

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 CO₂ 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 CO₂ 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](#)

