

UNCLOS treaty

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In news— Recently, the Indian Minister of State for Defence reiterated support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

About UNCLOS treaty-

- It is a 63-year-old **international agreement adopted in 1982 by more than 160 nations that establishes a legal framework for how maritime vessels** behave while transiting international waters.
- It was **established to define coastal and maritime boundaries**, to regulate seabed exploration not within territorial claims, and to distribute revenue from regulated exploration.
- UNCLOS which **came into force in 1994 replaced the four Geneva Conventions of April, 1958**, which respectively concerned the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, fishing and conservation of living resources on the high seas.
- It lays down a comprehensive regime of law and order in the world's oceans and seas **establishing rules governing all uses of the oceans and their resources.**
- It also **demarcates stretches of waters called exclusive economic zones** where coastal states are given the right to exclusively tap fishery and fuel resources.
- **The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS)** of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations serves as **the secretariat of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.**
- The Division monitors all developments relating to the Convention, the law of the sea and ocean affairs and reports annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on those developments.
- It also assists the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in

reviewing such developments.

- **In 2015 the UNGA decided to develop an international legally binding instrument** under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- Hence it convened an intergovernmental conference (IGC), with a view to developing the instrument.
- **UNCLOS does not deal with matters of territorial disputes or to resolve issues of sovereignty**, as that field is governed by rules of customary international law on the acquisition and loss of territory.
- **India is also a State party to the UNCLOS.**