



Green Fins Hub

For Prelims: Green Fins Hub, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Coral Reefs, Coastal and Marine Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Blue Economy, Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative, Deep Ocean Mission, O-SMART, Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

For Mains: Green Fins Hub and its Significance, Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism, Challenges and Initiatives to Promote.

Why in News?

Recently, the [United Nations Environmental Programme \(UNEP\)](#), along with the UK-based charity **Reef-World Foundation**, launched the **Green Fins Hub**.

- Green Fins Hub is a **global digital platform for diving and snorkelling operators worldwide**.

What is Green Fins?

- **About:**
 - **Green Fins** is a proven conservation management approach **implemented internationally by The Reef-World Foundation and the UNEP** which leads to a measurable **reduction in the negative environmental impacts associated with marine tourism**.
 - **Originally established in Thailand in 2004**, the Green Fins approach is a tool for supporting **adoption and implementation of best practices in the diving and snorkeling tourism industry**.
- **Aim:**
 - It aims to **protect coral reefs through environment-friendly guidelines** promoting sustainable diving and snorkelling.
 - It provides the **only internationally recognised environmental standards for marine tourism** and its robust assessment system measures compliance.

What is Green Fins Hub?

- **About:**
 - The **Green Fins Hub** is the **first-ever global [marine tourism](#) industry platform**.
 - It would **give sustainable marine tourism a 'major boost'**.
 - It is expected to scale up to reach a **potential 30,000 operators worldwide from about 700 operators across 14 countries**.
- **Significance:**
 - It is intended to catalyse a **seismic shift towards [sustainability](#) in the marine tourism**

- sector** through Green Fins membership.
- **Coral reefs** are **home to at least 25% of marine life**, are the mecca for marine-related tourism, **contributing up to 40% or more of the [gross domestic product](#)** in some island nations. However, they are a **most vulnerable ecosystem**, especially to climate change with the difference between a global temperature rise of 1.5 or 20C being existential for reefs.
 - **Increasing accessibility of best practice, knowledge and citizen science** through the Green Fins Hub could be a **game changer in ensuring a future for coral reefs and other fragile marine ecosystems**.
 - The **platform will help diving and snorkelling operators** worldwide to make **simple, cost-efficient changes to their daily practices** by utilising tried and tested solutions.
 - It would also help them **keep track of their annual improvements and communicate with their communities and customers**.

What is Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism?

- **[Sustainable Tourism](#)** refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It refers to **addressing the issues of a greener tourism sector both on the demand as well as supply side**.
 - According to the UN, **sustainable tourism should incorporate the following:**
 - **Make optimal use of environmental resources** that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
 - **Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities**, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
 - **Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits** to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
- **Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT)** represents at least **50% of total global tourism**. It constitutes the **largest economic sector for most Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and many coastal states**.
 - With anticipated global growth rates of more than 3.5%, coastal and marine tourism is **projected to be the largest value-adding segment of the ocean economy by 2030, at 26%**.

What are the Challenges Associated with CMT?

- **Continued Depletion and Degradation of Natural Assets** is putting the sustainability and viability of the industry, along with the local communities that rely on it, at risk.
- **Covid-19 Pandemic Caused a Major Disruption** in the tourism industry. The World Travel and Tourism Council has projected around 75 million job losses and a tourism-induced GDP reduction of more than \$2 trillion globally.
- **Climate Change will Affect Strongly the Coastal Areas** with high anthropic vulnerability, through temperature increase, more frequent environmental events, water scarcity and sea level rise (SLR).



What are the Other Initiatives Towards Coastal and Marine Tourism?

▪ Global Initiatives:

- **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and World Wild Fund (WWF)** are partnering with hotels, cruise ships, tour operators and the industry to create nature-positive tourism where all supply chain actors converge to create value for people, nature and businesses.
- **Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative** is a UN-convened global community focused on the intersection between private finance and ocean health, supporting the implementation of the Sustainable [Blue Economy Finance Principles](#).
 - **The Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles** are the foundational keystone to invest in the ocean economy. Launched in 2018, they are the world's first global guiding framework for banks, insurers and investors to finance a sustainable blue economy. They promote the implementation of SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and set out ocean-specific standards.
- **Ocean Recovery Alliance has become a signatory of the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative**, led by the UNEP and World Tourism Organization, in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.
 - **The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative** has the objective to [tackle plastic pollution](#) by promoting a shift towards circular economy of plastics in tourism operations where plastics never become waste, rather than to completely eliminate plastics from all tourism operations.

▪ Indian Initiatives:

- [Deep Ocean Mission](#)
- [India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development](#)
- [O-SMART](#)
- [Integrated Coastal Zone Management](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Most of the world's coral reefs are in tropical waters.
2. More than one-third of the world's coral reefs are located in the territories of Australia, Indonesia

and Philippines.

3. Coral reefs host far more animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of corals, which are marine invertebrate animals. The coral species extract Calcium Carbonate from seawater to create a hard, durable exoskeleton that protects their soft, sac-like bodies. Besides other conditions, reef-building corals require warm ocean temperatures (20 to 28°C). Hence, most of the coral reefs are found in tropical waters. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Reef-building corals are scattered throughout the tropical and subtropical Western Atlantic and Indo-Pacific oceans, generally within 30°N and 30°S latitudes. More than three-quarters of the world's reef-building coral species can be found within the waters of "Coral Triangle", the area covering the reefs of Northern Australia, Indonesia, Philippines and Papua New Guinea extending from Indonesia in the west to the Solomon Islands in the east, and the Philippines in the north. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- Coral reefs have much more animal phyla than those found in tropical rainforests. 32 of the 34 recognised animal Phyla are found on coral reefs compared to 9 in tropical rainforests. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option D is the correct answer.**

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