



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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India unlikely to ratify High Seas Treaty at U.N Ocean Conference

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Context

- India is unlikely to ratify the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement** — also known informally as the '**High Seas Treaty**' — at the ongoing **United Nations Ocean Conference** in Nice, France, sources indicated to The Hindu.
- Though **India signed the agreement** in September 2024, **formal ratification is pending**. Before proceeding, the government is **required to amend certain laws, including the Biological Diversity Act**, it is learnt.
- "This will probably be taken up after the Monsoon Session (July 12–August 12) and **needs to be passed in Parliament**. There are other issues that also need to be sorted out," a person familiar with the negotiations said.
- As of June 10, 49 countries have ratified the treaty. **Once 60 countries complete the process, the treaty will enter into legal force.**

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement

- Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement also called **High Seas Treaty**.
- This global agreement is designed to **safeguard high seas marine biodiversity** through collaboration at international level and it will operate within the framework of the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- According to the **1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas**, parts of the sea that are not included in the territorial waters or the internal waters of a country are known as the **high seas**.
- It is the **area beyond a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (that extends up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline)** and till where a nation has jurisdiction over living and non-living resources.
- No country is responsible for the management and protection of resources on the high seas.
- **The high seas cover over 64% of the world's oceans and 50% of the Earth's surface**, making them vital for marine life.
- They are home to around 270,000 known species, with many yet to be discovered.
- The high seas **regulate climate, absorb carbon, store solar radiation, and distribute heat, crucial for planetary stability and mitigating climate change.**

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- They are essential for human survival, providing resources like **seafood, raw materials, genetic and medicinal resources.**

- **Provisions of treaty include**

a) Conservation and Protection of Marine Ecology

b) Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits of Marine Resources

UN HIGH SEAS TR

aka BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement

*For the first time, UN members have agreed on
(legally-binding) treaty to protect biodiversity in the*

High Seas (HS)

All the saltwater bodies across Earth that aren't part of territorial sea/internal waters of a state

Need to Protect HS

- Only 1.2% of HS are protected
- 10% of HS are at risk of collapse
- High exposure to overfishing, pollution, and climate change

Background of Treaty

Demand for an updated framework to protect marine life in the High Seas, is about 20 years-old

The last int'l agreement on ocean protection was UNCL

This treaty is the 3rd "implementing agreement" under

KEY FEATURES

- Create a new body to manage conservation of ocean and establish protected areas in the high seas
- Estd. ground rules for conducting EIAs for commercial activities

KEY PLAYERS

EU, US, UK and China (in brokering the deal)

SIGNIFICANCE

- Achieving the 30x30 Target set at UN CBD COP15
- Legal protection of 2/3rd of the ocean (+ livelihoods)
- Comprehensive protection of endangered species/