

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution

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In news– The first session of the INC, tasked with developing an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution has recently concluded in Uruguay.

About INC-

- The INC-1 was **convened and managed by the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP)**.
- The first session of the INC-1 came nine months after representatives from 175 countries endorsed a landmark resolution on plastic pollution at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).
- **The UNEA resolution 5/14 calls for the international legally binding instrument** to promote a comprehensive lifecycle approach to chemicals and waste through sustainable production and consumption of plastics by adopting sound product design, and environment-friendly waste management.
- The UN Secretariat's document titled Summary of plastic pollution science noted that plastic pollution was an offshoot of the linear take-make-dispose economy.
- It said the current trends needed to be replaced by a circular economy which forms the basis of the solutions to the plastic pollution problem facing the world.
- The document proposed four strategic goals that can guide the transition to a circular economy:
 - Reduce the size of the problem by eliminating and substituting problematic and unnecessary plastic items, including hazardous additives.
 - **Ensure that plastic products are designed to be**

circular – reusable as a first priority, and recyclable or compostable after multiple uses at the end of their useful life.

- **Close the loop of plastics in the economy** by ensuring that plastic products are reused, recycled, or composted.
 - **Manage plastics that cannot be reused or recycled** (including existing pollution) in an environmentally responsible manner.
- It implicitly endorsed the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)'s position that plastic pollution is rooted in the material's lifecycle.
 - CSE is a not-for-profit public interest research and advocacy organisation based in New Delhi, India.
 - **CSE had released a report titled The Plastic Life-cycle** in November 2022, at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
 - The report identified issues in the upstream, midstream, and downstream of (primarily) India's plastic value chain, like the summary document.

Global plastic pollution-

- Global plastic production totalled 460 million tonnes (Mt) in 2019, double of 234 Mt in 2000, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Plastic waste more than doubled during the same period to 353 Mt from 156 Mt.
- In 2000 alone, 22 Mt of plastic material leaked into the environment. By 2019, 109 Mt had accumulated in rivers and 30 Mt in ocean

Plastic pollution in India-

- **Most of the plastic used in India today was for packaging** and an increasing amount of crude oil was being converted to plastic every year. **Most of this was single-use plastic and might not be recyclable.**

- The EPR legislation, which exists in European Union, North America, Latin America, and OECD countries had been introduced in India in 2022 for plastic packaging.
- However, the implementation and enforcement of the EPR policy will be a major challenge for the authorities as the policy is weak and has gaps that will need to be plugged, according to CSE.
- **Most of India's plastic waste was leaked in the environment or dumped in open dumpsites (67 per cent).**
- The country burnt (20 per cent) more plastic waste in specialised facilities than it recycled (12 per cent).
- As per Union Environment Ministry, over 34 lakh tonnes of plastic waste was generated in the financial year 2019-2020, an increase of more than 10 lakh tonnes compared to 2017-18.