

# Mongolian Cabinet holds meeting in Gobi desert

August 30 2010, By GANBAT NAMJILSANGARAV , Associated Press  
Writer

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In this photo taken on Friday, Aug. 27, 2010 released by China's Xinhua News Agency, a Cabinet meeting aimed at drawing attention to climate change is held in Gashuunii Khooloi, a sandy valley in South Gobi province, Mongolia. Top Mongolian officials donned dark green baseball caps reading "Save our planet" and set up chairs and tables in the sands of the Gobi desert for the Cabinet meeting held in scorching heat Friday. (AP Photo/Xinhua, Asigang)

(AP) -- Top Mongolian officials donned dark green baseball caps reading "Save our planet" and set up chairs and tables in the sands of the Gobi desert for a Cabinet meeting aimed at drawing attention to climate change.

The meeting of 12 government ministers was held in scorching heat Friday in Gashuunii Khooloi, a sandy valley in South Gobi province,

about 415 miles (670 kilometers) south of Ulan-Bator, the country's capital.

The ministers, dressed in suits and ties, arrived in the desert in jeeps after a 15-hour journey. Officials planted a Mongolian flag in the ground, set up long tables and chairs in the fine, golden sand and discussed climate change against the backdrop of a vast expanse of desert and a bright blue sky.

"Mongolia is feeling the impact of global climate change," Prime Minister Batbold Sukhbaatar said at the one-hour meeting.

Batbold pointed to the recent winter as an example of problems Mongolia faces. The winter was the harshest in decades and a fifth of the country's livestock died.

The government blames global warming for a decrease in rainfall and says that rising average temperatures have caused many rivers and springs to dry up and snow cover to melt. It also says the frequency of [natural disasters](#) and drought has jumped.

The site for the meeting was chosen because parts of it used to be arable land, said Badarch, head of social policy for South Gobi province, who like some Mongolians uses only one name.

"Five years ago, there used to grow many edible plants in this valley and there were fewer sand dunes. Now look here," he said. "The valley is completely covered with sand. The sand dunes are moving and taking more space each year."

Minister of Natural Environment and Tourism Gansukh Luumed said Mongolian herders' traditional way of life is under threat. "[Global climate change](#) accelerates the desertification process in Mongolia.

Currently, 70 percent of Mongolian land is affected by desertification."

In December, Nepalese officials held a Cabinet meeting at Mount Everest to highlight the danger global warming poses to glaciers. It followed an underwater Cabinet meeting in the Maldives in October to underline the threat of rising sea levels.

The government said it hoped that delegates attending global climate talks in Cancun, Mexico, in November would reach a decision that is "favorable for landlocked, developing countries ... very much affected by climate change and desertification."

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