



**President of the
General Assembly**
79th Session



High-Level Meeting on Sand and Dust Storms

Thursday, 10 July 2025

10:00a.m. to 1:00p.m.

General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters

“Working Across Agendas for Resilience and Sustainability”

Concept Note

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 78/158, the President of the General Assembly will convene a high-level meeting on 10 July 2025 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the General Assembly Hall at the United Nations Headquarters, New York under the theme “Sand and Dust Storms: Working Across Agendas for Resilience and Sustainability”. This high-level meeting is convened within the context of the International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms, which is observed annually on 12 July in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/294.

Sand and dust storms have far-reaching environmental, social, and economic consequences, severely impacting health, agriculture, ecosystems, and infrastructure. These storms degrade arable land through soil erosion, threatening food security and rural livelihoods, while also increasing air pollution and posing serious health risks such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular issues, and increased mortality. According to the World Health Organization, exposure to airborne particulate matter, including from sand and dust storms, contributes to approximately 7 million premature deaths each year due to air pollution-related diseases.

Sand and dust storms also accelerate desertification, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, creating long-term sustainability challenges that disrupt economies and hinder development. The Food and Agriculture Organization reports that sand and dust storms can reduce crop yields by up to 25% in affected regions, while increasing irrigation demand and damaging critical agricultural infrastructure. Drought conditions and water scarcity contribute to aridity and land degradation, further endangering agricultural productivity and public health when strong winds lift sand and dust from dry soils within and between countries and regions. Transportation and electricity services are also disrupted during intensive storm events. These conditions are exacerbated by rising temperatures and the changing climate.

The World Bank estimates that global welfare losses from dust increased from US\$ 2.2 trillion in 1990 to approximately US\$ 3.6 trillion in 2013. The Middle East and North Africa are particularly vulnerable to sand and dust storms suffering costs of about US\$ 150 billion and over 2.5% of GDP on average, while the greatest welfare losses are concentrated in the Asia and the Pacific region. The urgency to address these socio-economic and environmental costs is reflected in the Pact for the Future and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as under the three Rio Conventions and disaster risk reduction platforms.

A critical aspect of combating sand and dust storms is strengthening early warning systems and scientific research to predict and respond to these storms more effectively. The General Assembly has called for increased investment in regional and global trust funds to support affected countries, particularly in Western Asia and Africa, where sand and dust storms cause significant socio-economic and environmental harm. International frameworks, transboundary collaboration, and financial resources are essential for supporting early warning, source mitigation, impact mitigation and preparedness.

Growing recognition of sand and dust storms as a pressing global issue was further demonstrated by the decision of the General Assembly to proclaim 2025-2034 as the United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms in accordance with resolution 78/314. The resolution underscores that mitigating the impacts of sand and dust storms is essential for sustainable development and resilience-building and is directly linked to achieving 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the Decade aims to enhance international and regional cooperation and scale up efforts to prevent, halt and mitigate the negative effects of sand and dust storms, especially on the affected countries.

Objective

The meeting aims to bring together Member States and Observers at the highest level possible to discuss the challenges faced by affected countries and to promote practical, coordinated actions at both regional and global levels. It will also be an opportunity to discuss action-oriented recommendations and address the challenges faced by countries affected by sand and dust storms.

Format

The high-level meeting will comprise an opening segment and a plenary segment. The meeting will be open to Member States, observers of the General Assembly, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations and entities of the United Nations system. The meeting will be streamed live on UN WebTV and will be available in all official languages of the United Nations.