India votes against U.N. draft resolution on climate change

Why in news?

India voted against a draft resolution at UNSC linking climate to security.

What was the debate about?

- UNSC organised a debate titled 'Maintenance of international peace and security: security in the context of terrorism and climate change.'
- One of the objectives of the debate was to examine how terrorism and security risks could be linked to climate change.
- It seeks to transfer the decision making for climate issues under the ambit of UNSC.
- The resolution was sponsored by Ireland and Niger
- It did not pass as India and Russia voted against it and China abstained.
- Supporters of the resolution argue that climate is creating security risks in the world, which will exacerbate in the future with water shortage, migration and a destruction of livelihoods.

Why India voted against the resolution?

- India feels that it was an attempt to shift climate talks from UNFCCC to UNSC and a "step backward" for collective action on the issue.
- India's position is that the UNSC's primary responsibility is "maintenance of international peace and security" and climate change-related issues are outside its ambit.
- For India bringing climate talks under UNSC was an attempt to take decisions without consensus or the involvement of most developing countries.
- This will give more powers to the world's industrialised countries, which hold a veto power, to decide on future action on climate-related security issues.
- For India this is neither desirable nor acceptable.

What will be the implications?

- This would undermine progress made during COP26 at Glasgow.
- 'Developing' and 'least developed' countries had worked, over the last two decades, to make "common but differentiated" responsibilities as a fundamental tenet of climate action
- Linking climate with security tries to obscure the lack of progress on critical issues under the UNFCCC process
- Developed countries had not met their promises of providing $1 trillion in climate finance with regard to climate action
- The attempt to discuss climate action and climate justice issues at the UNSC was "motivated by a desire to evade responsibility in the appropriate forum."

What is India’s stand?

- Currently, all matters related to climate change are being discussed in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a specialised agency.
- With over 190 members, its framework has made progress in tackling climate change.
- It is this process that led to the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement and the recent COP26 summit
- It has put in place an international approach to combat global climate change.
- Criticising that decision making at UNFCCC conferences is slow.
- But the solution is not outsourcing decision making to the five permanent members of the UNSC.
- The least developed and developing countries should be encouraged to keep the promises they made with financial assistance.
- There needs to be a collective process and the best way is through the UNFCCC, where decisions made are by consensus.
- The UNFCCC should not only make sure that the promises made by member countries, especially the powerful ones, in previous conferences are kept but also expand the scope of discussions to include climate-related security issues.
- India is of the view that climate change may have exacerbated conflicts in the Sahel region and across Africa.
- But viewing conflicts through the prism of climate change was misleading and an oversimplification that could worsen conflicts rather than resolving them.
- India remained committed to peace and development in those regions.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/wrong-forum-the-hindu-editorial-on-climate-change-and-the-un-security-council/article37972199.ece
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