchallenge.org](http://www.bonnchallenge.org)

3 The Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR), [www.forestlandscaperestoration.org/what-forest-and-landscape-restoration-flr](http://www.forestlandscaperestoration.org/what-forest-and-landscape-restoration-flr)

4 <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47712>

## THE BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THE BONN CHALLENGE

Achieving the Bonn Challenge's goal of 350 million ha 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>5</sup>

Benefits of implementing Bonn Challenge pledges go beyond carbon sequestration. Forest landscape restoration can also contribute to reversing degradation and increasing productivity of land otherwise degraded, as well as improving the resilience of landscapes for environmental services provision, as well as enhancing human well-being and conserving the biodiversity.

Countries that are part of the Bonn Challenge are part of a global movement on restoration that is striving to achieve the following:

- **Increase forest areas** and improve livelihoods by reaping benefits from 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 spatial analysis, on extent and location of degradation and deforestation, economics, finance, carbon, impact on biodiversity and diagnosis of success factors.
- Leverage domestic programs to **achieve global goals** like the SDGs, the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and the commitments set out in the Rio Conventions.
- **Gain recognition** as leaders in the global movement and demonstrate how national priorities and actions contribute to international commitments.

## 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>6</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, which includes agricultural areas where on-farm trees could improve productivity and functionality of the landscape.

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 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).



## FINANCING RESTORATION

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

In line with the Climate Action Summit, the World Bank, together with the German Government launched PROGREEN,<sup>7</sup> a Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes, which is a World Bank multi-donor trust fund that supports countries' efforts to improve livelihoods while tackling declining biodiversity, loss of forests, deteriorating land fertility and increasing risks such as uncontrolled forest fires, which are exacerbated by a changing climate. Through an integrated landscape approach, PROGREEN will help countries meet their national and global sustainable development goals and commitments, including poverty reduction, in a cost-effective manner.

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) intends to continue and expand its support for restoration in the GEF-7 restoration cycle. A recent analysis by the GEF<sup>8</sup> 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.

Moreover, by integrating Bonn Challenge commitments into NDCs, LDN goals and post 2020 biodiversity framework could leverage funding to close the finance gaps in climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and restoration; and it can help in aligning sectoral policies and investments and achieve broader uptake by the stakeholders.

5 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>

6 Maginnis, S., Jackson, W. (2002). Restoring forest landscapes. ITTO Tropical Forest Update 12(4), pp 9-11.

7 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/environment/brief/frequently-asked-questions-the-progreen-global-partnership-for-sustainable-and-resilient-landscapes>

8 [http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.54.11.Rev\\_02\\_Results.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.54.11.Rev_02_Results.pdf)

## OTHER 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 marked 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 Europe, 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 high level ministerial roundtables for Latin America: El Salvador (2015), Panama (2016), Honduras (2017), Guatemala (2018), Argentina (2019), Cuba (planned). In Africa, regional Bonn Challenge high level ministerial roundtables were organized by Rwanda (2016), Malawi (2017), and Congo/Brazzaville (2018), Senegal (2019) building on the Ministerial Kigali Declaration. 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 Asia, Indonesia organized the first regional Bonn Challenge ministerial meeting in 2017, and India will host the regional Bonn Challenge ministerial meeting in 2020. The **ASEAN's** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Leadership in Forest Landscape Restoration: Supporting the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests took place in Thailand in 2019 and provided platform for planning a 2nd Asia ministerial roundtable on the Bonn Challenge.

The global push for forest landscape restoration and the increased ambition shown by countries have fostered several regional political spaces as well as technical platforms in support of the Bonn Challenge. **AFR100**<sup>9</sup> (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 28 African nations have committed to restore 113 million hectares of land. Twenty-eight technical and twelve financial partners support countries to assess restoration opportunities, develop strategies, and accelerate implementation on the ground.

**20x20 Initiative**<sup>10</sup> (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. So far, 17 Latin American and Caribbean countries and three regional programs have committed to begin restoring more than 50 million hectares (or about 124 million acres, an area roughly the size of France) of degraded land by 2020 through Initiative 20x20.

**ECCA30 Initiative**,<sup>11</sup> described separately above, (Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) a country-led initiative to restore 30 million hectares by 2030 in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. To date, 8 national and subnational governments have made 3+ million hectares to the Bonn Challenge.

## THE HISTORY OF THE BONN CHALLENGE

At the first global workshop on the implementation of FLR, 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 establishment 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 FLR was convened in London by the Government of the United Kingdom and IUCN to bring together ministers and other high-level representatives from governments, 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 GPFLR. 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 FLR. Action on restoration contributes to the **Global Forest Goals** of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2017, 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 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 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, UN Strategic Plan on Forests**, and is it is aligned with the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**, declared in 2019 by the UN General Assembly, aims to massively scale up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems as a proven measure to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity. UN Environment and the FAO are the custodian organizations. At the **UN Climate Summit 2019** that took place in New York, forest landscape restoration was brought up as a necessary nature-based solution to combat climate change. The Tanaloa process and UNFCCC COP25 in Madrid further emphasized the urgency to ramp up ambitions and action in 2020 NDCs and include more concrete, robust and quantifiable targets. Incorporating more ambitious and robust forest and land-use targets as such forest landscape restoration commitments in countries’ NDCs is critical to avoiding compromising long-term climate mitigation opportunities.

Forest Landscape Restoration under the Bonn Challenge 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.

## CONTACT

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<sup>9</sup> <https://afr100.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://initiative20x20.org/about>

<sup>11</sup> <https://infoflr.org/bonn-challenge/regional-initiatives/ecca30>