



# Environmental Conventions (Biodiversity)

## What are International Environmental Conventions?

An international environmental convention is a **legally binding agreement** negotiated among governments to take action together to combat or mitigate a global environmental threat. Reaching an agreement to take such action among sovereign nations with diverse interests is no small feat.

- However, in recent decades, such agreements have proliferated to address international environmental concerns at the global and regional levels.

## Why is there a Need for these Conventions?

- Ratification and implementation of the Convention and its protocols will, for many Parties, reduce health and environmental impacts **more cost-effectively than unilateral action**.
- It also creates economic benefits as harmonized legislation and standards across borders will introduce a level playing field for industry across countries and **prevent Parties from competing with each other** at the expense of the environment and health.
- Factors that harm human health, affect food security, hinder economic development, contribute to climate change and degrade the environment upon which our very livelihoods depend.
  - The Convention **provides a platform to discuss these interconnections and takes actions to prevent negative impacts**.

## What is Ramsar Convention?

- **Ramsar Convention** on **Wetlands** is an **intergovernmental treaty adopted in 1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the **Caspian Sea**.
- It **came into force for India in 1982**. Those wetlands which are of international importance are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The **Convention's mission** is the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution toward **achieving sustainable development** throughout the world.
- The **Montreux Record** is a register of wetland sites on the **List of Wetlands of International Importance** where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution, or other human interference. It is **maintained as part of the Ramsar List**.
  
- As of 2022, there are **54 designated wetlands** present in India.
  - Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove in **Tamil Nadu**, the Sakhya Sagar in **Madhya Pradesh** and Pala Wetland in **Mizoram**.
- At present, **two wetlands of India are in Montreux Record**:
  - **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)**
  - **Loktak Lake (Manipur)**.
- On the occasion of **World Wetlands Day** 2022, celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February every year two new **Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance)**, **Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary in**

Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in UP were also announced.

## What is Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora?

- **CITES** is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere voluntarily.
- It was **drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963** at a meeting of members of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.
- CITES **entered into force in July 1975**. Currently, there are **184 Parties** (including countries or regional economic integration organizations).
- It aims to ensure that **international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival**.
- The CITES Secretariat is administered by **UNEP (The United Nations Environment Programme)** and is located at Geneva, Switzerland.
  - It **plays a coordinating, advisory and servicing role** in the working of the Convention.
- The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** to CITES is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its Parties.
- Although CITES is **legally binding on the Parties**, it does not take the place of national laws.
  - Rather, **it provides a framework to be respected by each Party**, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.

## What is Bonn Convention?

- It is also known as the **Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**. It is the only convention that deals with taking or harvesting species from the wild. It currently protects 173 migratory species from across the globe.
  - India hosted the **13<sup>th</sup> COP of the CMS** from 17<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020 at **Gandhinagar in Gujarat**.
- The Convention **came into force in 1983**. The Secretariat that administers the Convention was established in 1984.
- As of 1st November 2019, there were **133 Parties** to the Convention.
- The Convention has **two Appendices**:
  - **Appendix I**: Lists migratory species that are endangered or threatened with extinction.
  - **Appendix II**: Lists migratory species which have unfavourable conservation status and which require international agreements for their conservation and management.
- CMS specifies the duty of States to **protect the species living within or passing through their national boundaries/ jurisdiction**.

## What is International Union for Conservation of Nature?

- **IUCN** is a membership Union uniquely **composed of both government and civil society organisations**.
- **Created in 1948**, it is the **global authority** on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
- It is **headquartered in Switzerland**.
- The **IUCN Red List** of Threatened Species is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species.
  - It **uses a set of quantitative criteria** to evaluate the extinction risk of species. These criteria are relevant to most species and all regions of the world.
  - The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from **Not Evaluated (NE)** to **Extinct (EX)**. **Critically Endangered (CR)**, **Endangered (EN)** and **Vulnerable (VU)** species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
  - It is recognized as the **most authoritative guide to the status of biological diversity**.
  - It is also a key indicator for the **Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)** and Aichi (Biodiversity) Targets.

## What is Global Tiger Forum?

- The **GTF** is the **only intergovernmental international body** established with members from willing countries to embark on a **global campaign to protect the Tiger**.
- It was formed in **1993** on recommendations from an international symposium on Tiger Conservation at New Delhi, India.
- It is located in **New Delhi, India**.

## What is United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification?

- **UNCCD** was **established in 1994** to protect and restore our land and ensure a safer, just, and more sustainable future.
  - It is **the only legally binding framework** set up to address desertification and the effects of drought.
    - Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change of [India](#) **addressed the COP15 of the UNCCD in Cote d'Ivoire** (Western Africa).
- There are 197 Parties to the Convention, including 196 country Parties and the **European Union (EU)**.
- The Convention is **based on the principles of participation, partnership and decentralisation** - is a multilateral commitment to mitigate the impact of land degradation, and protect the land so that the convention can provide food, water, shelter and economic opportunity to all people.
- The Convention **unites governments, scientists, policymakers, the private sector and communities** around a shared vision to restore and manage the world's land.

## What is United Nations Environmental Programme?

- **UNEP** (UN Environment) is a **global environmental authority** that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the **coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development** within the United Nations system.
- It was founded by **UN General Assembly (UNGA)** as a result of the United Nations **Conference on the Human Environment** (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972.
- UNEP and **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** established **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** in 1988 to assess climate change based on the latest science.
- Since its founding, the UNEP has **played a key role for the development of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)**. The secretariats for the following nine MEAs are **currently hosted by UNEP**:
  - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
  - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
  - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
  - **[Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer](#)**
  - **[Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)**
  - **[Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal](#)**
  - Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
  - **[Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade](#)**

[TTP Environmental Conventions \(Climate\)](#)

[TTP Environmental Conventions \(Pollutants\)](#)

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Under Ramsar Convention, it is mandatory on the part of the Government of India to protect and conserve all the wetlands in the territory of India.
2. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 were framed by the Government of India based on the recommendations of Ramsar Convention.
3. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 also encompass the drainage area or catchment regions of the wetlands as determined by the authority.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (c)**

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**Q.2 With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)**

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

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

**Ans: (b)**