UNSC Meet on Maritime Security

Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** has adopted the **first-ever presidential statement** on maritime security.

- **India, as the UNSC president for August 2021,** noted the threats to maritime safety and security and called upon the members to consider implementing the **2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.**
- All the **permanent members of UNSC (US, China, Russia, UK and France)** attended the Meet.

Key Points

- **Statement on Maritime Security:**

    - Emphasized on safeguarding the legitimate uses of the oceans and security of coastal communities, affirming that international law — reflected in the **1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**, among other global instruments — provides the legal framework for combating these illicit activities.
    - Called on Member States to **implement the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code** and Chapter XI-2 of the **International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea,** and to **work with the International Maritime Organization (IMO)** to promote safe and secure shipping while ensuring freedom of navigation.
    - Member States, by other terms, should also consider **ratifying, acceding to and implementing the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime** and the Protocols thereto.

Note

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- The **'Law of the Sea Treaty',** formally known as the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) was adopted in 1982 to establish jurisdictional limits over the ocean areas.
- The convention defines distance of 12 nautical miles from the baseline as Territorial Sea limit and a distance of 200 nautical miles distance as Exclusive Economic Zone limit.
- India became a signatory to the UNCLOS in 1982.

International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code

- The ISPS Code is a set of measures to enhance the security of ships and port facilities. It was developed in response to the perceived threats to ships and port facilities after the 9/11 attacks.
- **Chapter XI-2 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea** enshrines the ISPS Code.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

- IMO is **a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).** It is **a global standard-setting authority** with responsibility to improve the safety and security of international shipping and prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.
- India joined the IMO in 1959. The IMO currently **lists India as among the 10 states with the 'largest interest in international seaborne trade'.**

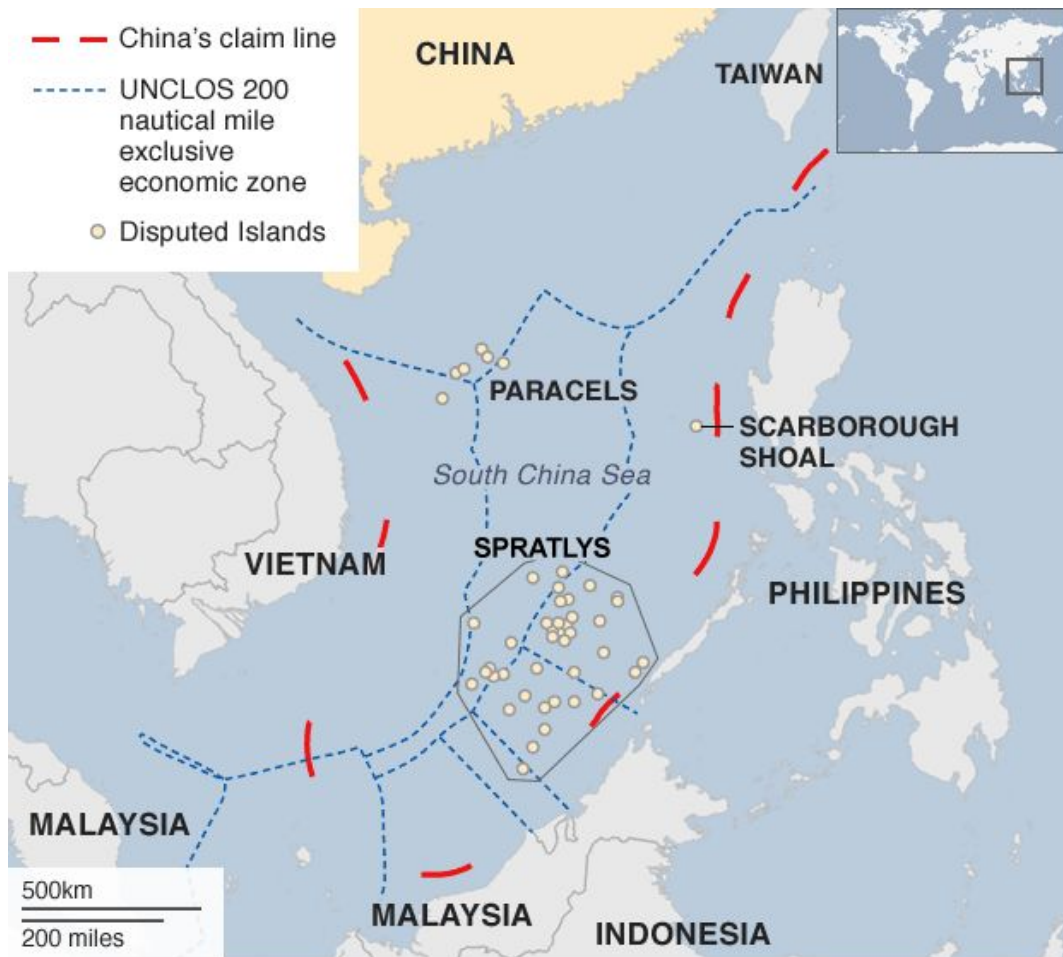**UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)**

