



[Click here to Visit our YouTube Channel](#)

Updated till February 15, 2025.

For more UPDATED information and to download latest version of this PDF for UPSC Prelims 2025 visit our [Webpage by clicking here.](#)

International Organisations 2025



[Click here to Join our Telegram Channel](#)

Contents

1. Global Governance and Political Cooperation Organizations 6

1.1 United Nations (UN) System

1.1.1 Principal Organs 6

- 1.1.1.1 UN General Assembly 6
- 1.1.1.2 UN Security Council (UNSC) 8
- 1.1.1.3 ECOSOC 11

- 1.1.1.4 International Court of Justice (ICJ) 12
- 1.1.1.5 United Nations Secretariat 14
- 1.1.1.6 United Nations Trusteeship Council 16

1.1.2 Specialized Agencies 18

- 1.1.2.1 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 18
- 1.1.2.2 ICAO 20
- 1.1.2.3 IFAD 23
- 1.1.2.4 International Labour Organization (ILO) 25
- 1.1.2.5 International Maritime Organization (IMO) 27
- 1.1.2.6 International Monetary Fund (IMF) 29
- 1.1.2.7 International Telecommunication Union 31
- 1.1.2.8 UNESCO 34

1.1.2.9 UNIDO	36	1.2.3 BRICS	122
1.1.2.10 Universal Postal Union (UPU)	38	1.2.4 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)	126
1.1.2.11 World Bank Group (WBG)	41	1.2.5 Group of 77 (G77)	128
1.1.2.12 World Health Organization (WHO)	44	1.2.6 OECD	131
1.1.2.13 WIPO	47	1.2.7 Commonwealth of Nations	135
1.1.2.14 World Meteorological Organization	49	1.2.8 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation	138
1.1.2.15 UN Tourism	53	1.2.9 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)	140
1.1.3 UN Programs and Funds	55	1.2.10 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)	143
1.1.3.1 UNDP	55	2. Regional Integration and Cooperation Organizations 146	
1.1.3.2 UNICEF	58	2.1 Intergovernmental Regional Organizations 146	
1.1.3.3 UNCDF	60	2.1.1 African Union (AU)	146
1.1.3.4 World Food Programme	62	2.1.2 ASEAN	148
1.1.3.5 UNEP	64	2.1.3 League of Arab States	150
1.1.3.6 United Nations Population Fund	67	2.1.4 Caribbean Community (CARICOM)	152
1.1.3.7 UN-Habitat	69	2.1.5 European Union (EU)	154
1.1.3.8 UNODC	71	2.1.6 Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	157
1.1.3.9 UNHCR	73	2.1.7 SAARC	158
1.1.3.10 UNRWA	76	2.1.8 BIMSTEC	161
1.1.3.11 UN Women	78	2.1.9 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)	164
1.1.3.12 UNAIDS	81	2.1.10 East African Community (EAC)	167
1.1.3.13 UNCTAD	83	2.1.11 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)	170
1.1.3.14 International Trade Centre (ITC)	86	2.1.12 Arctic Council	173
1.1.3.15 UNOPS	88	2.1.13 Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)	177
1.1.3.16 United Nations Volunteers	90	2.2 Regional Economic Blocs and Trade Agreements 181	
1.1.4 UN Commissions and Related Organizations 92	92	2.2.1 USMCA	181
1.1.4.1 UNECA or ECA	92	2.2.2 Mercosur	185
1.1.4.2 UNESCAP or ESCAP	94	2.2.3 RCEP	188
1.1.4.3 UNECE	96	2.2.4 European Free Trade Association	191
1.1.4.4 ECLAC	99	2.3 Regional Security Alliances and Defense Cooperation Bodies 194	
1.1.4.5 ESCWA	101	2.3.1 NATO	194
1.1.4.6 International Atomic Energy Agency	103	2.3.2 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)	194
1.1.4.7 International Organization for Migration	106	2.3.3 CSTO	194
1.1.4.8 OPCW	108	3. Security and Defense Alliances 196	
1.1.4.9 CTBTO Preparatory Commission	111	3.1 UNSC	196
1.1.4.10 World Trade Organization (WTO)	113		
1.2 Other Political Forums and Governance Institutions			
1.2.1 Group of Seven (G7)	117		
1.2.2 Group of Twenty (G20)	119		

3.2 NATO	196
3.3 CSTO	196
3.4 SCO	196
3.5 OPCW	196
3.6 IAEA	196

10. International Non-Governmental and Multi-Stakeholder Organizations 230

10.1 Transparency International (TI)	230
10.2 GAVI	231
10.3 International Olympic Committee (IOC)	234

4. Economic and Financial Institutions 197

4.1 IMF	197
4.2 WORLD BANK GROUP	197
4.3 Asian Development Bank (ADB)	197
4.4 African Development Bank	199
4.5 AIIB	201
4.6 New Development Bank (NDB- BRICS)	203
4.7 OECD	206
4.8 OPEC	206

5. Trade and Commerce Organizations 209

5.1 WTO	209
5.2 WCO	209
5.3 ISO	211
5.4 RCEP	213
5.5 ICO	213
5.6 ICCO	216

6. Development and Humanitarian Organizations 218

6.1 IFRC	218
6.2 MSF	220

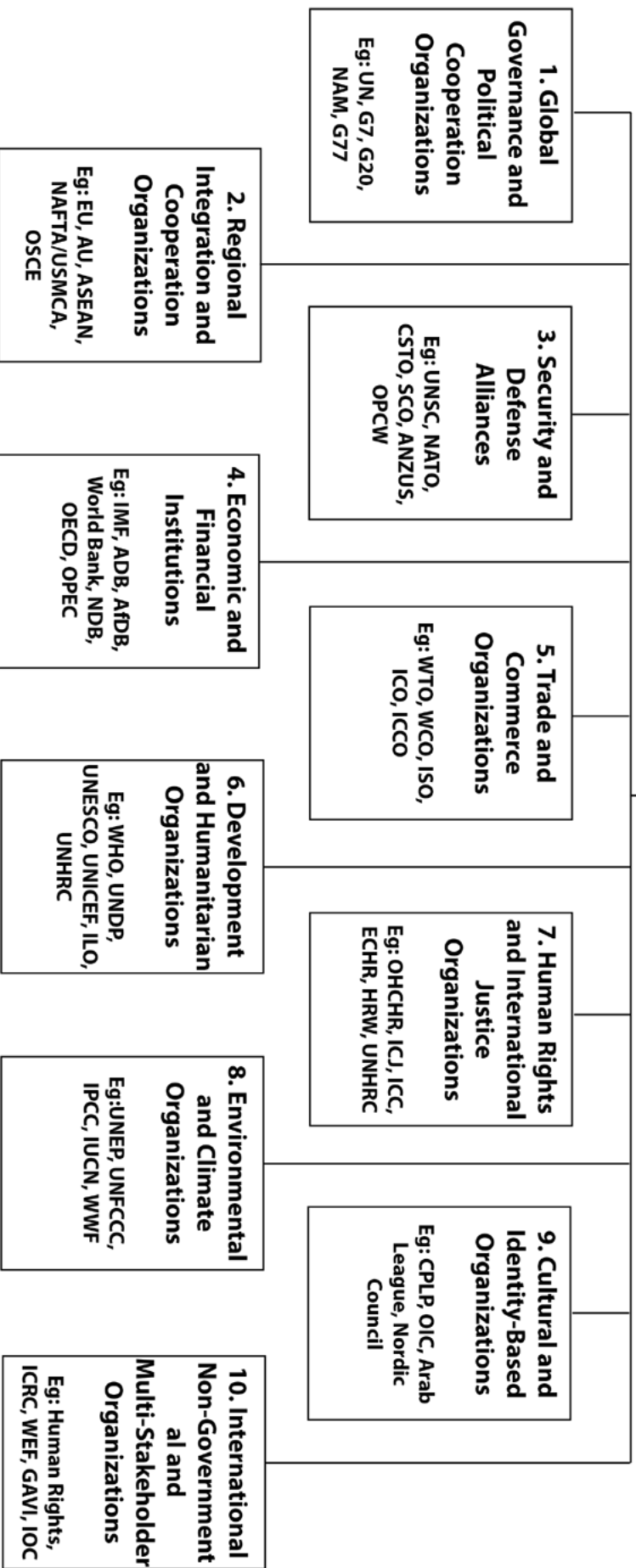
7. Human Rights and International Justice Organizations 222

