

What is Precautionary Principle?

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About Precautionary Principle

- It is an **approach to policymaking** that legitimizes the **adoption of preventative measures to address potential risks to the public or environment** associated with certain activities or policies.
- The principle says, "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, **lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures** to prevent such environmental degradation."
- It enables decision-makers to **adopt precautionary measures when scientific evidence** about an environmental or human health hazard **is uncertain and the stakes are high**.
- This implies that **protective action should be taken to prevent any possible harm**, even if there is a chance that such harm will not occur—thus playing it safe.
- It first **emerged during the 1970s** and has since been **enshrined in a number of international treaties** on the environment, including the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the national legislation of certain Member States.
- In 1987, it was incorporated into international law at the **International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea**.

- Since then, it has permeated most international environmental conventions. For example, entrenched by the **1992 Rio Declaration** (Principle 15), it was written into the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** and, retroactively, into the **Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer**.
- It was integrated into the criteria for the listing of endangered species by the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](#) in 1994, and the following year it was adopted by the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) of the United Nations.

It is a cornerstone of **European Union (EU) environmental law** and has been central in determining the EU's position toward genetically modified organisms.

Q1: What is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)?

It is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. CITES was adopted in 1973 and entered into force in 1975. There are 184 member parties, and trade is regulated in more than 38,000 species.

Source: [Decoding the judgment on Jim Corbett](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/precautionary-principle/>

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