



Saudi Arabia Launches Sand and Dust Storm Monitoring Initiative to Expand Global Early Warning System Capacity

Resilience Day at COP16 in Riyadh mobilizes action and financing

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 11 December 2024: Saudi Arabia's UNCCD COP16 Presidency has announced the launch of an international initiative for sand and dust storm monitoring, part of a regional sand and dust storm early warning system, in a major boost for global early warning systems. The initiative will expand on existing international sand and dust storm capacity, overseen by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Part of the Riyadh Action Agenda at COP16 in Riyadh, the announcement took place during Resilience Day on Tuesday, a thematic day at COP16 designed to amplify action on global resilience initiatives. Discussions and events throughout the day sought to deliver renewed funding and solutions to combat land degradation, drought, and desertification. Two billion tonnes of sand and dust enter the atmosphere every year according to the UNCCD, equivalent in weight to 350 Great Pyramids of Giza. Over 25% is estimated to be due to human activity.

Based in Jeddah, the Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System (SDS-WAS), increases the number of global WMO-affiliated nodes to four, part of an international network including Beijing, Barcelona, and Barbados.

Speaking about the growing capacity of the center during a panel discussion, Jumaan Al-Qahtani, CEO, GCC Regional Sand and Dust Storms Warning Advisory and Assessment Node, Jeddah, said: "The center managed to develop three models with different resolutions that have been validated to predict sand and dust storms in the region, and they are all now in operation."

Al-Qahtani also addressed an initiative to increase global monitoring, warning, and coordination for sand and dust storms, saying: "Saudi Arabia just launched an international partnership initiative where we want to enhance early warning systems in those countries that are not able to do it. This will be done through the WMO accredited regional centers that now exist, and Saudi Arabia will fund this initiative with \$10 million for the next five years. We call upon other UN organizations and countries to support this initiative."

Scaling global drought resilience also featured heavily in official dialogue throughout the ninth day of COP16 in Riyadh. It comes after Saudi Arabia launched the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, part of the Riyadh Action



Agenda, at the beginning of COP16 in Riyadh. It has already secured \$2.15 billion in financial backing.

“Over 1.8 billion people are impacted by drought, with this number forecast to accelerate. Drought resilience must be a global priority, one that see’s us shift from a reactive response after droughts hit, to a proactive stance of comprehensive drought readiness and resilience,” said Dr. Osama Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment, Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, and Advisor to the UNCCD COP16 Presidency.

“We are very proud to launch the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership during COP16 in Riyadh, and we are very proud of the of the stakeholders that already supported the partnership. We are calling upon all countries, organizations, private sector, and NGOs, to join us in these efforts to enhance drought resilience. With this initiative we are targeting the 80 most vulnerable countries to drought,” added Dr Faqeeha.

Elsewhere during the COP16 Resilience Day, the World Bank announced they had raised \$24 billion in donor contributions, as part of their International Development Association. In a statement, the World Bank said this will help generate a total of \$100 billion in affordable financing. Amongst other areas, the funding will be used to support climate resilience, farmers, and boost infrastructure, in 78 countries determined to be most in need. COP16 in Riyadh is mobilizing global state and non-state actors, seeking to enhance international land restoration and drought resilience initiatives.

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About COP16 Riyadh:

The UNCCD COP16 conference is taking place from December 2-13, 2024, at Boulevard Riyadh World, Saudi Arabia. The conference, themed Our Land. Our Future, will mark the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD and aims to secure multilateral action on critical issues such as drought resilience, land tenure, and sand and dust storms.

For more information about UNCCD COP16, please visit [UNCCDCOP16.org](https://unccdcop16.org)
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