Exit of the United States from International Organisations

Mains: *GS II – International Issues*

Why in News?

Recently, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order suspending U.S. support for 66 international organisations, agencies, and commissions, most of them linked to the United Nations system.

What is the background of the issue?

- **Approach of the U.S** – The Trump administration has adopted an **"America First"** approach that prioritises national sovereignty and transactional engagement over multilateralism.
- **Reason for the exit** – According to the U.S. State Department, these organisations were found to be:
  - Redundant or mismanaged
  - Wasteful and poorly run
  - Captured by interests contrary to U.S. priorities
  - A threat to U.S. sovereignty, freedoms, and economic prosperity
- Many targeted institutions focus on climate change, labour standards, population health, and diversity-related initiatives, which the administration has labelled as "woke" agendas.

What are the major international organisations affected?

- **United Nations-related withdrawals –** The U.S. has either exited or suspended support from several UN bodies, including:
  - World Health Organization (WHO)
  - UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)
  - UN Human Rights Council
  - UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
  - UN Population Fund (UNFPA)
- This represents a sharp break from earlier bipartisan U.S. support for UN institutions.
- **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) –** The UNFCCC is the foundational treaty underlying the *Paris Climate Agreement.*
- President Trump, who has repeatedly dismissed climate change as a hoax, had earlier withdrawn from the Paris Agreement as well.
- **Implications:**
  - Undermines global climate governance

    - Weakens collective action to curb greenhouse gas emissions
    - Provides other nations with justification to delay commitments
- Experts argue that meaningful progress on climate change is difficult without cooperation from the U.S., one of the world's largest emitters and economies.

- **Exit from other multilateral platforms –** Other organisations from which the U.S. is departing include:
    - International Solar Alliance (India–France initiative)
    - Carbon Free Energy Compact
    - United Nations University
    - International Tropical Timber Organization
    - International Cotton Advisory Committee
    - International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies
    - International Lead and Zinc Study Group
    - Pan-American Institute for Geography and History
- Additional reviews of U.S. participation in international bodies are ongoing.

What are the impacts on global governance?

- **Weakening of multilateral institutions –** The U.S. has shifted to an *à-la-carte approach,* selectively funding only those agencies aligned with its strategic interests.
- This has:
    - Forced the UN to implement staffing and programme cuts
    - Reduced the effectiveness of global coordination mechanisms
    - Increased financial stress on humanitarian and development agencies
- **Impact on global development and humanitarian work –** Cuts in *USAID funding* have led to the closure of several NGO and UN-linked projects worldwide.
- Suspension of funding to *UNFPA* threatens access to sexual and reproductive health services in developing countries.
- **Strategic reorientation –** Despite the exits, U.S. officials maintain that they seek to expand American influence in select global standard-setting bodies where competition with China is intense, such as:
    - International Telecommunications Union (ITU)
    - International Maritime Organization (IMO)
    - International Labour Organization (ILO)
- This reflects a selective multilateralism aimed at geopolitical competition rather than global cooperation.
- **Geopolitical and strategic implications –** The withdrawals coincide with assertive U.S. actions, including threats against adversaries and unconventional foreign policy postures.
- Allies are unsettled by the erosion of predictable U.S. leadership.
- China and other powers may gain greater influence in vacated multilateral spaces.

What lies ahead?

- The U.S. exit from numerous international organisations under the Trump administration represents a fundamental shift in global governance, from cooperative multilateralism to transactional and interest-based engagement.

- While intended to safeguard sovereignty and reduce costs, the move risks:
  - Weakening global institutions
  - Undermining collective responses to transnational challenges like climate change, health, and humanitarian crises
  - Creating leadership vacuums that may be filled by rival powers
- For countries like India, this evolving landscape presents both challenges and opportunities to strengthen leadership in multilateral platforms and advocate for a more inclusive and balanced global order.

Reference

The Hindu| US withdrawal from International Institution

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering