

# Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2)

March 4, 2022

**In news-** The resumed session of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) held in Nairobi was recently concluded with adoption of a resolution to end plastic pollution.

## **Key takeaways from UNEA 5.2-**

- The **historic resolution, entitled “End Plastic Pollution: Towards an internationally legally binding instrument”**, was adopted with the conclusion of the three-day UNEA-5.2 meeting.
- UNEA 5.2 considered three draft resolutions to address plastic pollution and one of the draft resolutions under consideration was that of India. The draft resolution submitted by India called for immediate collective voluntary action by countries.
- The adopted resolution said that **plastic pollution, in marine and other environments, can be of a transboundary nature and needs to be tackled, together with its impacts through a full lifecycle approach** taking into account national circumstances and capabilities.
- During the assembly, **environment ministers from 193 UN member states agreed to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee.**
- It was decided that the **intergovernmental negotiating committee is to develop an international legally binding draft agreement on plastic pollution by the end of 2024**, henceforth referred to as the instrument, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full

lifecycle of plastic.

- The **resolution took into account the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development** (on sustainable development), as well as national circumstances and capabilities.
- Apart from this, another positive step has been **acknowledging waste pickers and low paid workers in the resolution for the first time.**

### ***About United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)-***

- The UNEA is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment.
- It enjoys the **universal membership of all 193 UN Member States** and the full involvement of major groups and stakeholders.
- It gathers ministers of environment in **Nairobi, Kenya every 2 years.**
- It was **created in June 2012**, when world leaders called for the UN Environment to be strengthened and upgraded **during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also referred to as RIO+20.**
- The **establishment of UNEA was the culmination of decades of international efforts, initiated at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972** and aimed at creating a coherent system of international environmental governance.
- This assembly embodies a new era in which the environment is at the center of the international community's focus and is given the same level of prominence as issues such as peace, poverty, health, and security.
- The **Committee of Permanent Representatives is the inter-sessional intergovernmental body of the Assembly.**
- The Committee is led by accredited **Permanent Representatives to the UN Environment Programme, which account for 118 members.**

- The Committee of Permanent Representatives was formally established as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council (now the UN Environment Assembly) in May 1985.

### **India's initiatives on ending plastic pollution-**

- **India had piloted a resolution on addressing single use plastic pollution in the fourth session of UNEA in 2019.**
- The environment ministry notified the **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules 2021** in August last year, increasing the ***thickness of plastic bags from 50 to 75 microns, to 120 microns with effect from December 31, 2022.***
- The latest guidelines also prohibit the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of products with low utility but high littering potential.
- It also announced a **ban on ear-buds with plastic sticks**, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool) for decoration, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery, trays, wrapping, or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners of less than 100-micron thickness from July 1, 2022.
- The ministry notified **guidelines on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic packaging**, with an aim to eliminate single-use plastics and promote alternatives last month.
- It also laid down roles and responsibilities of producers, importers, brands generating plastic packaging waste, central and state pollution control boards, recyclers and waste processors in minimizing plastic waste.