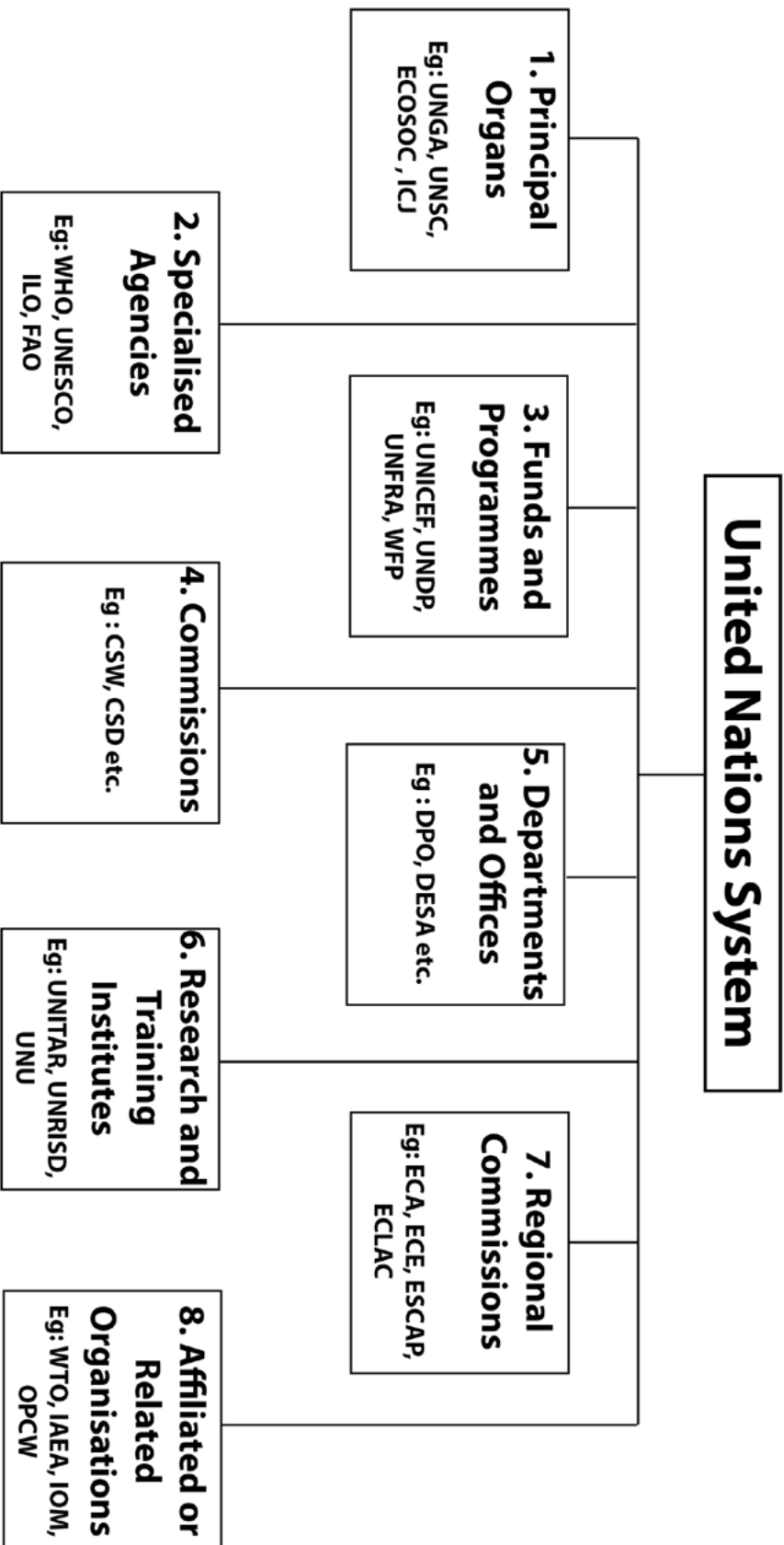
7.1 International Criminal Court	222
7.2 European Court of Human Rights	223
7.3 Amnesty International	225
7.4 Human Rights Watch (HRW)	227

8. Environmental and Climate Organizations 229

9. Cultural and Identity-Based Organizations 229

International Organizations





"Hello, everyone! I'm the General Assembly, the big meeting hall where all UN member countries come together. We all have equal votes here, so it's quite a lively affair!"



"I'm the Security Council. My main job is to maintain peace and security. I can pass binding resolutions, and five permanent members have that famous veto power. Serious business, yaar!"



"I'm ECOSOC. I coordinate economic, social, and development policies among the UN members. You can say I'm the planner and policy coordinator for many projects around the world!"



"I'm the International Court of Justice. People come to me when they have disputes between countries. I listen to both sides and deliver judgments based on international law."



"And I'm the Secretariat. I handle the day-to-day work of the UN. My job is to make sure everything runs smoothly, from paperwork to peacekeeping operations."



"I'm the Trusteeship Council. I was created to oversee trust territories and guide them towards self-government. These days, I'm quite relaxed as most trust territories have gained independence."



as climate change, artificial intelligence governance, and inequality.

- **Governance Updates:** Ongoing discussions on reforms to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the General Assembly's processes.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Middle East Conflict:** In late 2024, the UNGA called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, reflecting global concern over the escalating violence and humanitarian crisis.
- **Global Challenges:** Adoption of the "Pact for the Future" in 2024, outlining commitments to tackle pressing issues like climate change, artificial intelligence, and global inequality.

India-Specific Developments

- **Climate Action:** In February 2025, the UN called on India, recognized as a 'solar superpower,' to submit a more robust climate action plan, emphasizing its pivotal role in global sustainability efforts.
- **UNGA Engagement:** The President of the UNGA concluded a tour of India in February 2025, highlighting India's active participation in multilateral discussions and its contributions to UN initiatives.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** The UNGA is the only UN body with universal representation, allowing each member state an equal voice in deliberations.
- **Similar Organizations:** Unlike the UN Security Council, which has binding decision-making authority and a limited membership with permanent members holding veto power, the UNGA's decisions are generally non-binding but benefit from the legitimacy of universal participation.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- Understanding the structure and functions

of the UNGA is crucial for topics related to international relations.

- Awareness of India's engagements and contributions to the UNGA provides insights into the country's foreign policy and multilateral diplomacy.
- Keeping abreast of recent UNGA resolutions and initiatives helps in answering questions on current global issues and India's stance on them.

1.1.1.2 UN Security Council (UNSC)

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a principal organ of the United Nations, entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Name of the Organization

- United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The UNSC is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, bearing the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It has the authority to make binding decisions that member states are obligated to implement, including the imposition of sanctions and authorization of the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Year of Formation

- 1945

Why they formed it?

In the aftermath of World War II, there was a critical need for an international body capable of preventing future conflicts and ensuring global peace. The UNSC was established to provide a mechanism for prompt and effective action in response to threats to international peace and security.

Type

was unique in its specific mandate to oversee the transition of trust territories to self-governance or independence, a role that concluded successfully in 1994.

- **Similar Organizations:** While other UN bodies, such as the Decolonization Committee, have addressed issues of self-governance, the Trusteeship Council had a distinct legal and supervisory role under the International Trusteeship System.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The role and history of the Trusteeship Council may appear in questions related to UN organs, **decolonization**, and international governance structures.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Formed in 1945 as one of the six principal organs of the UN.
 - » **Mandate Completion:** Suspended operations in 1994 after all trust territories achieved self-governance or independence.
 - » **Current Status:** Inactive but still exists under the UN Charter.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located at the UN Headquarters in New York City.

Understanding the history and functions of the Trusteeship Council provides insight into the UN's role in promoting self-governance and the successful decolonization efforts of the mid-20th century.

1.1.2 Specialized Agencies

The **specialized agencies of the UN** are independent international organizations that work closely with the UN but operate with their own structure and decision-making processes. These agencies were created to handle highly technical and specialized global issues such as **health, finance, trade, labor rights, and transportation**. Unlike other UN bodies, which

focus on political and diplomatic matters, specialized agencies deal with practical solutions to global challenges. They provide expertise, set international standards, and support countries in building policies and institutions. Some of the most influential specialized agencies include the **World Health Organization (WHO)** for global health, the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and **World Bank Group (WBG)** for economic stability and development, and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** for labor rights. Others, like the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, work on food security, while the **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** regulates international air travel. The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** promotes global education and heritage conservation. These agencies often produce **global reports, conduct research, and implement large-scale development programs**. Their influence extends beyond government policies, as they also work with **private organizations, research institutions, and civil society** to address global issues efficiently.

1.1.2.1 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.

Name of the Organization

- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Its goal is to achieve food security for all and ensure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. The organization serves as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. It is also a source of knowledge and information, helping developing countries and countries in transition modernize

work include:

- **Poverty Reduction:** Investing in rural areas to alleviate poverty and hunger.
- **Agricultural Development:** Financing projects that enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability.
- **Empowerment:** Supporting marginalized groups, including smallholder farmers, women, and indigenous peoples, to improve their livelihoods.
- **Climate Resilience:** Assisting rural communities in adapting to climate change and managing natural resources sustainably.

