



Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

For Prelims: Single Use Plastics, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Environment Assembly, 2015 Paris Agreement.

For Mains: Single use plastics and related concerns, Environment Pollution and Degradation, Conservation.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Fifth UN Environment Assembly** concluded with **14 resolutions to strengthen actions** for nature to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

- The **overall theme** for UNEA-5 was **“Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”**, which was hosted by the [UN Environment Programme](#).
- The Assembly will be followed by **“UNEP@50”**, a two-day Special Session of the Assembly marking **UNEP's 50 anniversary** where member states are expected to address **how to build a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world**, as well as to endorse a draft Political Declaration.

What is the United Nations Environment Assembly?

- It is the governing body of the **UN Environment Programme**.
- It is the **world's highest-level decision-making body** on the environment.
- The Assembly is made up of the **193 UN Member States** and convenes **every two years** to advance global environmental governance.
- It was created in June 2012, during the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**, also referred to as **RIO+20**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Session?

- **Resolution to end Plastic Pollution:**
 - The world's ministers for the environment agreed to **establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)** with the mandate to forge an international legally binding agreement to end [plastic pollution](#).
 - INC will **begin its work in 2022**, with the ambition of completing a **draft global legally binding agreement by the end of 2024**.
 - This development is **considered the most important environmental deal** since the [2015 Paris Agreement](#).
 - Under the legally binding agreement, **countries will be expected to develop, implement and update national action plans** reflecting country-driven approaches to contribute to the objectives of the instrument.

- They will be **expected to promote national action plans** to work towards the prevention, reduction and elimination of plastic pollution and to support regional and international cooperation.
- **Resolution on Management of Chemicals and Waste:**
 - It **supports the establishment of a comprehensive and ambitious science policy panel** on the **sound management of chemicals and waste** and preventing pollution.
 - The Ministerial Declaration recognises **humanity's failure to date to manage chemicals and waste**, a threat that is further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic through widespread use of single-use plastics and disinfectant chemicals.
- **Resolution focused on Nature-based Solutions:**
 - In the spirit of the **UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)**, it focuses on **nature-based solutions: actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage ecosystems**.
 - The resolution calls on **UNEP to support the implementation** of such solutions, which safeguard the rights of communities and indigenous peoples.
- **Resolution Prioritising Ecosystem Restoration:**
 - Three resolutions **prioritize ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, resource efficiency**, consumption and production patterns, climate mitigation and adaptation, job creation and poverty reduction.
- **Resolution on Minerals and Metals:**
 - It **calls for the development of proposals** to enhance their environmental sustainability along their full lifecycle.
- **Resolution on Sustainable Lake Management:**
 - It calls on **member states to protect, conserve, and restore, as well as sustainably use lakes**, while integrating lakes into national and regional development plans.
- **Resolution on Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure:**
 - It **encourages member states to integrate environmental considerations** in all their infrastructure plans.
- **Resolution on Animal Welfare:**
 - It calls on **member states to protect animals, protecting their habitats** and meeting their welfare requirements.
 - It recognised the risk for future pandemics and other health risks if humanity doesn't overhaul its patterns of interaction with nature by adopting a holistic approach such as '**One Health**'.
- **Resolution on Biodiversity and Health:**
 - It calls on member states to **reduce health risks associated with trade in live wildlife** captured for the purposes of food, captive breeding, medicines and the pet trade, through regulation and sanitary controls.
- **Resolution to Reduce Nitrogen Waste:**
 - It calls for **accelerated actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste** from all sources, especially through agricultural practices, and saving USD100 billion annually.
- **Resolution to strengthen measures Post Covid:**
 - The Assembly adopted a "**resolution on the environmental dimension** of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive post-Covid-19 recovery" to strengthen measures to achieve a sustainable, resilient and inclusive global recovery.
- **Other Resolutions:**
 - Additional resolutions and decisions from the Assembly address the **date and venue for UNEA-6**, the future of the **Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** and the equitable geographical representation and balance in the secretariat of UNEP.

What was the Related Draft Resolution Proposed by India?

- The Indian draft resolution titled **Framework for addressing plastic product pollution** including **single use plastic product pollution**, was based upon the **principle of immediate collective voluntary action by countries**.
- But India has agreed to the **setting up of an INC for a new, international and legally binding treaty**.
 - The INC is **expected to present a legally binding instrument**, which would reflect diverse alternatives to address the full lifecycle of plastics, the design of reusable and

recyclable products and materials and the need for enhanced international collaboration to facilitate access to technology, capacity building and scientific and technical cooperation.

- Earlier, India had announced the **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022**, which notified the instructions on **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic packaging**.
 - Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 has been amended **to fast-track the elimination of single-use plastics and promote alternatives**.

Source: BS

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