



India Abstains at UNHRC

For Prelims: UNHRC, Quad, IAEA.

For Mains: Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, Important International Institutions.

Why in News?

Recently, India abstained on a vote at the [UN Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva. The Council moved the resolution to set up an **international commission of enquiry** into [Russia's actions in Ukraine](#).

- The move is significant in the terms that the vote followed even after **India's meeting with Quad countries**.
- India has also abstained from similar resolutions in the [United Nations General Assembly](#) and [United Nations Security Council](#).
- India also abstained from the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) resolution that was related to safety at four nuclear power stations and a number of nuclear waste sites including Chernobyl, as the Russians seized control of them.

What is the UN Human Rights Council?

- **About:**
 - The Human Rights Council is an **inter-governmental body within the United Nations system** responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of [human rights](#) around the world.
- **Formation:**
 - The Council was **created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006**. It replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
 - The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** serves as the **Secretariat** of the Human Rights Council.
 - OHCHR is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **Members:**
 - It is **made up of 47 United Nations Member States** which are **elected by the UN General Assembly (UNGA)**.
 - The UNGA takes into account the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.
 - The Council's Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution. Seats are distributed as follows:
 - African States: 13 seats
 - Asia-Pacific States: 13 seats
 - Latin American and Caribbean States: 8 seats
 - Western European and other States: 7 seats
 - Eastern European States: 6 seats

- Members of the Council **serve for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.**
- **Procedures and Mechanisms:**
 - **Universal Periodic Review:** [UPR](#) serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States.
 - **Advisory Committee:** It serves as the Council's "think tank" providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues.
 - **Complaint Procedure:** It allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.
 - **UN Special Procedures:** These are made up of [special rapporteurs](#), special representatives, independent experts and working groups that monitor, examine, advise and publicly report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.
- **Issues:**
 - **Related to the Membership:** A key concern for some critics has been the composition of Council membership, which sometimes includes countries widely perceived as human rights abusers.
 - China, Cuba, Eritrea, Russia and Venezuela, all of which have been accused of human rights abuses.
 - **Disproportionate Focus:** US pulled out of the Agency in 2018 due to its disproportionate focus on Israel, which has received by far the largest number of critical council resolutions against any country.
 - The US has joined the organization again.
- **India and UN Human Rights Council:**
 - Recently, a group of Special Rapporteurs to the United Nations (UN) has written to the Indian government [expressing concerns](#) over the **draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification 2020.**
 - In 2020, India's National Human Rights Commission submitted its mid-term report to the Council as a part of the third round of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
 - India was elected to the Council for a period of three years beginning 1st January 2019.

PYQ

Q. Consider the following: (2011)

1. Right to education
2. Right to equal access to public service
3. Right to food.

Which of the above is/are Human Right/Human Rights under "Universal Declaration of Human Rights"?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

[Source: TH](#)