Recent Activities

- **Climate Adaptation Initiatives:** In 2024, IFAD emphasized the need for increased climate finance to support small-scale farmers, highlighting that they receive less than 1% of global climate finance despite being crucial for global food security.
- **Global Hunger Reports:** IFAD has been actively involved in reporting and addressing the “shamefully” high global hunger levels, with projections indicating that nearly 600 million people could be undernourished by 2030.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **COP29 Advocacy:** During the 2024 COP29 conference, IFAD called for substantial increases in climate adaptation finance for small-scale farmers, proposing an additional \$75 billion annually to help them adapt to climate change and ensure global food security.
- **Hunger Projections:** In mid-2024, IFAD reported that Africa is expected to overtake Asia with the highest number of hungry people by 2030, emphasizing the urgent need for transformative actions in agricultural practices and rural development.

India-Specific Developments

- **April 2022:** In April 2022, India reinforced its commitment to combating rural hunger and poverty by providing a US\$20 million loan to IFAD. This financial support aims to enhance food systems, ensuring they offer sustainable and resilient livelihoods for small-scale farmers in some of the world’s poorest regions.
- **June 2024:** In June 2024, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a US\$217.2 million programme in partnership with IFAD. The initiative focuses on transforming agriculture, increasing incomes, and improving the livelihoods of rural communities in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **January 2025:** In January 2025, Donal Brown, IFAD’s Associate Vice-President for the Department of Country Operations, concluded a four-day visit to India. During his stay, he engaged with authorities, visited successful IFAD-supported projects, and reinforced the Fund’s commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth in the country.
- **February 2025:** In February 2025, IFAD published the interim mid-term review report for the Nav Tejaswini project. This initiative aims to empower rural women by providing access to finance, encouraging entrepreneurship, and offering specific training to enhance their livelihoods.
- **Collaborative Projects:** IFAD continues to partner with the Indian government on various projects aimed at improving rural livelihoods, enhancing agricultural productivity, and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Climate Resilience Efforts:** Recent initiatives focus on building climate resilience among smallholder farmers in India, providing them with resources and training to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** Unlike other international

What it Does (Key Objectives)

The ILO's primary objectives and areas of work include:

- **Setting International Labor Standards:** Developing conventions and recommendations to guide national policies and legislation.
- **Promoting Rights at Work:** Advocating for the elimination of forced labor, child labor, discrimination, and upholding freedom of association.
- **Enhancing Social Protection:** Ensuring access to adequate social security systems and safe working conditions.
- **Strengthening Social Dialogue:** Facilitating discussions among governments, employers, and workers to address labor issues collaboratively.

Recent Activities

- **Global Commission on the Future of Work:** In 2019, the ILO convened a commission that produced a report with recommendations to address challenges in the evolving labor market, including technological advancements and demographic shifts.
- **COVID-19 Response:** The ILO has been actively involved in assessing the pandemic's impact on employment and providing guidance for recovery, emphasizing the need for inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **World Employment Report and Social Outlook Report:** The ILO regularly publishes reports analyzing global employment trends, offering insights into issues like unemployment rates, wage disparities, and the informal economy.
- **Campaigns Against Child Labor:** Ongoing initiatives aim to eliminate child labor by 2025, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals.

India-Specific Developments

- **April 2024:** In April 2024, the Indian government formally objected to an ILO report titled "**India Employment Report 2024**," which claimed that 83% of the unemployed population in India were youth. The Ministry of Labour and Employment highlighted inconsistencies in the data sets used and argued that the report misinterpreted youth employment figures, overlooking factors such as international mobility and the gigeconomy. The government emphasized that the data sets compared were not comparable, leading to potential misrepresentation of the employment scenario.
- **September 2024:** In September 2024, the ILO and India's Central Trade Unions convened a consultation titled "Towards an Inclusive Labour Agenda for India." The event, held in New Delhi, brought together over 30 participants from 11 Central Trade Unions and various ILO departments. The discussions focused on addressing evolving challenges in India's workforce, aiming to develop a collaborative plan to promote decent work and inclusive growth.
- **December 2024:** In December 2024, the ILO launched the "**RISE for Impact**" project in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh. This initiative aims to promote decent work in India's cotton supply chain by integrating Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The project collaborates with local farmers to enhance working conditions and ensure sustainable practices within the industry.
- **Collaborative Programs:** The ILO has partnered with the Indian government on projects focusing on improving labor conditions, promoting decent work, and enhancing social protection for workers in various sectors.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:** Efforts have been made to support skill development and vocational training programs in India to boost employment

- **December 2023:** Also in December 2023, India was chosen as a pioneer lead country for the IMO's GreenVoyage2050 Project. This initiative aims to assist developing nations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships, underscoring India's proactive role in promoting environmentally sustainable maritime practices.
- **April 2024:** In April 2024, the Directorate General of Shipping intensified efforts to enhance India's strategic engagement with the IMO. This initiative focuses on ensuring maritime safety and aligning India's maritime policies with international standards, reflecting the country's commitment to global maritime governance.
- **October 2024:** By October 2024, during the 132nd IMO Council session in London, India assumed a leading role in global maritime discussions. This active participation highlights India's dedication to addressing critical maritime issues and contributing to the formulation of international maritime policies.
- **Maritime Safety Collaboration:** India has been actively collaborating with the IMO to enhance maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean region, participating in various IMO-led initiatives and workshops.
- **Environmental Commitments:** India has committed to implementing IMO's environmental regulations, including those related to reducing sulfur emissions from ships and adopting cleaner fuel alternatives.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** The IMO is the only specialized UN agency exclusively dedicated to maritime affairs, providing a global forum for regulatory frameworks that ensure safe, secure, and environmentally sound shipping.
- **Similar Organizations:** While organizations like the International

Labour Organization (ILO) address labor standards, including those for seafarers, the IMO specifically focuses on the broader aspects of maritime operations, safety, and environmental protection.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The IMO has been featured in UPSC examinations, particularly concerning its role in maritime safety, environmental regulations, and India's participation in international maritime affairs.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Formed in 1948; came into force in 1958.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in London, United Kingdom.
 - » **Membership:** Consists of 175 Member States and three Associate Members.
 - » **Primary Functions:** Sets global standards in the maritime domain and global shipping industry.

1.1.2.6 International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a global organization dedicated to promoting international monetary cooperation and financial stability.

Name of the Organization

- International Monetary Fund (IMF)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The IMF is an international financial institution that aims to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty worldwide. It provides policy advice, financial assistance, and technical expertise to its member countries.

implement spending cuts and tax hikes to stabilize debt levels.

initiatives, particularly in areas like fiscal management and monetary policy.

India-Specific Developments

- **December 2023:** On December 18, 2023, the IMF Executive Board concluded its Article IV consultation with India. The report highlighted India's robust economic growth over the past year, with employment surpassing pre-pandemic levels and a resilient financial sector. However, it also noted that headline inflation remained volatile and public debt elevated, emphasizing the need for fiscal buffer rebuilding. The consultation underscored India's significant role in advancing multilateral policy priorities during its G20 presidency.
- **October 2024:** In October 2024, the IMF maintained its growth projection for India at 6.5% for both FY2025-26 and FY2026-27. This decision was based on a sharper-than-expected deceleration in industrial activity, leading to a more cautious outlook. Despite this, India was projected to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies, with the services sector expected to sustain expansion and manufacturing activity anticipated to strengthen, supported by government initiatives to enhance logistics infrastructure and improve the business environment through tax reforms.
- **November 2024:** Effective November 1, 2024, Krishnamurthy Subramanian, former Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India, assumed the role of India's Executive Director at the IMF. His appointment reflects India's commitment to active participation in the IMF's decision-making processes and to contributing to global economic stability.
- **Economic Assessments:** The IMF has consistently engaged with India, providing economic assessments and policy recommendations to support sustainable growth and financial stability.
- **Technical Assistance:** Collaborated with Indian authorities on capacity development

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** The IMF focuses on macroeconomic and financial stability, providing short- to medium-term financial assistance and policy advice.
- **Similar Organizations:** The World Bank, while also a Bretton Woods institution, concentrates on long-term economic development and poverty reduction through project-based funding.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The IMF has been featured in UPSC examinations, with questions focusing on its functions, roles during economic crises, and differences from the World Bank.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Founded in 1944 during the Bretton Woods Conference.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in Washington, D.C., USA.
 - » **Membership:** Comprises 191 member countries.
 - » **Primary Functions:** Surveillance, financial assistance, and capacity development.
 - » **Recent Initiatives:** COVID-19 financial support, focus on debt sustainability, and climate change-related funding mechanisms.

Understanding the IMF's role is crucial for exams, as it plays a significant part in shaping global economic policies and providing financial stability, directly impacting member countries like India.

1.1.2.7 International Telecommunication Union

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for issues related to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Name of the Organization

- **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

What it is (Nature and Function)

The ITU is the UN's specialized agency for ICTs, coordinating global telecommunications operations and services. Its primary functions include allocating global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, developing technical standards to ensure network interconnectivity, and striving to improve access to ICTs worldwide.

Year of Formation

- 1865

Why they formed it?

Established as the International Telegraph Union in 1865, the ITU was created to standardize and regulate international telegraphy. As communication technologies evolved, its mandate expanded to encompass telephony, radio, and eventually modern ICTs, ensuring seamless global communication and cooperation.

