

SBSTTA28

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

The 28th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, or SBSTTA 28, came to an end in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi.

- It came with consensus as well as disagreements over a range of issues concerning global progress on biodiversity.
- The SBSTTA is the science advisory group for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.
- The meeting was tasked with giving countries science-based, practical advice to speed up action on biodiversity goals.
- It took place ahead of the pivotal 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the CBD.
- COP17, which will take place in Yerevan, Armenia, will decide on action for nature and reviewing global progress.
- Back in 2022, countries agreed on a plan called the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, or KMGBF.
- It set 23 goals that the world needs to reach by 2030, like protecting more land and ocean and stopping species from going extinct.
- Based on national reports from 129 countries, it found the world is not on track to meet most of its 2030 targets and that money, technology and capacity haven't flowed to developing countries fast enough.
- Besides the progress report, SBSTTA28 discussed marine and coastal biodiversity, sustainable wildlife management, an update to the programme of work on protected areas as well as work related to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
- One issue that was the subject of intense debate was synthetic biology.
- **Synthetic biology** – It is the process of using genetic engineering and

related technologies to design, modify or even build new biological parts, organisms or systems, from gene-edited crops to microbes engineered to produce chemicals or medicines.

- Most of the world's advanced synthetic biology research and patents belong to a small number of rich countries and companies.
- Synthetic biology holds out the promise that engineered organisms could help restore degraded ecosystems, fight invasive species, or produce goods more sustainably.
- On the other, it carries real risks of unintended effects on ecosystems if the engineered organisms spread beyond laboratories or fields, uncertainty about how to regulate rapidly evolving tools, and questions about who controls and profits from the technology.
- At COP16 in Colombia's Cali in 2024, governments agreed to draft a full action plan and set up a new expert group to study risks and benefits.
- At the International Union for the Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi in October 2025, members narrowly rejected a moratorium on releasing genetically engineered organisms into the wild, opting for a case-by-case approach instead, a close vote that showed how divided the conservation community remains.
- At SBSTTA-28, countries negotiated a draft plan called a 'thematic action plan' to help countries share money, training, and technology related to synthetic biology.
- Many developing countries also agreed that more money, training, access to technology, and knowledge-sharing is needed so that every country, not just the rich and technologically advanced ones, can benefit from synthetic biology and also manage its risks safely.

Reference

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