Pandemic Treaty (WHO Pandemic Agreement)

Why in news?

Recently, member states of World Health Organization (WHO) have adopted a Pandemic Agreement without opposition at the World Health Assembly in Geneva after over three years of negotiations and 13 rounds of meetings.

- **Pandemic Treaty –** It is the world's **first Pandemic Agreement** to ensure better global cooperation, preparedness, and response to future pandemics.
- **Purpose of the Pandemic Treaty**
  - To prepare nations with better systems and resources.
  - To respond more effectively and equitably during global health emergencies.
- **Equity and multilateralism focus –** The treaty aims to **address inequities** seen during COVID-19 (e.g., vaccine hoarding by rich nations).
- It emphasizes solidarity between nations and support for **low- and middle-income countries**.

> *The WHO Pandemic Agreement is the **second international legal agreement** negotiated under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution. The first was the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which was adopted in 2003 and came into force in 2005.*

Core Components of the Agreement

- **Pathogen access and benefit sharing system** – It includes a formal mechanism where countries sharing virus samples receive guaranteed benefits.
- It also establishes a coordinated financial mechanism for implementation.
- Up to **20% of medical products of pharma companies** will be reserved for WHO with,
  - 10% donated by pharmaceutical companies
  - 10% offered at affordable prices
- **Equitable resource Distribution –** Benefit sharing system will ensure a fair access to diagnostics, vaccines, and treatments during future pandemics.
- The distribution of these products to countries will be based on public health risk and need, with particular attention to the needs of developing countries.
- **Technology transfer** – It facilitates transfer of technology, knowledge, and skills on "**mutually agreed terms**".
- It aims to build geographically diverse R&D and manufacturing capacity.
- **Healthcare worker protection** - All countries agreed to a provision for **better protection and support** for frontline health workers in future pandemics.

Limitations

- The **United States** is **not a part of the final agreement**, having withdrawn from WHO under the Trump administration.
- The treaty is **non-binding**; there are **no penalties** if countries **fail to comply**, limiting enforceability.
- Negotiations on operational aspects, like how samples and products will be shared, are still ongoing.

Reference

The Indian Express| WHO adopts first global pandemic treaty