Type

- **Intergovernmental Organization**

Status

- **Active**

Headquarters

- **Geneva, Switzerland**

Members

- **Number of Members:** 194 Member States and over 1,000 sector members, including companies, universities, and international and regional organizations.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Membership is open to all sovereign states. Sector

membership is available to organizations and entities with an interest in ICTs.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Member States join voluntarily, while sector members are admitted based on their involvement and interest in ICT development and standardization.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** The ITU's broad membership includes almost all UN member states, facilitating comprehensive international cooperation in telecommunications.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India has been an active member since 1869 (one of the oldest affiliations, dating back to the International Telegraph Union era).

What it Does (Key Objectives)

The ITU's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Radiocommunication (ITU-R):** Managing the international radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbit resources.
- **Standardization (ITU-T):** Developing global standards for telecommunications and ICTs to ensure network interoperability.
- **Development (ITU-D):** Promoting equitable access to ICTs and bridging the digital divide through capacity-building initiatives.

Recent Activities

- **Strategic Plan Adoption:** In 2022, the ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference adopted the strategic and budget plans for 2024-2027, outlining priorities in radiocommunication, standardization, and development to drive inclusive global digital transformation.
- **Submarine Cable Protection:** In December 2024, the ITU established the International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience to enhance

Law University to conduct a workshop aimed at strengthening South Asia's judiciary through discussions on artificial intelligence and its implications for the rule of law.

- **43rd World Heritage Site:** In 2023, India celebrated the inscription of its 43rd UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognizing the country's rich cultural and natural heritage.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** UNESCO distinguishes itself by its multidisciplinary approach, integrating education, science, culture, and communication to promote peace and sustainable development.
- **Similar Organizations:** While other UN agencies focus on specific sectors (e.g., WHO on health, FAO on food and agriculture), UNESCO's broad mandate allows it to address complex, interconnected global challenges through a holistic lens.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** Examinations have featured questions on UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, its role in promoting education and culture, and India's involvement in UNESCO initiatives.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Founded in 1945 to promote international collaboration in education, science, and culture.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in Paris, France.
 - » **Membership:** Comprises 193 Member States and 11 Associate Members.
 - » **Primary Functions:** Focuses on education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication.
 - » **Recent Initiatives:** Emphasis on integrating culture and arts in education, safeguarding cultural heritage, and promoting ethical AI practices.

Understanding UNESCO's multifaceted role is crucial for exams, as it plays a significant part in shaping global policies related to education, culture, and sustainable development, directly impacting nations like India.

1.1.2.9 UNIDO

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID).

Name of the Organization

- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

UNIDO is a specialized agency of the United Nations with a unique mandate to promote, dynamize, and accelerate industrial development. Its mission is to promote and accelerate the industrialization of developing countries.

Year of Formation

- 1966

Why they formed it?

Established on 17 November 1966, UNIDO was created to promote and accelerate the industrialization of developing countries. Its mission is to promote and accelerate the industrialization of developing countries.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Vienna, Austria

Members

- **Number of Members:** As of 2025, UNIDO comprises 170 Member States.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Membership is open to any sovereign state that is a member of the United Nations or its specialized agencies.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Countries voluntarily join UNIDO to collaborate on industrial development initiatives.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** UNIDO's membership includes a diverse range of countries from different economic backgrounds, fostering comprehensive international cooperation in industrial development.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India has been a member since UNIDO's creation (founding member in 1966) and sits on its policymaking organs.

What it Does (Key Objectives)

UNIDO's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Creating Shared Prosperity:** Focusing on agro-industries, women's participation, and post-crisis human security.
- **Advancing Economic Competitiveness:** Supporting investment promotion, SME development, and trade capacity building.
- **Safeguarding the Environment:** Assisting countries in environmental management and sustainable energy initiatives.
- **Strengthening Knowledge and Institutions:** Enhancing institutional capacities and knowledge for sustainable industrial development.

Recent Activities

- **AIM Global Forum:** In December 2024, UNIDO hosted the inaugural AIM Global Forum in Vienna, focusing on artificial intelligence's role in industry and

manufacturing.

- **COP29 Participation:** In November 2024, UNIDO participated in COP29 in Baku, organizing sessions on green digital transformation and sustainable industrial practices.
- **Sustainable Industrial Park Platform Launch:** In June 2022, UNIDO launched the beta version of its Sustainable Industrial Park Platform, a global resource center for industrial parks.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Chemical Leasing Award Ceremony:** Scheduled for March 13, 2025, UNIDO will co-host the 6th Chemical Leasing Award Ceremony in Vienna and online, recognizing innovative practices in chemical leasing.
- **\$28 Million Project Funding:** UNIDO secured \$28 million in project funding to deliver climate solutions and protect the ozone layer, demonstrating its commitment to environmental sustainability.

India-Specific Developments

- **April 2023:** In April 2023, the Ministry of Textiles, in partnership with UNIDO, organized a workshop focusing on sustainability, innovation, and inclusion within the PM MITRA textile and apparel parks. The event aimed to share best practices to enhance the competitiveness and environmental performance of India's textile sector.
- **June 2023:** On June 27, 2023, UNIDO commemorated World Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day by sharing insights on strategies to boost MSME performance. The discussions emphasized the critical role of MSMEs in achieving inclusive and sustainable industrial development in India.
- **September 2024:** In September 2024, during the Energy Efficiency Summit organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), UNIDO showcased

18 innovative climate-tech solutions developed under its Facility for Low Carbon Technology Deployment (FLCTD) project. These solutions, validated through rigorous field trials, aim to support India's climate and net-zero development goals.

- **August 2024:** In August 2024, UNIDO, in collaboration with partners, launched a USD 7 million regional project between India and the Philippines to promote eco-friendly agriculture. The initiative seeks to reduce the use of harmful persistent organic pollutants and highly hazardous pesticides by promoting bio-pesticides and organic farming practices.
- **UNIDO-India Cooperation Publication:** UNIDO released a publication detailing its cooperation with India, highlighting joint efforts in industrial development and technology transfer.
- **Agro-Value Chain Development:** UNIDO has been actively promoting sustainable agribusiness and agro-value chain development in India, aiming to create inclusive business opportunities for the rural poor.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** UNIDO is the only UN specialized agency with an exclusive mandate to promote industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization, and environmental sustainability.
- **Similar Organizations:** While organizations like the World Bank and UNDP also engage in development activities, UNIDO specifically focuses on industrial development, offering specialized expertise in this sector.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** Questions have been asked regarding UNIDO's role in sustainable industrial development and its initiatives in developing countries.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Establishment:** Founded in 1966 to promote industrialization in developing countries.
- » **Headquarters:** Located in Vienna, Austria.
- » **Membership:** Consists of 170 Member States.
- » **Primary Functions:** Focuses on creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness, safeguarding the environment, and strengthening knowledge and institutions.
- » **Recent Initiatives:** Emphasis on AI in industry, sustainable industrial parks, and chemical leasing practices.

Understanding UNIDO's role is crucial for exams, as it plays a significant part in shaping global industrial policies, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering international cooperation in industrial development.

1.1.2.10 Universal Postal Union (UPU)

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that coordinates international postal policies and services among member nations, ensuring a seamless global postal network.

Name of the Organization

- Universal Postal Union (UPU)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The UPU serves as the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players, facilitating the exchange of international mail and the development of worldwide postal services. It establishes rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations to stimulate growth in mail, parcel, and financial services volumes, while improving quality of service for customers.

Year of Formation

- 1874

growth, industry innovation, and infrastructure development.

India-Specific Developments

- **May 2023:** In May 2023, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the establishment of a UPU Regional Office in New Delhi. This strategic move aims to enhance India's role in multilateral postal cooperation, focusing on capacity building, technological advancement, and improving postal services in the Asia-Pacific region. India committed to providing necessary infrastructure and personnel for the office.
- **July 2023:** On July 19, 2023, Minister of State for Communications, Shri Devusinh Chauhan, and UPU Director General, Mr. Masahiko Metoki, inaugurated the UPU Regional Office in New Delhi. This office serves as a hub for technical assistance and development cooperation in South Asia, facilitating the exchange of expertise and promoting the modernization of postal services. During the inauguration, India announced a contribution of USD 200,000 over four years to support UPU's development and technical assistance activities in the region.
- **December 2023:** In December 2023, the Indian Parliament enacted the Post Office Act, 2023, replacing the Indian Post Office Act of 1898. This legislation aims to modernize India's postal services, expanding their scope to include financial services and e-commerce logistics. The Act also grants the central government greater oversight of postal operations and includes provisions for intercepting postal articles under specific circumstances, sparking discussions about privacy and autonomy.
- **E-Commerce Collaboration:** India Post has been collaborating with the UPU to enhance its e-commerce capabilities, facilitating cross-border trade and improving delivery services for small and medium enterprises.
- **Capacity Building:** The UPU has

conducted workshops and training programs for Indian postal employees, focusing on digital skills and modern postal management practices to improve service quality and efficiency.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** As one of the oldest international organizations, the UPU has a unique mandate to coordinate global postal services, ensuring universal access and standardized operations across member countries.
- **Similar Organizations:** While other organizations like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) focus on telecommunications, the UPU specifically addresses postal services, playing a crucial role in facilitating global communication and commerce through mail.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** Examinations have included questions on the functions of the UPU, its role as a UN specialized agency, and its impact on international postal services.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Founded in 1874 through the Treaty of Bern.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in Bern, Switzerland.
 - » **Membership:** Comprises 192 member countries.
 - » **Primary Functions:** Coordinates international mail exchange, develops postal services, provides technical assistance, and formulates postal policies.
 - » **Recent Initiatives:** Focus on digital transformation, e-commerce integration, and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals.

