

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 361
ANSWERED ON 06.04.2023

INTERNATIONAL TREATY TO PROTECT HIGH SEAS

***361. # SHRI VAIKO**

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any international treaty has been concluded at the UN Headquarters recently to protect high seas;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether ocean ecosystems would be improved due to this treaty, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the number of countries that have ratified this treaty; and
- (e) whether the equity between the poorer Global South and richer North has been ensured during the implementation of the treaty, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(DR. SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR)

(a) to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) to (e) in respect of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 361 for reply on 06.04.2023 regarding international treaty to protect seas asked by Shri. Vaiko.

(a) to (e): The 5th UN Intergovernmental Conference [UNIGC] on the international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea has concluded the negotiations on 4th March 2023.

The primary intent of the agreement is conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity occurring in the high seas. The new instrument has legal provisions to significantly enhance the conservation and sustainable use of the high seas and other areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The agreement is intended to address gaps in the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, including the lack of a comprehensive regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine genetic resources, as well as the need for more effective mechanisms for marine protected areas and environmental impact assessments.

The draft agreement has not yet been adopted. The formal adoption of the agreement would be considered at the Intergovernmental Conference in June 2023. The agreement will enter into force 120 days after the 60th instrument of ratification is received.

The final text agreed was a compromise reached by all parties, with sufficient caveats to protect the interests of key players. From the perspective of developing countries, the agreement provides for:

i) Protection of marine biodiversity; ii) Access to marine genetic resources; iii) Transparency in the governance of marine diversity-protection, preservation, and its exploitation; iv) Support for capacity building and sharing of marine technology; and v) Research opportunities for experts in exploration of marine biodiversity.
