Global Plastic Treaty

Why in news?

The fifth and final session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is held in Busan, South Korea November 2024 to finalize a legally binding Global Plastic Treaty.

What is global plastic treaty?

- **About** – The global plastic treaty is a *legally binding agreement* aimed to combat plastic pollution in land and marine environments.
- **Goal** – End plastic pollution by 2040 by creating a circular economy for plastics.
- This means managing plastics responsibly throughout their lifecycle, from design and production to use and disposal.
- **Progress so far** – In March 2022, 175 countries agreed to develop a legally binding international agreement on plastic pollution.
- **Finalizing the treaty** – It is mandated by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and is *under negotiation* by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) by 2024.
- **Expected Outcomes** – Banning or phasing out certain high-risk plastics, especially single-use items.
- Establishing design requirements for plastics to make them easier to recycle.
- Creating a framework for international cooperation to tackle plastic pollution.

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
• **Origin** – The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was formed by UNEA through a resolution in 2022. • **Objective** – The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was tasked to draft a global treaty to address plastic pollution by 2024. • ***Four INC sessions*** have been held since 2022 in Uruguay, France, Kenya and Canada. • **Final session** – In Busan, South Korea (2024). • **Key Areas of Negotiation** – Focus on the *life cycle of plastics*, including production, usage, and disposal. - *Approve legally binding targets* for recycling and reducing certain plastic products and additives. - Discussions on a *just transition* for workers impacted by reduced plastic production.

What is the need for a global plastic treaty?

- **Rising plastic production** – Global production doubled from 234 million tonnes (2000) to 460 million tonnes (2019).
    - It is expected to reach 700 million tonnes by 2040.
- **Waste and Pollution** – Plastic takes more than 200 years to decompose and the environment faces significant challenge as only less than *10% of global plastic has*

been recycled.

> *India is the largest contributor to global plastic pollution, responsible for 20% of the world's plastic emissions, amounting to 9.3 million tonnes annually.*

- **Micro plastic accumulation** – Globally 400 million tonnes of waste generated annually, with micro plastics polluting both land and ocean ecosystems.
- **Climate change connection** – Plastics contribute *3.6% of global greenhouse gas emissions* (2020).
    - Emissions expected to rise by ***20% by 2050*** if current trends persist.
- **Health risks** – Plastic chemicals got mixed with food chain system and disrupt *endocrine systems, cancer, reproductive disorders* and cause severe health conditions.

What is the India's stance on the treaty?

- **Opposition to production caps** – India does not support restrictions on polymer production, considering it beyond the mandate of the UNEA's 2022 resolution in Nairobi.
- **Call for regulation of chemicals** – Advocates for decisions on harmful chemicals based on scientific studies, leaving regulation to domestic authorities.
- **Emphasize on phasing out plastic** – Recommends practical, nationally driven regulation of phased-out plastic items, accounting for local circumstances.
    - India has banned 19 categories of single-use plastics in 2022).
- **Need for safe waste management mechanism** – Formulate mechanism to assess and address infrastructure needs for effective waste management.
- **Financial and technical assistance** – Seeks inclusion of funding, technical support, and technology transfer in the treaty's provisions.

Multilateral Fund Proposed by India
• **Key features** – Modeled after the Montreal Protocol for ozone-depleting substances. • Provides grant-based financing for ***developing countries to transition to sustainable practices.*** • Funded by *periodic replenishment from developed countries* and private contributions. • **Governance structure** – Subsidiary body with *equal representation* from developed and developing countries. • Responsible for *operational policies, guidelines and resource disbursement.* • **Focus areas** – *Technology transfer* to developing nations. • *Support for incremental* costs related to treaty compliance.

What lies ahead?

- Finalize the global treaty by negotiating with all parties in 5th INC session.
- Reach consensus on production caps and financial mechanisms.
- Ensure inclusivity and equitable participation of all nations.
- Establish robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
- Mobilizing resources for effective implementation, especially in developing countries.

Reference

1. The Indian Express |Why The World Needs a Global Plastic Treaty?
2. Business Standard | India Proposes Fund to Fight Plastic Pollution