Understanding the UPU's role is essential for exams, as it plays a pivotal part in facilitating

global communication, trade, and cooperation through its coordination of international postal services.

- 1818 H Street Northwest, Washington, D.C., United States.

Members

- **Number of Members:** 189 member countries.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Membership is open to any country that subscribes to the WBG's mission and becomes a member of its institutions.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Countries voluntarily join the WBG to collaborate on development projects and gain access to financial and technical resources.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** The WBG includes a diverse range of countries, from developed to developing nations, fostering global cooperation in development efforts.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India joined the World Bank (IBRD) in December 1945. (*India is a founding member of the IBRD and IDA, and also a member of IFC, MIGA, etc.*)

What it Does (Key Objectives)

The WBG's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Reducing Extreme Poverty:** Aiming to decrease the percentage of people living on less than \$1.90 a day.
- **Promoting Shared Prosperity:** Focusing on increasing income growth for the bottom 40% of the population in every country.
- **Financing Development Projects:** Providing loans and grants for projects in sectors like education, health, public administration, infrastructure, financial and private sector development, agriculture, and environmental and natural resource management.

1.1.2.11 World Bank Group (WBG)

The World Bank Group (WBG) is a vital international organization committed to reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.

Name of the Organization

- World Bank Group (WBG)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The WBG is a family of five international organizations that provide leveraged loans, grants, and expertise to developing countries. Its primary mission is to reduce poverty and support development by providing financial and technical assistance for various projects, including infrastructure, education, health, and environmental initiatives.

Year of Formation

- Established on July 4, 1944.

Why they formed it?

The WBG was conceived during the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944. The primary aim was to aid in the reconstruction of countries devastated by World War II and to promote economic development and stability by providing financial assistance and fostering international cooperation.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

Standards: Facilitating the negotiation and adoption of international treaties and agreements to harmonize IP laws globally.

- **Providing Global IP Services:** Offering systems for the international registration of patents (Patent Cooperation Treaty), trademarks (Madrid System), and industrial designs (Hague System).
- **Facilitating Dispute Resolution:** Through the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center, providing alternative dispute resolution options for IP conflicts.
- **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:** Assisting developing countries in building their IP infrastructure and enhancing their ability to utilize IP for economic development.
- **Public Outreach and Education:** Raising awareness about the importance of IP and providing educational resources through initiatives like the WIPO Academy.

Recent Activities

- **Adoption of the Riyadh Design Law Treaty (2024):** In November 2024, WIPO member states approved a new treaty aimed at simplifying and harmonizing the process for designers to protect their industrial designs internationally.
- **Milestone in Patent Publications (2024):** By December 2024, WIPO's international patent system published its 5 millionth patent application, marking a significant achievement in facilitating global innovation.
- **World Intellectual Property Indicators Report (2023):** The report highlighted a record high in global patent filings, with India-based applicants experiencing a 15.7% increase, marking their fifth consecutive year of double-digit growth.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Focus on Agricultural Innovation Hubs (2024):** The World Intellectual Property Report examined how regions

like São Paulo (Brazil), Nairobi (Kenya), and Colorado (USA) have become leading producers in specific agricultural technologies, emphasizing the role of government support in building local innovative capabilities.

- **Support for Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan (2024):** WIPO launched a project in partnership with Pakistan's Intellectual Property Organization to support over 40 women entrepreneurs in the embroidery and crafts sector, helping them utilize IP tools to advance their businesses.

India-Specific Developments

- **Growth in Patent Filings:** India has seen a significant rise in patent applications, with a 15.7% increase reported in 2023, marking the fifth consecutive year of double-digit growth.
- **National IPR Policy Implementation:** Since announcing its first National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) policy in 2016, India has continued to strengthen its IP framework. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) oversees various IP portfolios, aiming to foster innovation and creativity.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** As a specialized UN agency, WIPO uniquely focuses on the global promotion and protection of intellectual property rights, offering a comprehensive range of services and support to its member states.
- **Similar Organizations:**
- **Unique Aspects:**
 - » WIPO is the only UN agency solely dedicated to intellectual property (IP), ensuring international cooperation and legal protection for IP rights.
 - » It administers key global IP systems, such as the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), Madrid System (trademarks), and Hague System (industrial designs), which help

businesses and innovators secure IP protection worldwide.

» Unlike other organizations, WIPO focuses on both IP policy development and practical services, such as dispute resolution and registration facilitation.

● **Similar Organizations:**

» World Trade Organization (WTO) – Deals with Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which sets minimum global IP standards, while WIPO manages global IP registration and cooperation.

» National & Regional Patent Offices (e.g., USPTO, EPO, JPO) – These offices grant patents and trademarks within their jurisdictions, while WIPO facilitates international filings but does not grant patents itself.

» UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – Discusses IP's role in economic development, while WIPO provides direct support to governments and businesses for IP protection and enforcement.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

● **Past UPSC Questions:**

» WIPO has been a recurring topic in Prelims and Mains, especially under International Relations, Economy, and Science & Technology.

» UPSC has asked about India's IPR policy, WIPO-administered treaties, and the role of WIPO in global innovation.

» **Example: "What are the key differences between WIPO and WTO in intellectual property governance?"**

● **Key Facts to Remember:**

» **Establishment:** 1967, became a UN specialized agency in 1974.

» **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

» **Membership:** 193 member states.

» **Main Treaties Administered by WIPO:**

□ **Paris Convention (1883)** – First international treaty for industrial property rights.

□ **Berne Convention (1886)** – Governs copyright protection.

□ **Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) (1970)** – Simplifies international patent applications.

□ **Madrid Agreement & Madrid Protocol** – Streamlines global trademark registration.

□ **Hague Agreement** – Covers international industrial design protection.

» **India's IP System:**

□ India follows TRIPS-compliant IP laws under WIPO & WTO frameworks.

□ India's National IPR Policy (2016) aims to increase patent filings and streamline IP enforcement.

□ Geographical Indications (GI) Registry in India aligns with WIPO's Lisbon Agreement.

» **Recent Initiatives:**

□ WIPO's 2023 Global Innovation Index ranked India 40th, marking steady progress in innovation.

□ WIPO GREEN initiative supports climate-friendly technologies in developing countries, including India.

Conclusion:

WIPO plays a crucial role in the protection and promotion of intellectual property worldwide. It provides global frameworks for patents, trademarks, copyrights, and industrial designs, while also supporting innovation and economic development. For UPSC exams, understanding WIPO's functions, treaties, and India's involvement is essential for International Relations, Economy, and Science & Tech topics.

1.1.2.14 World Meteorological Organization

and resource support.

- **Research and Development:** Encouraging research in meteorology, climatology, hydrology, and related fields to advance scientific understanding and improve services.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Enhancing the capabilities of nations to provide accurate and timely weather forecasts and warnings to protect life and property.

Recent Activities

- **Unified Data Policy (2021):** The World Meteorological Congress approved a new Unified Data Policy to enhance the acquisition and international exchange of weather, climate, and water data.
- **Record Atmospheric Pollutant Levels (2023):** The WMO reported unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases, with carbon dioxide concentrations reaching 420 parts per million, primarily due to persistent fossil fuel use.
- **Hottest Year on Record (2024):** Projections indicated that 2024 would surpass previous temperature records, exceeding the pre-industrial average by 1.5°C, prompting a **"Red Alert"** from the WMO.
- **El Niño Declaration (2023):** The WMO declared the onset of an El Niño event on July 4, 2023, anticipating significant meteorological impacts globally.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Climate Change Awareness Collaboration (2024):** The WMO partnered with the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS) to raise awareness about climate change impacts on winter sports and tourism.
- **Leadership Appointment (2024):** Meteorologist Celeste Saulo became the first woman to lead the WMO, emphasizing the urgent need for global cooperation to address climate change.

- **Global River Drying Report (2023):** The WMO reported that global rivers dried up at the fastest rate in 30 years, affecting water supplies and highlighting the impacts of climate change.

