Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Why in news?

The University of Arizona hosted a symposium focusing on the rights of indigenous people that put spotlight on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
• **Theme-** Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth. • **Adopted-** At UN Convention on Biodiversity Diversity (COP-15) • **Aim-** To halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 while respecting the rights of indigenous and local communities. • **Paris agreement for nature-** It is being referred as the "Paris moment" for biodiversity, as 196 countries (excluding, significantly, the US) signed this historic deal. • **Goals-** GBF contains *4 global goals* ("Kunming-Montreal Global Goals for 2050"). • **Targets-** The framework contains *23 targets* ("Kunming-Montreal 2030 Global Targets"). • **'30 by 30' target**- 30% of the Earth's land and oceans protected status by 2030. • **Reduce harmful subsidies** - Reduce environmentally harmful subsidies by at least 500 billion dollar a year • **Restore ecosystem** - Restore at least 30% area of degraded ecosystems. • **Increase protected areas**- It sets target to increase terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas, especially those of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services," to at least 30% of the world's terrestrial area. • Currently, protected areas cover approximately 16% of the world's terrestrial area .

Who are indigenous people?

- World Bank states that Indigenous Peoples are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced.
- The land and natural resources on which they depend are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, as well as their physical and spiritual well-being.
- **ILO-** In 1989 International Labour Organization Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples protects Indigenous peoples from discrimination and specifies their rights to development, customary laws, lands, territories and resources, employment, education and health.
- **UN**- It adopted a declaration on the rights of indigenous people including their rights to self determination and to protect their cultures, identities, languages, ceremonies and access to employment, health, education and natural resources.

What are the implications of GBF on indigenous communities?

- **Threat to tribal lands**- The ambitious targets of the framework particularly the expansion of protected areas, pose a significant threat to indigenous communities in India.

- **Expansion of protected areas-** The proposed upgrades and expansion of wildlife sanctuaries and reserves, such as Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and the Nauradehi Sanctuary, directly impact tribal villages and their inhabitants.

Around 84% of India's national parks have been established in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.

- **Marginalization-** The implementation of GBF targets risks further marginalizing indigenous people who have historically lived in harmony with their natural environment.
- Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023- It includes provisions for zoos, safaris and ecotourism demonstrates a shift towards prioritizing commercial interests over the rights of indigenous communities.
- **Human rights violation**- Indigenous communities within protected areas often face human rights violation, including denial of basic amenities such as housing, healthcare and education.
- **Displacement**- In South Asian countries like Indonesia and Cambodia, the establishment of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries has led to the displacement and disenfranchisement of indigenous people.

Impact in India
• **Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan**- Upgrading the Wildlife Sanctuary to tiger reserve would impact around 160 tribal villages located inside and outside the sanctuary. • **Nauradehi Sancutary, Madhya Pradesh**- Expansion of the sanctuary would affect 60 villages primarily inhabited by tribal people. • **Barak Bhuban Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam**- The notification for the sanctuary poses a threat to indigenous groups such as the Khasis and Dimasas. • Despite the gazette notification claiming the area to be free from encroachment, indigenous communities, like the Khasis, possess historical documents demonstrating their ancestral presence in the region since 1914.

- **Denial of basic rights**- The indigenous people in Ujungkulon National Park have been denied basic rights such as housing, health, education, electricity and security.
- **Recreational space**- The UN special Rapporteur on Indigenous People emphasized that protected areas which was created for recreational spaces and hunting ground for western colonial elites, it still prevails as certain ecotourism projects depict indigenous people as mere animals in zoo presenting them in model replicas of traditional homes, clothing and musical instruments.

How the tribal lands should be protected?

- **Recognition of indigenous rights**- There is a need for India to recognize and uphold the rights of indigenous communities, including the right to free, prior and informed consent.
- **Custodian of protected areas**- Amendments to the existing laws, such as Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act should ensure that tribal communities are acknowledged as custodians of protected areas.

- **Inclusive development**- India must adopt policies that prioritize environmental protection without disproportionately impacting indigenous populations.
- **Equitable conservation policies-** The conservation efforts should be equitable and inclusive, considering biodiversity conservation in non-tribal regions as well.
- **Address human rights violations**-It is imperative for the Indian government to address human rights abuses within protected areas seriously.
- **Provide basic services**- Indigenous peoples' access to essential services and their rights to education, healthcare, and housing should not be neglected or left solely to wildlife or forest departments.

What lies ahead?

- The Kunming-Montreal GBF aims to enhance global biodiversity conservation efforts, its implementation must consider and safeguard the rights and livelihoods of indigenous communities in India.
- Balancing conservation goals with respect for indigenous rights is essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive environmental stewardship.

References

1. The Hindu- Will global tribal forest expansion hit tribals?
2. CBD- Kunming Montreal protocol

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