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- News: United Nations Forum on Forests
- Recently, **India participated in the 19th session of UNFF at the UN Headquarters in New York.**

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

- United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is a **high-level intergovernmental policy forum which includes all United Nations member states and permanent observers, the UNFF Secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, Regional Organizations and Processes and Major Groups.**
- **The Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (simply known as Forest Principles) and Agenda 21 on “Combating Deforestation” were adopted in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development known as Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro.**
- In 2000, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) with the main objective to promote **“the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end”** based on the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles,

Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the outcome of the IPF/IFF Processes and other key milestones of international forest policy.

Objectives

- To facilitate implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management.
- To provide for continued policy development and dialogue among Governments, international organizations, including major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 as well as to address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner.
- To enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues.
- To foster international cooperation.
- To monitor, assess and report on progress of the above functions and objectives.
- To strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.
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Key Takeaways from UNFF19

- India presented its revised National Forest Policy emphasising forest fire prevention and management through recommendations and technological solutions.
- According to UNFF, about 100 million hectares of forest or 3% of world's total forest area are affected by fires each year.
- India proposes operationalising the Global Fire Management Hub, a collaborative effort by the UNEP and the FAO to share knowledge and experiences in mitigating forest fires.
- India suggests establishing universally accepted standards like Model Forests Act for forest certification programs for consistent and responsible forest management practices worldwide.
- The forum reviewed the UN's strategic plan for forests (2017-2030) and progress made in achieving global forest goals like enhancing forests' economic, social, and environmental benefits and securing finances.
- A UN report highlighted concerns about “Climatisation” of forests, driven by market-oriented approaches for carbon sequestration, reducing forests' ecological and social values roles to mere carbon sinks.
- Indonesia presented its Forest and Other Land Use Net Sink 2030 strategy, and Malaysia committed to keeping at least 50% of its territory under tree cover.

India's Highlighted Initiatives in Forest Management at UNFF19

- India highlighted its success in using technology to manage forest fires.
- Examples include real-time fire monitoring via remote sensing, online fire reporting through web portals, and utilising ecological methods for restoration.
- Based on the forest inventory records, 54.40% of forests in India are exposed to occasional fires, 7.49% to moderately frequent fires and 2.40% to high incidence levels.
- Globally, India ranks third in the net gain of average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020.
- India completed its 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant, demonstrating its commitment to species conservation and habitat protection.
- India introduced the 'Green Credit Program' to incentivise tree plantation and restoration of degraded forest lands to strengthen climate action initiatives.
- In 2023, India hosted the country-led Initiative under UNFF at Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organisations, focusing on forest fire management and forest certification.