India-Specific Developments

- **January 2025:** In January 2025, the WMO joined the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Established in 1875, the IMD has been pivotal in advancing meteorological services in India. During the event, the IMD unveiled its "Vision 2047" document, aiming to mainstream weather and climate information to transform India into a weather-ready and climate-smart nation. This vision emphasizes integrating meteorological data into national objectives to enhance socio-economic conditions.
- **April 2024:** In April 2024, the WMO released a report indicating that 2023 was the warmest year on record, with the global average near-surface temperature at 1.45°C above the pre-industrial baseline. This report underscored the escalating impacts of climate change, emphasizing the need for countries, including India, to intensify efforts in climate mitigation and adaptation.
- **October 2024:** In October 2024, the WMO published a report highlighting that 2023 was the driest year for global rivers in over three decades. This finding signaled critical changes in water availability amid growing demand. The report's insights are particularly relevant for India, where water resource management is crucial for agriculture and overall sustainability.
- **El Niño Impact on Agriculture (2023):** In response to the 2023–2024 El Niño event, the Indian government banned the export of non-basmati rice to manage domestic supply and prices, as El Niño conditions can affect monsoon patterns critical for agriculture.
- **Enhanced Early Warning Systems:** India

tourism.

What it Does (Key Objectives)

UN Tourism's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Market Knowledge:** Providing data and insights on global tourism trends.
- **Sustainable Tourism Policies:** Promoting policies that encourage responsible and sustainable tourism.
- **Education and Training:** Fostering tourism education and capacity building.
- **Technical Assistance:** Offering support to countries to develop and manage tourism responsibly.

Recent Activities

- **International Tourism Recovery:** In 2024, global tourism reached approximately 1.4 billion international arrivals, nearly matching pre-pandemic levels. This recovery was driven by strong demand and the reopening of destinations, especially in Asia and the Pacific.
- **G20 Collaboration:** In June 2023, UN Tourism and India's G20 Presidency launched the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, aiming to make tourism a central pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Rebranding:** In January 2024, the organization rebranded from UNWTO to UN Tourism to mark a new era for the global tourism sector.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Best Tourism Villages 2024:** UN Tourism announced 55 rural communities recognized for their commitment to sustainable tourism, bringing the total to 254 villages in the Best Tourism Villages Network.
- **World Tourism Day 2023:** Celebrated under the theme "Tourism and Green

Investment," highlighting the need for more targeted investments in sustainable tourism.

India-Specific Developments

- **June 2023:** In June 2023, during the G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting in Goa, the Government of India and UNWTO signed an MoU to enhance cooperation and identify areas of mutual interest. This agreement aims to strengthen India's tourism sector through collaborative efforts and knowledge sharing.
- **June 2023:** As the knowledge partner of India's G20 Presidency, UNWTO developed the "Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Presented in June 2023, the roadmap focuses on five priority areas: Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skills, Tourism MSMEs, and Destination Management. It provides a strategic framework to harness tourism's potential in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **September 2023:** In September 2023, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in collaboration with UNWTO, launched the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard. This tool showcases best practices, case studies, and insights from G20 countries, serving as a reference for policymakers and stakeholders to align tourism initiatives with the SDGs.
- **September 2023:** During the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi in September 2023, the pivotal role of tourism in sustainable development was acknowledged. The Leaders' Declaration emphasized tourism's contribution to economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental conservation, reflecting the collaborative efforts between India and UNWTO to position tourism as a key driver for achieving the SDGs.
- **September 2023:** On September 27, 2023, coinciding with World Tourism Day, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in partnership with UNWTO and the United

and poverty reduction.

● **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Formation:** Established in 1965 through the merger of EPTA and the Special Fund.
- » **Headquarters:** Located in New York City, USA.
- » **Mission:** Focuses on eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and building resilience to achieve sustainable development.

1.1.3.2 UNICEF

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is a prominent international organization dedicated to advocating for and protecting children’s rights worldwide.

Name of the Organization

- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

What it is (Nature and Function)

UNICEF is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children globally. Its mission encompasses safeguarding children’s rights, ensuring their basic needs are met, and expanding their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories, addressing issues such as child protection, education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and emergency relief.

Year of Formation

- Established on December 11, 1946.

Why they formed it?

In the aftermath of World War II, millions of children faced dire conditions, including malnutrition, disease, and lack of shelter. Recognizing the urgent need for coordinated relief efforts, the United Nations General Assembly established UNICEF to provide immediate aid to children and mothers in countries devastated

by the war. Initially named the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, it was created to address the emergency needs of children. In 1953, as its mission expanded beyond emergency relief to long-term needs of children and mothers in developing countries, it became a permanent part of the United Nations system, adopting the name United Nations Children’s Fund while retaining the original acronym.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- New York City, United States

Members

- **Number of Members:** UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories.
- **Criteria for Membership:** As a UN agency, UNICEF’s programs and initiatives are implemented in collaboration with all member states of the United Nations.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** UNICEF works in partnership with governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to deliver programs and services to children and mothers
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** UNICEF maintains a universal presence, ensuring that no child is excluded from its mandate, regardless of the country’s political or economic status.

India’s Membership

- **Yes** – India engages fully with UNICEF. It has served on UNICEF’s 36-member Executive Board (India occupies a rotating Board seat periodically).

What it Does (Key Objectives)

is to unlock public and private resources to reduce poverty and support local economic development.

Year of Formation

- Established in 1966.

Why they formed it?

In the 1960s, recognizing the need for targeted financial assistance to spur economic development in the world's poorest nations, the United Nations General Assembly established UNCDF. The goal was to supplement existing capital assistance sources through grants and loans, focusing primarily on the least developed countries.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- New York City, United States

Members

- **Number of Members:** Operates in 37 least developed countries.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Focuses on countries classified by the United Nations as least developed, providing them with financial tools and support to achieve sustainable development.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Assists countries designated as least developed by the United Nations, aiming to address unique economic challenges and promote sustainable growth.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** Exclusively targets the 46 least developed countries, ensuring that assistance is directed where it's most needed.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India contributes to and benefits from UNCDF programs (as a developing economy). (*UNCDF is managed by the UNDP Board; India's role is through that governing structure.*)

What it Does (Key Objectives)

UNCDF's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Financial Inclusion:** Expanding access to financial services for individuals, households, and small businesses to promote economic participation and resilience.
- **Local Development Finance:** Supporting local infrastructure projects and municipal finance initiatives to drive economic growth at the community level.
- **Investment Finance:** Providing catalytic financial structuring, de-risking, and capital deployment to drive Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) impact, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and climate-resilient infrastructure projects.

Recent Activities

- **Strategic Framework 2018-2021:** Aligned with the 2030 Agenda, focusing on poverty eradication (SDG 1) and means of implementation (SDG 17).
- **COVID-19 Response:** Deployed digital innovations, channeled finance to subnational authorities, and injected investment funds into SMEs to stabilize local economies and accelerate recovery.
- **Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL):** Supported 284 local governments in 14 countries, mobilizing \$80 million in grants and technical assistance for climate adaptation projects.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Inaugural Investment in Child Nutrition:** Partnered with other UN agencies to

Its creation was driven by the recognition of the need for a coordinated international response to provide food assistance in emergencies and to support economic and social development through food aid.

Type

- **Intergovernmental Organization**

Status

- **Active**

Headquarters

- **Rome, Italy**

Members

- **Number of Members:** WFP operates in over 120 countries and territories.
- **Criteria for Membership:** As a UN agency, WFP's programs and initiatives are implemented in collaboration with all member states of the United Nations.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** WFP works in partnership with governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to deliver food assistance and implement programs aimed at improving food security and nutrition.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:** WFP maintains a universal presence, ensuring that assistance reaches those in need, regardless of the country's political or economic status.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India is a major contributor and beneficiary. It often holds a seat on WFP's Executive Board (India is listed among the 36 Board States for 2023–2025).

What it Does (Key Objectives)

WFP's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Emergency Response:** Providing life-saving food assistance during emergencies such as conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics.
- **Nutrition:** Implementing programs to combat malnutrition, especially among children and pregnant or nursing women.
- **School Meals:** Offering school meal programs to improve children's nutrition and encourage education.
- **Food Security Analysis:** Conducting assessments to inform policy and program decisions related to hunger and food security.
- **Supply Chain and Logistics:** Managing the delivery of food assistance and supporting other humanitarian organizations with logistics expertise.

Recent Activities

- **Nobel Peace Prize 2020:** WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 for its efforts to combat hunger, its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, and for acting as a driving force in preventing the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.
- **COVID-19 Response:** During the pandemic, WFP scaled up its operations to address the increased food insecurity caused by economic downturns and supply chain disruptions.
- **Climate Change Initiatives:** Launched projects aimed at strengthening climate change adaptation, such as the 'Adaptation for Resilience' (ADAPT4R) project in India and Sri Lanka to support farming communities facing climate-induced challenges.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **School Feeding Commitments:** In 2023, 65 countries made new or strengthened commitments to school-based programs, enhancing children's nutrition and access to education.

2022, UNEP marked its 50th anniversary, reflecting on five decades of environmental milestones and setting the agenda for future action.