- UNTOC is **also known as the Palermo Convention** since it was adopted in Palermo in Italy in 2000, entered into force in 2003. **India joined UNTOC** in 2002.
- The idea behind having an international convention against organized crime was that if crimes could cross borders, so must law enforcement.

- **India's Stand:** India has put forth **five basic basic principles** for maritime security.

    - **Free maritime trade** sans barriers so as to establish legitimate trade.

        - In this context, **SAGAR ('Security and Growth for all in the Region') vision** can be highlighted.
    - **Settlement of maritime disputes** should be peaceful and on the basis of international law only.

        - It was with this understanding, and maturity, that **India resolved its maritime boundary with its neighbour Bangladesh.**
    - **Responsible maritime connectivity** should be encouraged.
        - Making reference to **China's Belt and Road Initiative**, India held that, while creating structures for "maritime connectivity", countries should **keep "financial sustainability" and absorption capacity of the host countries.**
    - Need to **collectively combat maritime threats** posed by non-state actors and natural calamities.
        - Highlighting **India's role in the Indian Ocean has been that of a** net security provider.
    - **Preserve the maritime environment** and maritime resources.
        - Highlighting increasing **pollution from** plastic waste **and** oil spills.
- **US' Stand:**

    - **Conflict in the** South China Sea or in any ocean would have **serious global consequences for security and for commerce.**
    - It highlighted that **China has been building military bases on artificial islands** in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.
    - The US also referred to the unanimous and legally binding decision five years ago by the **arbitral tribunal constituted under the UNCLOS which China firmly rejected as unlawful.**

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- **China's Stand:**

  - China held that with the joint efforts of China and **ASEAN countries**, the situation in the South China Sea remains generally stable.
  - Referring indirectly to the **Quad** (US, India, Japan, Australia), a few countries are pursuing exclusive regional strategies in the **Asia Pacific region.**

    - This can create and intensify maritime conflicts, undermine the sovereignty and security interests of relevant countries, and weaken regional peace and stability.
  - Further, China criticizes the US that it is not qualified to make irresponsible remarks on the issue of the South China Sea, **because the US itself has not joined the UNCLOS.**
- **Russia's Stand:**

  - Russia **did not mention the South China Sea or the** Indo-Pacific, and articulated a much nuanced position.
  - It promotes **strict adherence to** key norms and principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter, such as respect for **sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs** and settling disputes through dialogue.
- **UK's Stand:**

  - The UK has a vision for a **free, open and secure Indo-Pacific.**
  - In this context, the UK's recent **Integrated Review of Foreign, Security, Defence and Development policy** set out the importance it attaches to the Indo-Pacific.
- **France's Stand:**

  - It held that the **maritime domain has emerged as a theatre for a new generation of challenges** and urged greater cooperation among the members of the UNSC to deal with the issue.

- Such as, **combating climate change** and its consequences on security, particularly in terms of natural disasters.

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