

High Seas Treaty

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Why in news?

The High Seas Treaty has secured the 60 ratifications needed for its entry into force, paving the way for the treaty to take effect next year.

- It is officially known as **Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty**.
- BBNJ is **first legal international treaty** under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- **Adopted in** - 2023.
- **Aim** - Protecting biodiversity in international waters, those that **lie beyond the jurisdiction of any single country**.

Territorial waters extend from the baseline to 12 nautical miles (1 nautical mile = 1.852 km), beyond that up to 200 miles (370 km) lies the Exclusive Economic Zone.

- **Objectives** -
 - Demarcation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs - that do not allow any fishing, mining, drilling, or other extractive activities).
 - Sustainable use of marine genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits arising from them.
 - Initiate the practice of environmental impact assessments for all major activities in the oceans.
 - Capacity building and technology transfer.
- **Enforced by** - Individual countries to regulate their own ships and companies.
- **Binding in nature** - It is a **legally binding** treaty.
- **Signed countries** - At present, **143 countries have signed** the treaty and it is ratified by 60 countries.

- **Newly ratified countries** - Recently, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone and Morocco ratified the treaty.
- **Non-Ratified Countries** - India has signed the treaty but yet to ratify it. (U.S., China, Russia and Japan – not ratified).

According to **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, currently, 6.35% of the ocean is protected, but only just over 1.89% is covered by exclusively no-take MPAs.

- **Threats** - International waters account for nearly 2/3rd of the ocean and nearly 1/2 of Earth's surface and are vulnerable to threats including **over-fishing, climate change and deep-sea mining**.
- **Significance** - The treaty is essential for achieving **“30x30” target**, protect 30% of the planet's land and sea by 2030 and a major step toward **inclusion of small island nations** in decisions making.

Quick facts

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- UNCLOS is **legally binding international treaty** that establishes rules for using the world's oceans and their resources.
- It sets out the legal framework for all marine and maritime activities and rules for resolving disputes between state parties.
- ***India is a party to the UNCLOS.***

References

1. [The Hindu | High Seas Treaty](#)
2. [Down to Earth | High Seas Treaty](#)