- **Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6):** Published in 2019, the sixth edition of the GEO report provided a comprehensive assessment of the global environmental situation, offering insights and policy recommendations.
- **Faith for Earth Initiative:** Launched in 2017, this initiative collaborates with faith-based organizations to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Circular Economy Promotion:** UNEP co-founded the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE), a public-private partnership aimed at transitioning to a global circular economy.
- **Regional Seas Programme:** Established in 1974, this program works to protect oceans and seas at the regional level, involving over 143 countries across 18 regional programs.

India-Specific Developments

- **December 2023:** In December 2023, UNEP, in partnership with the Government of India's Ministry of Textiles, launched the 'InTex India' project. This four-year initiative, funded by Denmark, aims to transition India's textile sector towards circular practices. Focusing on textile clusters in Surat and Karur, the project supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in calculating their Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and implementing circular business models. Additionally, it seeks to build capacity and support the development of circular textile policies at the national level.
- **October 2024:** In October 2024, UNEP continued its Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) projects in

the Indian states of Odisha, Bihar, and Gujarat. These projects focus on restoring and protecting wetlands, rejuvenating village ponds, and conserving water bodies. By empowering community-based organizations, the initiative aims to integrate Eco-DRR action plans into local government development programs, enhancing resilience against climate and disaster risks.

- **November 2024:** Throughout 2024, India continued its active engagement with the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, established in 2017. This \$150 million fund supports demand-driven and transformational sustainable development projects across developing countries, with a focus on least developed countries and small island developing states. India's leadership in this initiative underscores its commitment to promoting shared prosperity and sustainable development globally.
- **Collaborative Environmental Projects:** UNEP has partnered with India on various initiatives, including promoting renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and pollution control measures.
- **Capacity Building:** Efforts have been made to enhance India's capacity in environmental governance and implementation of green technologies.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** UNEP serves as the authoritative advocate for the global environment within the UN system, coordinating international efforts and providing a platform for collective action.
- **Similar Organizations:** While organizations like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Greenpeace focus on environmental conservation through advocacy and direct action, UNEP operates at the intergovernmental level, facilitating policy development and implementation among nations.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India cooperates with UNODC. (While UNODC has no formal members, India is party to UN drug conventions and is a member of UNODC-governed bodies like the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.)

What it Does (Key Objectives)

UNODC's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Countering Illicit Drug Use and Trafficking:** Implementing programs to reduce drug demand and supply, and assisting in the development of drug control policies.
- **Combating Transnational Organized Crime:** Addressing issues such as human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and illicit trade.
- **Preventing Terrorism:** Providing legal and technical assistance to prevent and combat terrorism.
- **Fighting Corruption:** Supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and promoting integrity in public and private sectors.
- **Strengthening Criminal Justice Systems:** Enhancing the rule of law through judicial reforms, prison management, and crime prevention strategies.
- **Promoting Health and Alternative Development:** Addressing drug dependence treatment, HIV/AIDS prevention, and sustainable livelihoods to reduce reliance on illicit crop cultivation.

Recent Activities

- **World Drug Report 2024:** UNODC released this report highlighting a concerning rise in global drug use and the emergence of potent new synthetic opioids, exacerbating health, social, and environmental impacts.
- **Capacity Building Initiatives:** Conducted

training programs for law enforcement and judicial officials worldwide to enhance responses to drug trafficking, organized crime, and corruption. Strategic Partnerships: Collaborated with international and regional organizations to strengthen collective security measures and promote sustainable development.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **RiseUp4Peace Initiative:** Launched to empower young people and educators in promoting peace, justice, and inclusivity through education, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 16.
- **Family Empowerment Programs:** Implemented initiatives focusing on strengthening family units to protect young people from drugs and crime, recognizing the pivotal role of families in youth development.

India-Specific Developments

- **June 2024:** On June 27, 2024, UNODC presented key findings from its World Drug Report 2024 in New Delhi to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The report highlighted a concerning rise in global drug use and the emergence of potent new synthetic opioids. Discussions emphasized the need for evidence-based prevention programs and comprehensive strategies to address drug-related challenges.
- **Law Enforcement Training:** UNODC, in collaboration with India's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, conducted capacity-building programs for law enforcement officials to enhance their ability to detect, investigate, and dismantle drug trafficking networks.
- **Policy Development Workshops:** Organized sessions with Indian policymakers to develop effective responses to drug use disorders, emphasizing evidence-based strategies and regional cooperation.

trade organizations, their mandates, and their impact on developing countries. ITC's work is directly linked to India's MSME sector, which is frequently covered in government initiatives like Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India, and Startup India.

- » **Mains (Essay Paper):** Topics like “**The Role of MSMEs in Global Trade**”, “**Empowering Developing Nations through Trade**”, and “**Women-Led Businesses in International Markets**” align with ITC's mission.

- **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Formation:** Established in 1964, as a joint initiative of GATT (now WTO) and UNCTAD.
- » **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- » **Mission:** To enhance the trade capacities of developing countries, particularly MSMEs, to integrate into the global economy.
- » **Key Reports:**
 - **SME Competitiveness Outlook** – Focuses on how MSMEs can improve trade and access international markets.
 - **Trade Market Intelligence Tools** – ITC provides global trade data tools like Trade Map, Market Access Map, and Investment Map to help businesses and policymakers.
- » **India's Engagement:**
 - ITC has actively supported India's MSMEs in increasing exports and market access.
 - India has used ITC's **Trade Market Intelligence** platforms to analyze global trade opportunities and enhance export diversification.

Final Takeaway for UPSC Exams

- **Why is ITC Important for UPSC?**
 - » **GS-2 (International Trade & Relations):** Covers India's engagement in global trade, WTO policies, and trade facilitation

for MSMEs.

- » **GS-3 (Economic Development):** Includes trade and investment promotion, digital economy, and MSME-led export growth.
- » **Essay Paper:** Possible topics include “**Trade as a Tool for Development**” or “**The Role of MSMEs in Global Trade**”.
- » **Ethics Paper (GS-4):** ITC's work on sustainable trade, ethical business practices, and digital trade facilitation can provide case study examples.

1.1.3.15 UNOPS

Name of the Organization

- **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)**

What it is (Nature and Function)

UNOPS is a self-financing entity within the United Nations system that specializes in implementing humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding projects. It offers services in infrastructure, procurement, project management, financial management, and human resources, aiming to help people build better lives and assist countries in achieving peace and sustainable development.

Year of Formation

- **UNOPS was established in December 1973 as part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and became an independent, self-financing organization in January 1995.**

Why they formed it?

Initially formed to provide operational assistance for UNDP projects, UNOPS evolved to meet the growing demand for a dedicated entity capable of managing complex development projects. Its independence in 1995 allowed it to offer specialized services across the UN system and to various partners, enhancing efficiency and

- Address social inequalities

ECLAC was formed to address these challenges by providing a platform for economic collaboration and policy formulation.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Santiago, Chile

Members

- **Number of Members:** 46 member states and 14 associate members
- **Member States Include:** Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, among others
- **Associate Members Include:** Puerto Rico, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, among others

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is open to Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as nations from other regions with economic ties to Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **Notable Inclusions:** Non-Latin American countries like Germany, Japan, and the Republic of Korea are members, reflecting their economic interests in the region.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member (ECLAC includes Latin American/Caribbean states plus a few others, but not India).

What it does (Key Objectives)

ECLAC's key objectives and areas of work include:

- **Economic Development:** Promoting sustainable economic growth and reducing poverty.

- **Social Development:** Addressing issues like inequality, education, and health.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Advocating for policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection.

- **Statistical Research:** Collecting and analyzing data to inform policy decisions.

Recent Activities

- **2024:** Hosted the 40th session in Lima, focusing on sustainable development and economic integration.
- **2022:** Held the 39th session in Buenos Aires, discussing post-pandemic recovery strategies.
- **2022:** Appointment of José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs as Executive Secretary.
- **2021:** Facilitated the entry into force of the Escazú Agreement, emphasizing environmental rights and protection.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Economic Projections:** In December 2024, ECLAC projected a 2.2% growth for the region in 2024 and 2.4% in 2025, driven primarily by domestic consumption.
- **Gender Violence:** In November 2024, ECLAC called for urgent action to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, highlighting that at least 11 women are victims of femicide daily in the region.

India-Specific Developments

- **Strengthening Relations:** ECLAC has been exploring opportunities to enhance economic and trade relations between India and Latin America and the Caribbean, focusing on sectors like Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) and e-commerce.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Unique Aspects:** ECLAC combines economic analysis with social and

environmental considerations, offering a holistic approach to development.

- **Similar Organizations:** Other UN regional commissions include the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Unlike these, ECLAC has a strong focus on structural economic analysis and has been influential in developing theories like dependency theory.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While specific questions on ECLAC are rare, understanding its role is crucial for topics on international organizations, regional economic groupings, and global development policies.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » Established in 1948 as a UN regional commission
 - » Headquartered in Santiago, Chile.
 - » Focuses on economic, social, and environmental development in Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - » Engages in research, policy formulation, and technical assistance.

