

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.