

## Protecting the Ocean Ecosystem

### Why in news?

*While the high seas make up more than 60% of the world's oceans, they have long drawn far less attention than coastal waters and the UN wants to protect them in a global treaty.*

### What is the need for a global treaty?

- Fishing, shipping, tourism and ocean protection is currently controlled by around 20 organizations.
- However, their regulations only apply to a distance of 200 nautical miles (370 kilometres) from the coast and individual states have no power in international waters.

*Although the high seas make up more than half of the surface of the Earth and 61% of all oceans, only 1% of international waters are under protection.*

- Illegal and overfishing, and other forms of damage such as deep-sea mining, oil and gas drilling, can hardly be monitored or prosecuted.
- To address this, officials from 51 countries have come together to negotiate the High Seas Treaty at the United Nations in New York.

### Why healthy underwater is necessary?

- The resources of the ocean not only sustain coast dwellers, but almost 3 bn people worldwide.
- The entire sea industry has a worth of \$3 trillion, that's 5% of the world's GDP.
- The oceans are important to generate sustainable wave and tidal energy, as well as for the production of commodities and even medicine.
- **Examples** - Tectitethya Crypta for treating leukaemia, Conus Magus' poison as pain killer.

### How climate change impact oceans?

- **Carbon Sequestration** - Oceans store 50 times more carbon dioxide than what's currently found in our atmosphere.
- The warmer the ocean gets, the lesser the CO<sub>2</sub> it stores.
- **Ocean Acidification** - With increasing temperatures at this current speed, scientists believe many shellfish such as mussels and snails will not survive.
- If the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the seawater increases, the PH level in the water changes and increase in acidity hampers the creation of the chalky shells of the animals.
- **Change in Ocean currents** - The rising temperatures can also change the directions

of ocean currents.

- **Coral bleaching** - Corals live in symbiosis with colourful algae which help feed them.
- The warming of the water can lead to algae death which leads to coral bleaching.

### How can we protect ocean ecosystems?

- **Sustainable fishing** - Every year, 10 mn tons of fish was tossed away because of bad fishing practices and processing.
- This could be prevented, and in turn directly decrease pressure on our oceans.
- **Sustainable Sewage systems** - Around 80% of global wastewater is currently being diverted into oceans, unfiltered.
- Building sustainable sewage systems would contribute to better drinking water supplies.

### References

1. [The Indian Express - How to save our high seas from overfishing, pollution](#)
2. [Hindustan Times - Why the world needs a deal to protect its oceans?](#)
3. [DW - How to save our high seas from overfishing, pollution](#)

