

Tuesday, Aug 30, 2022

EPAPER TODAY'S PAPER

The Indian EXPRESS

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Home Explained Political Pulse India Cities Opinion Entertainment Lifestyle Videos Sports Audio

TRENDING UPSC Health Jio 5G Artemis 1 Movie Follow Cricket

Home / Explained / Explained Global / Explained: What is the UN High Seas Treaty, why have countries failed to agree on it?

Explained: What is the UN High Seas Treaty, why have countries failed to agree on it?

In June, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had declared an “ocean emergency” at the UN Ocean Conference

Written by [Rishika Singh](#)

New Delhi | August 29, 2022 9:46:21 pm



There has been talk of resistance from countries that engage in deep sea mining of minerals or are

heavily invested in fishing. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen, File)

Negotiations involving 168 countries, including the European Union, to agree on a UN treaty for protecting oceans failed Saturday (August 27). When the latest round of talks began two weeks ago in New York, it was hoped that an agreement would be arrived at for the conserving marine life at the 'high seas' which lie outside the exclusive jurisdiction of different countries.

In June, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had declared an "ocean emergency" at the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, citing threats to the world's oceans.

What is the proposed UN High Seas treaty?

Also referred to as the 'Paris Agreement for the Ocean', the treaty to deal with Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction has been under discussion for several years.

SUBSCRIBER ONLY STORIES

[View All](#)



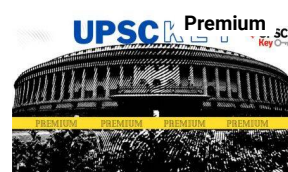
Crime against women rose by 15.3% in 2021: NCRB



PILs have a bad run, CJI-led bench says no to many



Indians get nearly twice as many US student visas as Chinese this year



UPSC Key-August 29, 2022: Why you should read 'Safety Valve Theory' or 'M...

The proposed treaty concerns the ocean existing beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones that lie from the coast of a country to about 200 nautical miles or 370 km into the sea, till where it has special rights for exploration. Waters beyond that are known as open seas or high seas.

The treaty was to be negotiated under the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 which governs the rights of countries regarding marine resources. As there is no treaty for conserving the health of vast swathes of the earth's oceans, a UN resolution in 2017 had decided to rectify this while setting 2022 as the deadline.

The pandemic resulted in many delays, and later, a High Ambition Coalition, which now has more than 100 countries including India, the US, and the UK, came about and put the focus on '30×30' goals – protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030. After the latest deadlock, talks will only resume next year, unless a special session is called.

Also Explained | **Explained: Who is William Ruto, the controversial President-elect who won Kenya's contested elections?**

Some aspects of negotiations included establishing marine protected areas to put limits on certain activities, environmental impact assessments or clearances for sustainability of works, financial support to countries and sharing other scientific knowledge. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has said binding agreements are needed for this treaty to be effective.

How are the world's oceans regulated as of now?

Some treaties, along with the UNCLOS, regulate the conduct of actors on the high seas. The UNCLOS led to the establishment of territorial sea boundaries 22 km offshore, deciding the region up to which countries could claim full sovereign territorial rights, as well as the 200 nautical miles EEZ limit. It also created the International Seabed Authority and other conflict-resolution mechanisms.

Also Explained | **Explained: Why Nepal has put on hold Gorkhas recruitment under India's Agnipath scheme**

But a treaty dedicated to protecting ocean health does not exist as of now. Conversely, every country has the right to access open seas, resulting in large-scale drilling and trawling operations for catching fish and other animals for commercial purposes.

What are the risks of countries failing to reach an agreement?

Ninety per cent of global warming is occurring in the ocean, according to the NASA website.

“The effects of ocean warming include sea level rise due to thermal expansion, coral bleaching, accelerated melting of Earth's major ice sheets, intensified hurricanes, and changes in ocean health and biochemistry,” it says. Excessive

fishing has increased manifold over the years, and a third of species such as sharks and rays are at the risk of extinction, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

Best of Explained

[Demolition of Noida's Supertech twin towers: process, impact & concerns](#)

[#BoycottBollywood, and its impact on the industry](#)

[Chhattisgarh's forest 'by mistake': the case, and the law explained](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE](#)

Despite acknowledging these threats, members failed to agree on how to deal with these threats.

There has been talk of resistance from countries that engage in deep sea mining of minerals or are heavily invested in fishing. “Although we did make excellent progress, we still do need a little bit more time to progress towards the finish line,” UN Oceans Ambassador Rena Lee said, the AFP reported.

Some countries in the Caribbean alleged that richer countries of the Global North did not actively participate until the last few days of the talks.

First published on: 29-08-2022 at 09:46:21 pm



NEXT STORY ►

Hong Kong's historic Peak Tram reopens after 14 months; all you need to know about it

TAGS: [Explained Global](#) [Express Explained](#) [The United Nations](#)

Explained by The Indian Express Do not just read the news. Understand it. Read our daily explainers

[READ NOW >](#)

Post Comment(s) *

* The moderation of comments is automated and not cleared manually by indianexpress.com.
