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IMPACT OF KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK ON TRIBES

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "IMPACT OF KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK ON TRIBES". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

A recent conference hosted by the University of Arizona shed light on apprehensions regarding the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its potential ramifications, specifically concerning the indigenous tribes of India.

ABOUT KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- In December 2022, at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, a landmark agreement emerged – the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.
- This framework builds on past efforts and seeks to achieve the ambitious goal of living in harmony with nature by 2050, aligning with broader sustainable development objectives.

TARGETS SET BY KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- The GBF outlines a clear path for a future where biodiversity thrives. **It establishes four overarching goals for 2050**, encompassing aspects like maintaining healthy ecosystems, reducing threats to biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use benefits everyone, and ultimately achieving a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.
- To translate these goals into action, the **GBF sets 23 specific targets to be achieved by 2030**. These targets **focus on** key areas like **mitigating threats to biodiversity, promoting sustainable use with fair benefit-sharing, and establishing effective tools** for implementation and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations.

LEGAL MANDATE OF THE FRAMEWORK

- Although GBF **isn't a legally binding treaty**, it serves as a powerful international instrument fostering collective action. All participating countries agree to set national targets aligned with the framework's goals and targets.

- This collaborative approach promotes a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for achieving a sustainable future.

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE TARGETS TILL NOW

- **Target 3 – 30×30:** India has announced the inclusion of 22% of its terrestrial area and 5% of marine and coastal areas within the Protected Area Network.
- Although India demonstrates progress in expanding protected areas, concerns have surfaced regarding the legal definitions and potential diversion of these areas for non-conservation purposes.
- **India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023** broadened the scope of forest activities to incorporate commercial ventures such as zoos and ecotourism, indicating a commitment to sustainable development.
- Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has issued directives mandating that any proposals for establishing zoos and safaris within forest areas (excluding protected areas) must undergo prior approval from the court.
- **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs):** India has identified 14 categories of OECMs, including initiatives led by citizens. However, the voluntary nature of their declaration raises questions regarding legal protection.

CONTROVERSY AROUND TARGET 3 OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL FRAMEWORK

- **Target 3 of the GBF aims to ensure that by 2030**, at least 30% of the world's land, waters, and seas are preserved. Currently, protected areas (PAs) encompass approximately 16% of these areas. **This objective is commonly referred to as the "30 by 30" target.**
- Analysts argue that while this target appears beneficial, it often **prioritises corporate interests over those of indigenous communities, particularly in Southeast Asia.** For instance, in **Cambodia's Beng Per Wildlife Sanctuary**, an indigenous leader named Heng Saphen was unjustly convicted for cultivating her own land.
- Critics contend that **involving the private sector in forest conservation is problematic.** They point to India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023 as an example of this trend. The act expands the definition of forest activities to include zoos, safaris, and ecotourism facilities.
- According to experts, **colonial elites initially established protected areas for recreational and hunting purposes.** This legacy persists today, with ecotourism projects often treating indigenous peoples as attractions, showcasing their traditional cultures in contrived settings.

STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO PROTECT TRIBAL LANDS

- **Consent from tribals:** The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act emphasises "free, prior, and informed consent" from tribals before any decisions affecting their land are made. Upholding this right is essential for ensuring their agency and protecting their cultural heritage.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide educational and training opportunities to equip tribal communities with the skills and knowledge needed to manage their lands effectively and advocate for their rights.
- **Considering them as Guardians of the forests:** Laws should be amended to formally recognise tribal communities as guardians of protected areas. Their deep understanding of the local ecosystem and traditional conservation practices make them invaluable partners in protecting biodiversity. This

approach fosters a sense of ownership and empowers communities to manage their lands sustainably.

- **Community-Based Conservation:** Support collaborative conservation initiatives led by tribal communities, ensuring their knowledge and practices are integrated into land management strategies.
- **Legal Framework and Enforcement:** Strengthen the legal framework by enforcing existing legislations like the Forest Rights Act to secure individual and community ownership of land for forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- **Incorporating Indigenous and Expertise Knowledge:** Governments have the opportunity to utilise the traditional wisdom held by indigenous communities, such as the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya, who possess a deep-rooted heritage in safeguarding “sacred groves” – regions of natural flora and fauna preserved through local customs and prohibitions.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Forest rights can be asserted by individuals who have resided in the area for a minimum of two generations prior to the specified date.
2. The gram sabha holds the authority to commence the procedure for ascertaining the type and scope of forest rights.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

ANSWER: A

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. How can collaborative efforts between indigenous peoples and conservation organisations harness traditional knowledge to combat threats like deforestation and habitat degradation?

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