

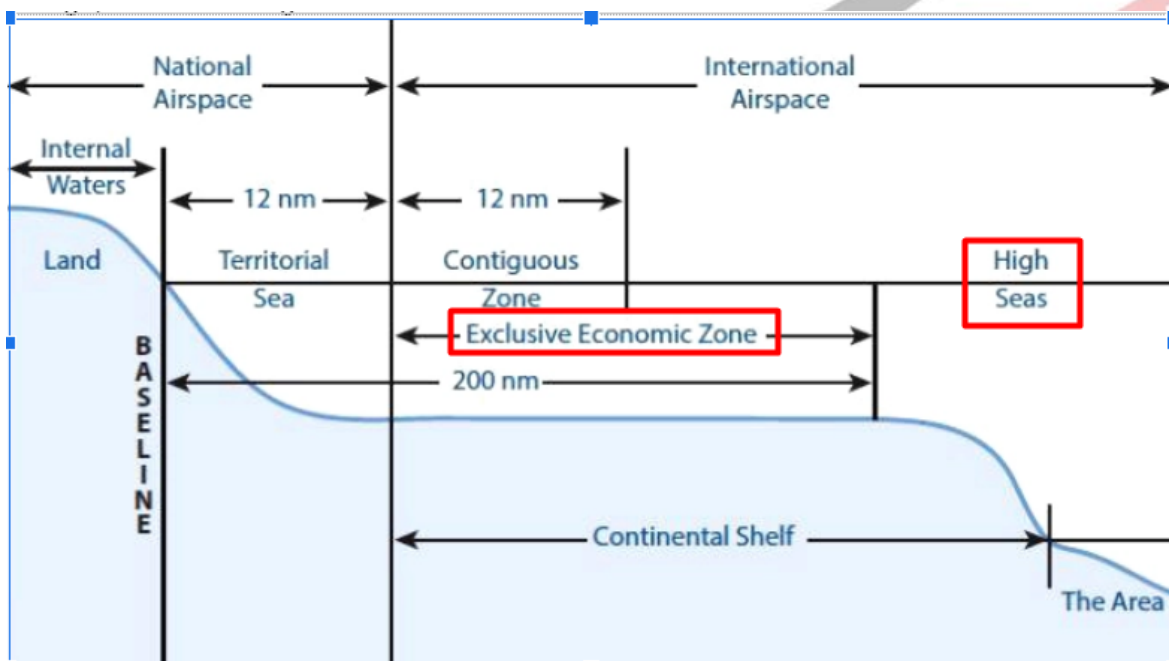


BBNJ Treaty

Source: DTE

Why in News?

The **Blue Leaders High-Level Event on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction** took place in Belgium, encouraging nations to ratify the **Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty** aimed at protecting the high seas from pollution, climate change, and overfishing.



What is the BBNJ Treaty?

▪ About:

- The BBNJ treaty commonly referred to as the **Treaty of the High Seas** was agreed upon in March 2023 for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas **beyond national jurisdiction**.
 - It represents a crucial step towards conserving and sustainably managing **marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction**.

▪ Ratification Progress:

- The treaty aims to address the challenges faced by the high seas, which constitute areas beyond **200 nautical miles from the exclusive economic zones of coastal countries**.
 - So far, 88 countries have signed the treaty, with **Chile and Palau being the only two to have ratified it**.
 - However, at least 60 ratifications are necessary for it to come into force.

▪ Objectives:

- The treaty seeks to increase the **percentage of protected areas on the high seas**,

which **currently stands at a mere 1.44%**, despite covering more than **two-thirds of the global ocean**.

- Additionally, it aims to **ensure fair and equitable sharing of profits from marine genetic resources (MGR)** and establish rules for conducting **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)**, which deal with identifying and evaluating the potential impacts an activity could have on the ocean.
- This aligns with **the 30x30 target**, it is a global commitment to protect at least **30% of the planet for nature by 2030**. It was agreed upon at the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** at the **Conference of Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity** in 2022 and is included in the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

▪ **Challenges:**

- Despite widespread support for the treaty, concerns persist regarding **potential delays in ratification**, echoing past challenges faced by similar international agreements like the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas**.
- Additionally, operationalising the treaty poses logistical hurdles, including defining procedural frameworks and securing adequate funding.

▪ **Moving Forward:**

- Efforts towards the treaty's entry into force and subsequent implementation require concerted global collaboration.
 - The upcoming **United Nations Ocean Conference in 2025** is identified as a crucial platform for advancing these objectives.



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

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

Background of Treaty

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

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

ROADBLOCK

How to fairly share marine genetic resources (MGR) & eventual profits among developed/developing nations



Ocean ecosystems produce half the oxygen we breathe, represent 95% of the planet's biosphere and soak up CO₂ (world's largest carbon sink)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q.1 With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, consider the following statements: (2022)

1. A coastal state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baseline determined in accordance with the convention.
2. Ships of all states, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.
3. The Exclusive Economic Zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/bbnj-treaty-1>

