

What is United Nations High Seas Treaty?

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United Nations High Seas Treaty Latest News

Two years after countries adopted the high seas treaty, delegates recently gathered at the first session of the Preparatory Commission meeting in New York, to develop rules needed to implement the agreement and set the stage for the first Conference of Parties (COP1).

About UN High Seas Treaty

- The **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement**, or the 'High Seas Treaty', is an **international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- It is the **first-ever treaty to protect the world's oceans that lie outside national boundaries**.
- It is also known as the **'Paris Agreement for the Ocean.'**
- It is a **legally binding treaty to protect marine life** in international waters.
- It sets precise mechanisms for the sustainable use of marine biological diversity through international cooperation and coordination.
- It would also contribute to achieving several SDGs, particularly **SDG14 (Life Below Water)**.

- The treaty will enter into force 120 days after the 60th country formally ratifies the agreement.

UN High Seas Treaty Features

- It contains 75 articles that aim at protecting, caring for, and ensuring the **responsible use of the marine environment**, maintaining the integrity of ocean ecosystems, and conserving the inherent value of marine biological diversity.
- It **aims to place 30% of the seas into protected areas by 2030** (a pledge made by countries at the UN biodiversity conference in 2022).
- It will provide a **legal framework for establishing vast marine protected areas (MPAs)** to protect against the loss of wildlife and share out the genetic resources of the high seas.
- It also **covers environmental assessments** to evaluate the potential damage of commercial activities, such as deep-sea mining.
- It will **establish a conference of the parties (CoP)** that will meet periodically and enable member states to be held to account on issues such as governance and biodiversity.
- The treaty also **includes a pledge by signatories to share ocean resources**.
- **Parties cannot claim** or exercise **sovereign rights over marine resources** derived **from the high seas** and **ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits**.
- It follows an **inclusive, integrated, ecosystem-centric approach based on the precautionary principle** and **promotes using traditional knowledge** and the best available scientific knowledge.
- It helps minimise impacts on the marine environment through **area-based management tools** and establishes rules for conducting **environmental impact assessments**.

What are High Seas?

- The high seas **begin at the border of countries' exclusive economic zones**, which extend up to 370 km (200 nautical miles) from coastlines.
- Beyond that point, the seas are **under the jurisdiction of no country**, and **all countries have a right to fish, ship, and do research**.
- They make up **more than 60% of the world's oceans** by surface area.
- **Activities** on the high seas are **often unregulated** and **insufficiently monitored**, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

United Nations High Seas Treaty FAQs

Q1. Is India part of the UN High Seas Treaty?

Ans. Yes, India is a signatory to the United Nations High Seas Treaty.

Q2. What does the UN High Seas Treaty do?

Ans. It is a landmark international agreement aimed at protecting marine life in the high seas.

Q3. Is the UN High Seas Treaty legally binding?

Ans. Yes, the UN High Seas Treaty is a legally binding treaty.

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