UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15)

Why in news?

The UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) has concluded in Montreal, Canada, promising to take urgent action to protect and restore the world's biodiversity that inhabit this planet.

What is Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)?

- **CBD -**The CBD that came into force in **1993,** was an outcome of the **1992 Rio Earth Summit**, along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- All the three agreements hold their separate COPs.

To know about UNFCCC COP 27, click here

- **Objectives of CBD**
  - Conservation of biological diversity
  - Sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
  - Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources
- In total, 196 countries, including India, have ratified the CBD and are, parties to the COP.
- **The US** is a notable outlier as the only UN member state not to have ratified the treaty although it still has a presence at biodiversity COPs.
- The CBD has given rise to two supplementary agreements
  - The Cartagena Protocol of 2003
  - The Nagoya Protocol of 2014

What is the Montreal Conference about?

- The conference was the biodiversity equivalent of the high-profile climate meetings that are held every year.
- Signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), meet every two years to work on a plan to stop biodiversity loss and restore natural ecosystems.
- The meeting in Montreal was the second part of COP15, the first part having been held in Kunming in China in 2021 and adopted the **Kunming Declaration**.
- The Montreal Conference has delivered a new agreement called the **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** that need to be achieved by 2030.

Kunming Declaration

- In **2021**, the Kunming Declaration was signed by more than 100 countries to ensure the development, adoption, and implementation of an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- The theme of the declaration was **Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth**.
- China invested about 230 million dollars to establish the Kunming Biodiversity Fund to support biodiversity protection in the developing countries.
- The declaration referred to the **'30 by 30' target,** that would afford 30% of the Earth's land and oceans protected status by 2030.

What is the need for a biodiversity framework?

- At COP10 (2010), almost every country in the world agreed to **20 Aichi biodiversity targets** in order to achieve a goal of "living in harmony with nature" by 2050.
- At the global level, none of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets agreed by Parties to the CBD in 2010 have been fully achieved.

- Estimates based on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species tell us that **1 million species are currently threatened with extinction**.
- Healthy ecosystems support **55% of global GDP**, and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity underpins sustainable development.
- Healthy ecosystems protect communities from climate change impacts and nature-based solutions could provide up to **37% of our climate change mitigation** needs as per the Paris Agreement.
- An ambitious new framework is therefore needed to achieve the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, and the vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050.

What is Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)?

- **Framework** - Being referred as the "**Paris moment**" for biodiversity, 196 countries (excluding, significantly, the US) signed a historic deal to
  - **Conserve area** - Protect 30% of the world for nature 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
- With 4 main goals and 23 targets for 2030, the landmark agreement covers various aspects of biodiversity loss.
- **Aim** - The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aims to to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 while respecting the rights of indigenous and local communities.

What are the key takeaways from the COP15 biodiversity summit?

- **30x30 target** - Delegates committed to protect 30% of land and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030.
- Indigenous and traditional territories will also count toward this goal, as many countries and campaigners pushed for during the talks.
- The deal also aspires to restore 30% of degraded lands and waters throughout the decade, up from an earlier aim of 20%.
- **Money for nature** - Signatories aim to ensure 200 billion per year is channelled to conservation initiatives, from public and private sources.
- Wealthier countries should contribute at least 20 billion dollars of this every year by 2025, and at least 30 billion dollars a year by 2030.
- **Reporting the impacts on biodiversity** - Companies should analyse and report how their operations affect and are affected by biodiversity issues.
- **Harmful subsidies -** Countries committed to identify subsidies that deplete biodiversity by 2025, and then eliminate, phase out or reform them.
- They agreed to slash those incentives by at least 500 billion dollars a year by 2030.
- **Pollution and pesticides –** It aims to reduce the risks associated with pesticides by at least half, and focus on other forms of pest management.
- **Monitoring and reporting progress** - National action plans will be set and reviewed, following a similar format used for greenhouse gas emissions under U.N.-led efforts to curb climate change.

What are the concerns?

- **Implementation** - A major issue is realization of targets contained within the framework because lack of implementation was the major factors behind the failure of the Aichi targets.
- **Finance -** Democratic Republic of Congo staunchly opposed the package, regarding the issues over financing.
- **New fund** - Demands from the global South for a new fund were only partially fulfilled, as it proposed to create the fund within the Global Environment Facility, the UN's existing biodiversity financing fund.
- **Eliminating harmful subsidies** - India's demand against a numerical target to eliminate harmful subsidies has been partially addressed.
- **Cutting pollution** - India was against a numerical goal of cutting pollution to zero.

What is India's role in the summit?

- The most significant contribution of the Indian interventions was that all the targets are kept as global in nature and countries will be free to adopt them as per their circumstances, priorities and capabilities.
- The concept of Life style for environment was recognised for achieving the goals of biodiversity conservation.
- India was of the view that GBF should focus on an ecosystem-based approach rather than nature-based solutions.

References

1. The Indian Express | What is the COP15 Biodiversity Commitment?
2. The Indian Express | Key takeaways from the COP15 summit
3. Indiatimes | What Is Kunming Declaration On Biodiversity?
4. IUCN | Post-2020 global biodiversity framework
5. Hindustan Times | COP15 vows to protect 30% land, water

