



Environmental Conventions (Pollutants)

What are International Environmental Conventions?

An international environmental convention is a **legally binding agreement** negotiated among governments to take action together to combat or mitigate a global environmental threat. Reaching an agreement to take such action among sovereign nations with diverse interests is no small feat.

- However, in recent decades, such agreements have proliferated to address international environmental concerns at the global and regional levels.

Why is there a Need for these Conventions?

- Ratification and implementation of the Convention and its protocols will, for many Parties, reduce health and environmental impacts **more cost-effectively than unilateral action**.
- It also creates economic benefits as harmonized legislation and standards across borders will introduce a level playing field for industry across countries and **prevent Parties from competing with each other** at the expense of the environment and health.
- Factors that harm human health, affect food security, hinder economic development, contribute to climate change and degrade the environment upon which our very livelihoods depend.
 - The Convention **provides a platform to discuss these interconnections and takes actions to prevent negative impacts**.

What is Stockholm Convention?

- **Stockholm Convention** is a **global treaty to protect human health and the environment from POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants)**.
- It was opened for signature in 2001 in Stockholm (Sweden) and **became effective in 2004**.
- POPs are **listed in various Annexes** to the Stockholm Convention after thorough scientific research, deliberations and negotiations among member countries.
- **Objectives:**
 - Support the transition to safer alternatives.
 - Target additional POPs for action.
 - Cleanup old stockpiles and equipment containing POPs.
 - Work together for a POPs-free future.
- **India ratified the Stockholm Convention in 2006** as per **Article 25(4)**, which enabled it to keep itself in a default "**opt-out**" position such that amendments in various Annexes of the convention **cannot be enforced on it unless an instrument of ratification/ acceptance/ approval or accession is explicitly deposited with UN (United Nations) depositary**.
- The convention **calls to ban nine of the dirty dozen chemicals** (key POPs), limit the use of **DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane)** for malaria control, and curtail inadvertent production of **dioxins and furans**. The convention **listed twelve distinct chemicals in three categories:**
 - **Eight pesticides** (aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene)
 - **Two industrial chemicals** (polychlorinated biphenyls and hexachlorobenzene)
 - **Two unintended by-products** of many industrial processes involving chlorine such as waste incineration, chemical and pesticide manufacturing and pulp and paper bleaching (polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans, commonly referred to as dioxins and

furans).

What is Convention on Biological Diversity?

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** is a legally binding treaty to conserve biodiversity that **has been in force since 1993**. It has **3 main objectives**:
 - The conservation of biological diversity.
 - The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity.
 - The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
- It has been **ratified by 196 nations**.
 - **India enacted Biological Diversity Act in 2002** for giving effect to the provisions of the CBD.
- The CBD **Secretariat is based in Montreal, Canada** and it operates under the UNEP.
- On 29 January 2000, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP5) **adopted a supplementary agreement to the Convention known as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**. It came into force on 11 September 2003.
 - The Protocol **seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks** posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.
- The **Nagoya Protocol** on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted on 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan at COP10. It **entered into force on 12 October 2014**.
 - It **provides a transparent legal framework** for the effective implementation of **one of the three objectives of the CBD**:
 - The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
 - It not only applies to genetic resources that are covered by the CBD, and to the benefits arising from their utilization but also covers **Traditional Knowledge (TK)** associated with genetic resources that are covered by the CBD and the benefits arising from their utilisation.
- Along with Nagoya Protocol on Genetic Resources, the COP-10 also adopted a **ten-year framework for action by all countries** to save biodiversity.
- In 2021, the **Kunming Declaration** was adopted by over 100 countries at the ongoing **15th Conference of the Parties** to the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity** in China.
 - The adoption of the declaration will **create momentum for a new global biodiversity pact**.
 - In a previous agreement, **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**, signed in Aichi, Japan, in 2010, governments agreed on **20 targets to try to slow biodiversity loss and protect habitats by 2020 (Aichi Biodiversity Targets)**.

What is Basel Convention?

- It was **adopted in 1989** by the **Conference of Plenipotentiaries** in Basel, Switzerland, the “Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal”, generally known as the **Basel Convention, came into force in 1992**.
- It is an international treaty that **aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste** between countries.
- It particularly **focuses on preventing transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries**.
- It provides for **cooperation between the parties**, including exchange of information on issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

What is Minamata Convention?

- The **Minamata Convention on Mercury** is a **global treaty to protect human health and the environment** from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds.
 - Recently, **Indonesia has introduced a global declaration** that calls on parties to the **Minamata Convention on Mercury** to tackle illegal trade of mercury.

- The declaration was read in Nusa Dua, Bali, where **Indonesia is hosting the COP4** to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
- It was **agreed at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee** in Geneva, Switzerland 2013.
- Controlling the **anthropogenic releases of mercury throughout its lifecycle** is one of the key obligations under the Convention.
- The **Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury** and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.
- The Convention **covers all aspects of the life cycle of mercury, controlling and reducing mercury** across a range of products, processes and industries. **This includes controls on:**
 - Mercury mining
 - The manufacture and trade of mercury and products containing mercury
 - Disposal of mercury waste
 - Emissions of mercury from industrial facilities.
- Countries that have **ratified the Convention are bound by international law** to put these controls in place.
 - **India has ratified the Convention.**

What is Rotterdam Convention?

- The **Rotterdam Convention** was adopted in 1998 by a Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The Convention **entered into force on in 2004.**
- It **covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted** for health or environmental reasons by Parties and which have been notified by Parties for inclusion in the **Prior Informed Consent (PIC)** procedure. The Convention creates legally binding obligations for the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.
- **The objectives of the Convention are:**
 - To promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among Parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm.
 - To contribute to the environmentally sound use of those hazardous chemicals, by facilitating information exchange about their characteristics, by providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and by disseminating these decisions to Parties.
 - The Convention creates legally binding obligations for the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. It was built on the voluntary PIC procedure, **initiated by UNEP and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)** in 1989 and ceased on 24 February 2006.

What are Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol?

- The 1985 **Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer** was an international agreement in which **United Nations** members recognized the fundamental importance of preventing **damage to the stratospheric ozone layer.**
- **The 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that deplete the Ozone Layer** and its succeeding amendments were subsequently negotiated to control the consumption and production of anthropogenic (ODSs) and some hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).
 - The Protocol was **signed by 197 parties** in 1987 to control the use of ozone-depleting substances, mainly chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
 - Montreal Protocol deals with the development of replacement of substances, **firstly hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and then HFCs, in a number of industrial sectors.**
 - While HFCs have only a minor effect on stratospheric ozone, some HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases (GHGs).
- The adoption of the **2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol** will **phase down the production and consumption of some HFCs** and avoid much of the projected global increase and associated climate change.

[TTP Environmental Conventions \(Biodiversity\)](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2016)

	Terms sometimes seen in the news	Their origin
1.	Annex-I Countries	Cartagena Protocol
2.	Certified Emissions Reductions	Nagoya Protocol
3.	Clean Development Mechanism	Kyoto Protocol

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. The Sustainable Development Goals were first proposed in 1972 by a global think tank called the 'Club of Rome'.
2. The Sustainable Development Goals have to be achieved by 2030.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)