

India: A Non-Permanent UNSC member

Why in news?

India has been elected to the non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2021-22.

How much support did India get?

- India has got an overwhelming support of 184 out of the 192 valid votes polled in the United Nations General Assembly.
- India will begin its term in the beginning of 2021, and will hold the position until the end of 2022.

What is the UNSC?

- The United Nations Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council.
- It gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the UNSC, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- Only the UNSC has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.
- It dispatches military operations, imposes sanctions, mandates arms inspections, deploys election monitors, etc.

What are 'non-permanent seats' at the UNSC?

- The UNSC is composed of **15 members**:
 - a. 5 permanent members - China, France, Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom and
 - b. 10 non-permanent members who are elected by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- Each of the 15 members has **one vote**.
- The non-permanent members are elected for **2-years term**.
- So every year, the UNGA elects five non-permanent members out of the total 10.

How these 10 seats are distributed?

- These 10 seats are distributed among the regions of the world:

- a. 5 seats for African and Asian countries;
 - b. 1 for Eastern European countries;
 - c. 2 for Latin American and Caribbean countries; and
 - d. 2 for Western European and Other Countries.
- Of the five seats for Africa and Asia, three are for Africa and two for Asia.
 - Also, there is an informal understanding between the Africa and Asia Pacific groups to reserve 1 seat for an Arab country.
 - These groups takes turns every 2 years to put up an Arab candidate.

How elections are held?

- Elections for terms beginning in even-numbered years select two African members, and one each within Eastern Europe, the Asia Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Elections for terms beginning in odd-numbered years select two Western European and Other members, and one each from Asia Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Who are the current non-permanent members?

- The current non-permanent members whose terms end in 2020 are Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia, and South Africa.
- The current non-permanent members whose terms end in 2021 are Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, and Vietnam.

What happened at the election that India won?

- India was the only candidate for the vacancy from the Asia Pacific.
- Last year, India's candidature for the seat was endorsed unanimously by the Asia Pacific group.
- This group comprises of 55 countries, including Pakistan and China.
- That endorsement meant that India would be a **clean slate candidate** for the elections, with an assured victory.
- Even if a country is a "clean slate" candidate and has been endorsed by its group, it still needs to secure the votes of two-thirds of the members present and voting at the UNGA session.
- This means that it should secure a minimum of 129 votes, if all 193 member states participate.

Has India been in the UNSC earlier?

- India has earlier been a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 2011-12.

- For the 2011-12 term, India won 187 of 190 votes after Kazakhstan stood down from its candidacy.

What will happen if there is a contest?

- Unlike Africa, which has formalised a system of rotation of its three seats, the Asia Pacific grouping has often seen contests for seats.
- On the occasions when there is a contest, the elections for non-permanent seats can go on for several rounds.
- Back in 1975, there was a contest between India and Pakistan, which went into eight rounds, with Pakistan finally winning the seat.
- In 2018, there was a contest between the Maldives and Indonesia.

Source: The Indian Express

