

India Votes against UN draft Resolution on Climate Change

Syllabus- GS 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

GS 3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation.

Geo Optional: Paper 1: Environmental geography

Why in news:

❖ India on Monday **voted against** a draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) **linking climate to security, saying it was an attempt to shift climate talks from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to the Security Council** and a “step backward” for collective action on the issue.

❖ The **resolution, sponsored by Ireland and Niger, aims at enabling the United Nations Security Council to take up the routine discussions on climate change from the perspective of its impact on peace and conflict worldwide.**

✚ It **did not pass**, with 12 UNSC members voting for it, **India and Russia** voting against it and **China abstaining**. Russian **veto** led to the non-adoption of the resolution.

❖ The draft resolution states that the adverse effects of climate change can “lead...to **social tensions..., exacerbating, prolonging, or contributing to the risk of future conflicts** and instability and **posing a key risk to global peace, security, and stability**”.

Why India opposed it?

❖ India argued that this move **seeks to undermine** the hard-won consensus which was reached at the recent **Glasgow Summit**.

❖ India is of the view that, Many of the UNSC members are the main contributors of climate change due to historical emissions. If the security council indeed takes over the responsibility on this issue,

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- The UNs Charter established **six main organs of the UN**, including the UNSC.
 - The other 5 organs of the UN are—the **General Assembly**, the **Trusteeship Council**, the **Economic and Social Council**, the **International Court of Justice**, and the **Secretariat**.
- The council is headquartered at **New York**.
 - **Five permanent members:** China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - **Ten non-permanent members:** Elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.
- The **UNSC has been given primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security** and may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- While other organs of the UN make recommendations to member states, **only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement** under the Charter.
- India began its latest two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in January 2021.

a few states will then have a free hand in deciding on all climate-related issues. This is **neither desirable nor acceptable.**

- ✚ India's permanent representative in the UN said the attempt to discuss climate action and climate justice issues at the UNSC was **"motivated by a desire to evade responsibility in the appropriate forum."**
- ❖ The climate resolution was seen as an attempt by the western countries to **evade its responsibility on climate finance** that has been dominating the climate change debate, especially at the recently-concluded Glasgow climate summit.
- ❖ This is not the first time Russia, India, China and Brazil have taken a similar approach on the issue. In 2011, when Germany had raised the issue at the council, BRICS had taken a similar position. All members of the grouping were members of the council that year.

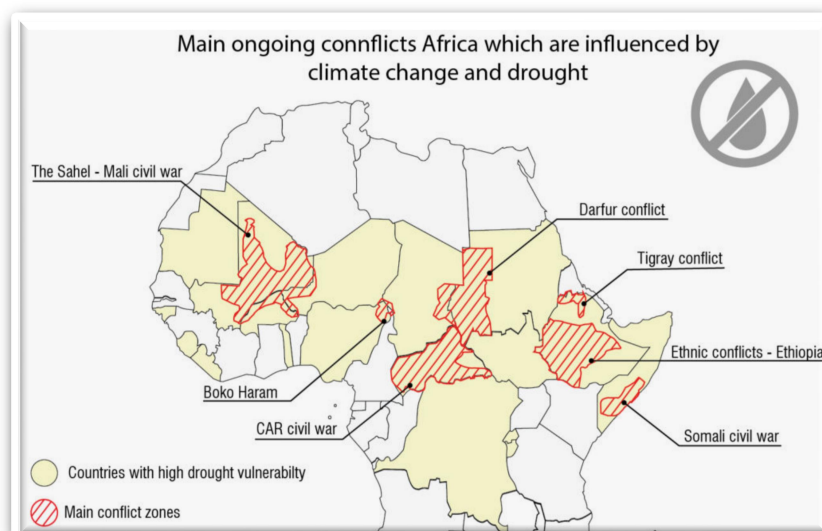
Indian representative marked that climate change may have exacerbated **conflicts in the Sahel region and across Africa**, and **India remained committed to peace** and development in those regions, but **"viewing conflicts through the prism of climate change"** was **"misleading"** and an oversimplification that could worsen conflicts rather than resolving them.

Climate change and Security:

- It was estimated that a **1 % temperature increase could elevate risks of civil war by 4,5 %** implying a **projected 54 % increase in armed conflicts by 2030.**
- In the last century, climate change affected 3-20 % of conflicts, and its growing weight in Africa is both a cause and a consequence of conflict.

The Sahara and the Sahel:

- ✓ These regions frequently experience droughts that affect millions every year. As it stands, the areas worst hit remain underdeveloped and cope with **extreme temperatures**, and **food and water scarcity.**
- ✓ People in the Sahel **rely heavily on pastoralism**, and the *increasing frequency, duration and intensity of these droughts forces different communities to drive their herds towards the same remaining grazing lands.* This is one of the mechanisms through which conflict can ignite, as both parties are hard-pressed for resources.



- ✓ Many current ongoing conflicts are influenced by climatic changes in Africa. The **Darfur conflict** is considered the first entirely **climate-change driven conflict.**



- ✚ Rainfall patterns were 30-75 % below expected levels and the resulting water scarcity was a decisive factor in the civil war's outbreak. **Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger** have very **high proportions of people under the poverty line who depend on the land.**
- ✚ Recent droughts have displaced millions, who find themselves threatened by ongoing islamic clashes in Burkina Faso, or **wide-spread communal disputes due to resource scarcity.**
- ✓ The **Horn of Africa** in the East has recently experienced **unprecedented drought**, along with a **resurgence of locust swarms**. Both Ethiopia and Somalia have a very low human development index and more than 80 % of the population is employed in the agricultural sector with vulnerable rainfed agriculture. **When extreme events put large numbers of people in lack of sustenance, extreme behaviour arises which could explain the social triggers for conflict.**
- ✓ The **Central African Republic** is an interesting case. It is not yet affected by increased drought or desertification, but its **borders are often crossed by herds from neighboring nations with resource scarcity**. *Increased competition from unwelcome visitors is not well received, leading to frequent clashes* and volatile security in the northern parts of the country.
- ✓ In many cases, **absence of clear, commonly accepted rules** has even added to the conflict over who owns and has access to these limited, but essential, natural resources.
- ✓ In Niger, **demographic and climatic pressures are pushing the frontier of cultivation progressively northward**, where it increasingly **encroaches on the pastoralist zone** and traditional transit routes. Pastoralists and their animals, who are also affected by changes in climate, then have to travel through these areas of cultivation, damaging crops and possibly triggering conflict.
 - ✚ Further, in northern Niger, the effects of climate change, combined with unresolved grievances of the pastoralist **Tuareg** population, have the potential to produce more intense violence.
- ✓ In Burkina Faso, **climate-linked internal migration** has flowed from the central plateau to the more economically dynamic south-southwest and the more land-abundant east. It is probable that conflicts will continue to develop in these areas over scarce natural resources, especially those involving access to water and arable land.

Recommendations:

In order to build climate resilience in a conflict-adverse manner, it is essential to **strengthen institutions**, both formal and informal, that can prevent or mitigate conflict over climate-affected natural resources. This could be done by **establishing and mapping clear, verifiable pastoral territories, promoting and enforcing existing laws, strengthening local land commissions** in the region, and supporting efforts to develop the backward areas.