Global Fund for Coral Reefs announces at COP31

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

Why in News?

At the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya, Turkey, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) announced more than $30 million in new investments and donor commitments to scale coral reef conservation and coastal community adaptation across 22 developing countries.

Key Highlights

- **Finance Model-** Rather than relying solely on traditional grants, the GFCR uses catalytic finance to de-risk lending and attract public and private capital into **"reef-positive" businesses** and local enterprises that reduce pressures on reefs while supporting coastal livelihoods.
- **2030 Target -** The GFCR aims to deliver at least **250 additional reef-positive business and finance solutions by 2030** and test outcome-linked financing mechanisms to unlock larger, long-term conservation capital.

Key Regional & Country Actions

- **Mesoamerican Reef (Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras) -** Expanding reef-positive finance across 18 priority sites—including wastewater treatment ("Clean Water Fund"), sargassum management, guaranteed loans, and parametric insurance for small-scale fishers.
- **Indonesia -** Expanding the *Biru Fund* (via YKAN) to channel recoverable grants into sustainable aquaculture/shrimp, seaweed, fisheries, and waste-management enterprises alongside self-financing for marine protected areas (MPAs).
- **Philippines-** Scaling marine protected area networks covering nearly **one million hectares** across Mindoro and Northeast Palawan.
- **Tanzania (Zanzibar) -** Closing financing gaps for the Pemba Channel Conservation Area and establishing a second large conservation area, with direct adaptation benefits expected for around **21,000 coastal residents**.
- **Governance & New Partners-** Alongside the funding pledge, **UNOPS** was designated to host the GFCR Secretariat with operational support, while **Ireland** joined as a new state partner and Executive Board member alongside new investment partner **Outrigger Impact Fund**.

Significance of Coral Reefs

- Often termed the **"rainforests of the sea,"** coral reefs occupy less than 1% of the ocean floor yet harbor roughly **one-quarter of all marine species**.
- They provide vital coastal wave attenuation and storm buffering, sustain commercial and artisanal fisheries, and support tourism and livelihoods for millions of people globally.

Major Threats to Coral Reefs

- Rising sea surface temperatures causing **coral bleaching** and thermal stress, **ocean acidification** (from elevated atmospheric CO2reducing aragonite saturation and calcifying ability), marine pollution/runoff, destructive fishing practices, and coastal development.

Reference

Down to Earth | Global Fund for Coral Reefs

