

Concept Note UNFF 21 (11-15 May 2026)

Title: Aravalli Green Wall Initiative: India's Landscape Ecological Restoration Programme for Climate Resilience and Inclusive Growth

1. Context

The Aravalli Range is one of the world's oldest mountain systems and among India's most ecologically significant dryland landscapes. Extending approximately 692 km across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the Aravallis form a critical ecological barrier against desertification, support groundwater recharge, regulate microclimates, and sustain biodiversity in north-western India.

Like many dryland forest systems globally, the Aravallis is facing continuous pressures from land degradation, rapid urbanization, fragmentation, unsustainable extraction, and climate variability. These challenges threaten ecosystem services essential for water security, soil stability, biodiversity conservation, and human well-being particularly in densely populated peri-urban and semi-arid regions.

Aravalli Green Wall (AGW) Initiative represents a model for restoration at the dryland–peri-urban interface, a category affecting large populations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is also significant for achieving the India's commitment of achieving the 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO equivalent by additional forest and tree cover by 2030 and restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

2. Aravalli Green Wall (AGW) Initiative:

India has launched the Aravalli Green Wall (AGW) Initiative, a landscape based restoration initiative covering nearly 6 million hectares within a 5 km buffer zone across four states. AGW adopts a science-based, multi-sectoral approach to restore degraded forest and non-forest lands, strengthen climate resilience, and promote inclusive green growth.

While tree planting serves as an entry point, AGW prioritizes ecological restoration over plantation-driven metrics. Key interventions include assisted natural regeneration and enrichment with native, climate-resilient species, grassland and scrubland restoration, removal of invasive species, soil and moisture conservation (SMC) measures and wetland revival.

Selection of micro-ecosystem for suitable interventions is enabled through remote sensing and spatial assessments of physiographic features, extent of degradation, soil depth and socio-economic vulnerability. The initiative aligns with national restoration strategies, including the Green India Mission as well as Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (Plant for Mother) campaign and contributes to India's various commitments including the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (2017–2030). The initiative operationalizes Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) principles under the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.

AGW is structured around a multi-tier governance framework in overall coordination by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India through

inter-ministerial convergence. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change leads implementation in partnership with State Forest Departments. Convergence with national and sub national schemes such as Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), Compensatory Afforestation Fund, Finance Commission grants, etc. enables scaling of soil and moisture conservation works, waterbody rejuvenation, and community-based assets. Urban ecological resilience is addressed through collaboration with Urban Local Bodies and expansion of urban forests and peri-urban green buffers under Nagar Van Yojana (Urban Forestry Scheme). These interventions contribute to heat island mitigation, air quality improvement, biodiversity corridors and public access to nature.

AGW also includes blended finance approach combining Public finance (CAMPA, convergence schemes), Community-led initiatives and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A key innovation is the operationalization of India's Green Credit Programme (GCP) within the Aravalli landscape. The GCP enables voluntary environmental action on identified degraded lands, uses a digital registry for transparency and traceability and issues verified, non-tradable Green Credits after five years of ecological restoration meeting defined ecological thresholds (e.g., $\geq 40\%$ canopy cover with indigenous species). The AGW model demonstrates how domestic financing instruments can complement public investment while upholding strong environmental standards and accountability.

AGW is promoting and strengthening community Engagement and proactive Social Inclusion through community led protection and maintenance, participation of women's groups and youth and generation of livelihood co-benefits through pasture development and ecosystem restoration. The initiative is focusing on holistic approach for strengthening of local governance institutions.

AGW builds upon the national citizen movement *Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam* (Plant4Mother), launched in 5 June 2024, which has mobilized large-scale public participation in tree planting across India by planting of over 2.61 billion saplings across India and 74 million saplings in Aravalli landscape.

Moreover, India is currently advancing the preparation of its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to strengthen resilience across climate-sensitive sectors, including forests and ecosystems. The Aravalli Green Wall contributes directly to this process by promoting ecosystem-based adaptation, enhancing water security, and building climate resilience in vulnerable dryland–urban landscapes.

3. Objectives of the Thematic Track

This thematic track aims to position the Aravalli Green Wall as a replicable, finance-ready and governance-integrated model of forest landscape restoration at the dryland–urban interface. The session will:

- **Showcase a Scalable Restoration Model for Semi-Arid Landscapes:** Present how the Aravalli Green Wall integrates ecological restoration, water security, urban resilience, and community participation across four states, offering a replicable approach for regions facing desertification and climate stress.
- **Demonstrate Innovative Public–Market Financing Mechanisms:** Highlight how convergence of public schemes, blended finance, and the Green Credit framework are mobilising private and community participation while ensuring ecological integrity.
- **Explore Governance Models for Landscape-Scale Convergence:** Examine how multi-tier coordination and inter-ministerial collaboration enable accountable, measurable restoration at scale.

Which UNFF21 agenda item is the proposed event most relevant to, and how?

Agenda Item for UNFF-21	Relevance with the Side Event
3(b): Contributions by Members 3(c): Contributions of Partners 3(d): Interlinkages with SDGs & Conventions 3(e): Communication & Outreach 3(f): Means of Implementation (Finance) 6. Emerging issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aravalli Green Wall contributes directly to advancing Global Forest <i>Goal-1 (Reversing Forest loss through landscape restoration)</i>, <i>Goal-3 (Increasing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits)</i> and <i>Goal 5 (Promoting governance frameworks and financing)</i> by integrating restoration, resilience, financing innovation and governance convergence. • UNFF21’s biennial cycle prioritizes these Goals, and its provisional agenda emphasizes progress since the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests providing an apt platform for India to present AGW as a replicable model for dryland-urban interface restoration. • AGW is a major national initiative contributing to GFGs and demonstrates strong multi-partner engagement (MoEFCC, TERI, GIZ, state agencies, communities). It also supports SDGs, UNCCD goals, CBD biodiversity restoration, and climate adaptation alignment.

Proposed Speakers/ Chairs for the event and Panel Members

Speakers: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India	
Shri Ramesh Kumar Pandey, IFS Additional Director General of Forests (ADGF)	Shri R Raghu Prasad, IFS Inspector General of Forests (IGF)
Speaker: Rajasthan Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan	
Smt. Shikha Mehra, PCCF Development (virtual)	
Speakers: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi,	
Dr. Jitendra Vir Sharma, Senior Director, (virtual)	Dr. Dipankar Saharia, Senior Director
Shri Aniruddh Soni, Fellow	
Other experts	
Dr Chetan Kumar, Global Head, Forest and Grasslands Team, IUCN	Shri Kundan Burnwal Deputy Project Director, RECAP4NDC Project, GIZ India

Draft Agenda

Time	Subject	Speaker
13:15-13:20	Introduction to the Theme of Program	Dr. J.V. Sharma, Senior Director, TERI
13:20-13:30	India's Approach towards Ecorestoration and Halting Land Degradation	Shri Ramesh Kumar Pandey, ADGF Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India
13:30-13:40	Aravalli Green Wall Project: Convergence for Conservation	Shri R Raghu Prasad, IGF Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India
13:40-13:50	Initiatives of Rajasthan State: From Policy to Action	Smt Shikha Mehra, PCCF Development Rajasthan Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan
13:50-13:58	Community based conservation approaches for livelihoods and landscape restoration	Dr. Dipankar Saharia, Senior Director, TERI
13:58-14:06	Landscape Restoration in India: Approach of RECAP4NDC Project	Shri Kundan Burnwal, Deputy Project Director, RECAP4NDC Project, GIZ India
14:06-14:14	Technology and Tools Aiding Aravalli Green Wall Project	Shri Aniruddh Soni, Fellow, TERI
14:14-14:28	Q&A session	Questions to be responded by Panel
14:28-14:30	Vote of Thanks	Shri Aniruddh Soni, Fellow, TERI
