



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 TREATY

aka BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement

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

High Seas (HS)

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

Background of Treaty

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

Need to Protect HS

- Only 1.2% of HSs are currently protected
- 10% of global marine species at risk of extinction
- High exploitation due to commercial fishing, mining, acidification, pollution

The last int'l agreement on ocean protection was UNCLOS signed in 1982

This treaty is the 3rd "implementing agreement" under UNCLOS

KEY FEATURES

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

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 of coastal communities)
- Comprehensive protection of endangered species/habitats on >40% of Earth's surface

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