

World Heritage Glaciers Sentinels of Climate Change

November 9, 2022

In news- A study conducted by the UN body has found that **a third of the glaciers on the UNESCO World Heritage list are under threat**, regardless of efforts to limit temperature increases.

Key findings-

- **The UNESCO study, in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), showed that these glaciers have been retreating** at an accelerated rate since 2000 due to CO2 emissions, which are warming temperatures.
- **They are currently losing 58 billion tons of ice every year** – equivalent to the combined annual water use of France and Spain – and are responsible for nearly 5% of observed global sea-level rise.
- Researchers have identified a total of 18,600 glaciers in these 50 sites. Together, these glaciers cover around an area of 66,000 sq km.
- **The glaciers under threat are in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania.**
- The study said, it was still possible to save the other two-thirds, if the rise in global temperatures did not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to the pre-industrial era.
- In addition to drastically reduced carbon emissions, **UNESCO is advocating for the creation of a new international fund for glacier monitoring and preservation.**
- Such a **fund would support comprehensive research, promote exchange networks** between all stakeholders and implement early warning and disaster risk reduction measures.

- Half of humanity depends directly or indirectly on glaciers as their water source for domestic use, agriculture, and power.
- This **study highlights the urgent need to cut greenhouse gas emissions and invest in nature-based solutions**, which can help mitigate climate change and allow people to better adapt to its impacts.
- **Fifty UNESCO World Heritage sites are home to glaciers, representing almost 10% of the Earth's total glacier area.**
- They include the highest (next to Mt Everest), the longest (in Alaska), and the last remaining glaciers in Africa.