

THE CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH UNEP AWARD HAS ANNOUNCED THE WINNERS OF THE 2024 EDITION

On 10 December 2024 [UN Environment Programme UNEP](#) have announced the [2024 Champions of the Earth](#), honouring individuals and organizations whose actions have a transformative impact on the environment.

Since its inception in 2005, the annual Champions of the Earth UNEP Award has been bringing visibility and validating some of the world's most dynamic environmental leaders, including pioneering scientists, captains of industry, heads of state and community activists. The award celebrates inspirational and motivational examples of the potential of individuals and their collective action to change the world.



Following the launch of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) (2021-2030), the editions of the award have been focused on efforts to globally prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation, looking for inspirational leaders capable to lead the charge in actions for: Climate - Strengthening ecosystem resilience and halting emissions; Nature - Protecting what we have and restoring what we have lost and Pollution - Tackling waste and pollutants threatening human and ecosystem health.

UNEP Underlines that “Almost [40 per cent of the world's land is already degraded](#), desertification is on the rise and devastating droughts are becoming more regular. An estimated 3.2 billion people worldwide are impacted by desertification. By 2050, more [than three-quarters](#) of the world's population is expected to be affected by droughts. In March 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2021–2030 the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). UNEP's Generation Restoration campaign aims to support accelerated progress on these commitments by rallying support for [the 2030 Agenda](#) and carrying out vital ecosystem restoration work to protect 30 per cent of nature on land and sea as well as rehabilitating 30 per cent of planetary degradation. Globally, [countries have pledged to restore 1 billion hectares of land](#) by 2030, while current trends suggest 1.5 billion hectares would need to be restored to meet the 2030 [land degradation neutrality](#) goals”.

“The good news is that solutions already exist today, and around the world, extraordinary individuals and organizations are proving that it is possible to defend and heal our planet. The efforts of the 2024 Champions of the Earth stand tall as a reminder that the fight to protect our land, rivers and oceans is one we can win. With the right policies, scientific breakthroughs, system reforms, activism, as well as the vital leadership and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples, we can restore our ecosystems”.



The following six [UNEP's Champions of the Earth 2024](#) have been selected from all the nominations received from around the world:

- **[Sonia Guajajara](#)**, Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples honoured in the *Policy Leadership* category, has been advocating for Indigenous rights for more than two decades. Guajajara became Brazil's first Minister of Indigenous Peoples and the country's first female Indigenous minister in 2023. Under her leadership, 13 territories have been recognized as Indigenous land to ward off deforestation, illegal logging, and drug traffickers.
- **[Amy Bowers Cordalis](#)**, an Indigenous rights advocate honoured in the *Inspiration and Action* category, is using her legal expertise and passion for restoration to secure a better future for the Yurok tribe and the Klamath River in the United States. Cordalis' work to restore the river ecosystem and encourage the adoption of sustainable fishing practices demonstrates how bold environmental action can bring significant positive change, while upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights and livelihoods.
- **[Gabriel Paun](#)**, a Romanian environmental defender honoured in the *Inspiration and Action* category, is the founder of the NGO Agent Green, which has been helping save thousands of hectares of precious biodiversity in the Carpathians since 2009 by exposing the destruction and illegal logging of Europe's last old growth forest. Paun has received death threats and has been physically attacked for his work in documenting deforestation in an area that is vital for the ecosystem and supports unique biodiversity such as lynx and wolves.
- **[Lu Qi](#)**, a Chinese scientist honoured in the *Science and Innovation* category, has worked in both science and policy sectors for three decades helping China reverse degradation and shrink its deserts. As Chief Scientist of the Chinese Academy of Forestry and the founding President of the Institute of Great Green Wall, Lu has played a key role in implementing the world's largest afforestation project, establishing expert research networks and partnerships, and boosting multilateral cooperation to stem desertification, land degradation and drought.
- **[Madhav Gadgil](#)**, an Indian ecologist honoured in the *Lifetime Achievement* category, has spent decades protecting people and the planet through research and community engagement. From landmark environmental impact assessments of state and national policies to grassroots environmental initiatives, Gadgil's work has greatly influenced public opinion and official policies on the protection of natural resources. He is renowned for his seminal work in the ecologically fragile Western Ghats region of India, which is a unique global biodiversity hotspot.
- **[SEKEM](#)**, a sustainable agriculture initiative honoured in the *Entrepreneurial Vision* category, is helping farmers in Egypt transition to more sustainable agriculture. Its promotion of biodynamic agriculture along with afforestation and reforestation work has been transforming large swathes of desert into thriving agricultural businesses, advancing sustainable development across the country.

Since the award's inception in 2005, the Champions of the Earth has recognized 122 laureates, ranging from world leaders to technology inventors.



On the website, all winners of the annual Champions of the Earth Awards are presented with articles that allow readers to learn about their innovative initiatives.

To know more

[2024 Champions of the Earth](#)

[News in UNEP website-Champions of the Earth 2024](#)

[About the Champions of the Earth Award](#)

[Laureates by Year | Champions of the Earth \(unep.org\)](#)

[Champions of the Earth News and Stories \(unep.org\)](#)

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