

# CITES – COP 18

April 2, 2020

## Why in news?

18th Conference of Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was held in Geneva.

## Highlights of COP 18:

- **Asian small-clawed and smooth-coated otters** were included in **Appendix I**.
- **First time giraffe has been accorded protection by placing it in Appendix II.**
- 18 species of sharks and rays were included in Appendix II.
- A resolution calling for Japan and the European Union (EU) to close their legal domestic ivory markets was not adopted.
- **87 CITES parties decided to restrict trade in elephants from Zimbabwe and Botswana** to in-situ conservation programmes or secure areas in the wild within the species' natural and historical range in Africa, with limited exceptions.
- **The critically endangered Saiga antelope of the Eurasian steppe was refused to the highest protection** (to be added to Appendix -I) that can be offered under international law.
- Conservationist **Vivek Menon, head of non-profit, Wildlife Trust of India** was awarded the prestigious Clark R Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award for the year 2019.
- He **co-founded TRAFFIC India** with his mentor the late Ashok Kumar and his early work on rhino poaching was published by TRAFFIC-International.

**CITES:**

- It is an **international agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species.**
- It is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**).
- It restricts trade in items made from such plants and animals, such as food, clothing, medicine, and souvenirs.
- It was **signed on March 3, 1973.**
- Secretariat is in Geneva Switzerland.
- It is **legally binding on state parties** to the convention, which are obliged to **adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.**
- **Appendix I species:** It lists species that are in danger of extinction. It **prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals** except in extraordinary situations for scientific or educational reasons.