Understanding ECLAC's functions and initiatives provides insights into regional development dynamics and international cooperation mechanisms, which are pertinent for the UPSC examination.

1.1.4.5 ESCWA

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is a United Nations regional commission dedicated to promoting economic and social development in the Western Asia region through regional and subregional cooperation and integration.

Name of the Organization

- Economic and Social Commission for

Western Asia (ESCWA)

What it is (Nature and Function)

ESCWA is one of five regional commissions under the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It aims to stimulate economic activity, strengthen cooperation among member countries, and promote sustainable development. ESCWA provides a platform for formulating and harmonizing sectoral policies, initiating data collection, and coordinating activities for development.

Year of Formation

- Established on August 9, 1973.

Why they formed it?

In the early 1970s, Western Asian countries recognized the need for a dedicated platform to address their unique economic and social challenges. The establishment of ESCWA aimed to facilitate concerted action for economic reconstruction and development in the region, succeeding the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (UNESOB).

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Beirut, Lebanon.

Member

- **Number of Members:** 21 member states.
- **Full List of Members:** Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is open to

countries in the Western Asia region.

- **Notable Inclusions:** The State of Palestine is a full member since its declaration of independence in 1988.
- **Notable Exclusions:** Comoros and Djibouti, despite being Arab states, are not members of ESCWA.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member (ESCWA's 21 members are Arab states in West Asia/ North Africa).

What it does (Key Objectives)

ESCWA's primary objectives and areas of work include:

- **Economic Development:** Promoting sustainable economic growth and integration among member states.
- **Social Development:** Addressing social issues such as poverty, education, and gender equality.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Advocating for policies that balance economic development with environmental protection.
- **Data and Statistics:** Providing support and capacity-building for national systems in official statistics and ensuring coordination between various actors involved in statistical activities in the region.

Recent Activities

- **2025:**
 - » **January:** Released a joint report with UNCTAD titled "**Syria at the Crossroads,**" warning of potential economic collapse in Syria and outlining pathways to stability.
 - » **January:** Published a report indicating that Kuwait could save more than a quarter of its budget through improved efficiency in social spending.

2024:

- » **December:** Held the 9th Executive Committee meeting and the 12th Technical Cooperation Network meeting to discuss regional cooperation.
- » **December:** Launched the ENACT reports focusing on emerging technology and innovation for Arab public institutions.

2023:

- » **February:** Organized the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, focusing on opportunities for recovery efforts to accelerate SDG progress and strengthen social inclusion.

2022:

- » **December:** Published a report highlighting that political and economic crises are hindering growth in the Arab region until 2026.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Syria's Economic Outlook:** In January 2025, ESCWA, in collaboration with UNCTAD, released a report titled "**Syria at the Crossroads,**" warning of potential economic collapse in Syria and outlining pathways to stability.
- **Kuwait's Social Spending Efficiency:** A January 2025 report indicated that Kuwait could save more than a quarter of its budget through improved efficiency in social spending.
- **ENACT Project:** ESCWA launched the ENACT project to support Arab governments in deploying emerging technologies and incorporating innovative practices to enhance public sector operations and services.

India-Specific Developments

There are no significant developments or direct collaborations between ESCWA and India reported in the past two years.

Comparison with other Orgs

OPCW deals with chemical weapons, whereas the CTBTO Preparatory Commission addresses nuclear test bans.

proliferation efforts, focusing on nuclear test monitoring and treaty verification. While the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, the organization continues to refine its global verification regime.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**
 - » Questions have been asked about the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and India's position on nuclear disarmament.
 - » UPSC Mains GS-II (International Relations) has included discussions on global arms control treaties, where the CTBT and its verification mechanisms are relevant.
 - » UPSC Prelims has featured questions on international organizations related to non-proliferation, including the IAEA, OPCW, and CTBTO.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Established:** 1996 under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) framework.
 - » **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria.
 - » **Members:** 187 signatories; 178 ratifications as of 2024.
 - » **India's Position:** India has not signed or ratified the CTBT, citing concerns over the treaty's discriminatory nature and lack of commitment from nuclear states to complete disarmament.
 - » **Verification System:** The International Monitoring System (IMS), developed by the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, is one of the most advanced global networks for detecting nuclear tests.
 - » **Current Relevance:** Ongoing concerns over North Korea's nuclear program, the US-China arms race, and India's non-signatory status make this topic crucial for international relations discussions.

The CTBTO Preparatory Commission plays a critical role in global nuclear non-

For UPSC exams, understanding the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, India's nuclear policy, and the broader non-proliferation framework is essential for **GS-II (International Relations)** and **GS-III (Science & Technology, Security Issues)**.

1.1.4.10 World Trade Organization (WTO)

Name of the Organization

- World Trade Organization (WTO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The WTO is an intergovernmental organization that regulates and facilitates international trade between nations. It provides a framework for negotiating trade agreements, resolving trade disputes, and enforcing adherence to established trade rules.

Year of Formation

- The WTO was established on January 1, 1995.

Why they formed it?

Prior to the WTO, international trade was governed by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) since 1948. However, GATT had limitations, particularly in addressing trade in services and intellectual property. The rapid globalization and increasing complexity of trade required a more comprehensive and robust institution, leading to the creation of the WTO during the Uruguay Round negotiations (1986-1994).

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Centre William Rappard, Geneva, Switzerland

Members

- **Number of Members:** As of February 2025, the WTO comprises 166 member countries, representing over 98% of global trade and GDP.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Membership is open to any state or customs territory with full autonomy over its trade policies. Prospective members undergo a negotiation process to ensure compliance with WTO rules and commitments.

Who are its members?

- **Universal Representation:** The WTO's extensive membership underscores its role as a central platform for global trade governance.
- **Notable Inclusions:** Major economies, including the United States, China, the European Union, and India, are members, highlighting the organization's global reach.
- **Notable Exclusions:** Some countries and territories remain non-members, often due to political reasons or ongoing accession negotiations.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India has been a WTO member since its inception on 1 January 1995 (and was part of GATT since 1948).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Trade Negotiations:** Facilitates multilateral trade negotiations to reduce trade barriers and establish fair trade rules.
- **Dispute Settlement:** Provides a structured process for resolving trade disputes between member countries.

- **Trade Policy Monitoring:** Regularly reviews national trade policies to ensure transparency and compliance with WTO agreements.
- **Capacity Building:** Offers technical assistance and training to developing countries to enhance their trade capabilities.

11. Recent Activities

- **2025:**
 - » **January:** China initiated a WTO dispute complaint regarding U.S. tariff measures, reflecting ongoing trade tensions between major economies.
 - » **January:** The WTO and the World Customs Organization (WCO) signed an agreement to enhance cooperation on trade and customs matters, aiming to streamline global trade processes.
- **2024:**
 - » **December:** The WTO-International Trade Centre (ITC) initiative for women received a record-high pledge from the FIFA World Cup Legacy Fund, supporting women's participation in global trade.
 - » **December:** Sweden committed SEK 30 million to support safe agriculture trade in developing countries, emphasizing the WTO's role in promoting food security.
 - » **September:** The WTO and the World Bank launched the **"Trade in Services for Development"** initiative, focusing on enhancing service trade in developing nations.
- **2023:**
 - » **December:** The WTO introduced a new e-Learning platform aimed at enhancing the learning experience for users, reflecting the organization's commitment to capacity building.

Recent News & Initiatives

to-people exchanges to foster mutual understanding and cooperation.

Recent Activities

- **2023:**
 - » **August:** The 15th BRICS Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Key outcomes included the decision to expand membership by inviting Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to join the bloc.
- **2024:**
 - » **October:** The 16th BRICS Summit took place in Kazan, Russia. Discussions focused on deepening economic ties, enhancing cooperation in technology and innovation, and addressing global challenges such as climate change.
- **2025:**
 - » **July:** Brazil is set to host the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The agenda is expected to emphasize global governance reforms and strengthening South-South cooperation.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Expansion Efforts:** BRICS has been actively expanding its membership to include more emerging economies, aiming to amplify the voices of the Global South in international forums.
- **Alternative Payment Systems:** Member countries have discussed developing alternative payment systems to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar, promoting financial sovereignty among member states.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The New Development Bank has continued to fund infrastructure projects in member countries, focusing on sustainable development and economic resilience.

India-Specific Developments

- **Strategic Engagement:** India views BRICS

as a platform to enhance its economic outreach, particularly in the Middle East, leveraging the bloc's expansion to access new markets and investment opportunities.

- **Balancing Act:** While engaging with BRICS, India maintains its strategic autonomy, ensuring that its participation aligns with national interests and contributes to a balanced multipolar world order.
- **Development Financing:** India has utilized the New Development Bank to finance key domestic infrastructure projects, facilitating economic growth and development.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **BRICS vs. G7:**
 - » **Membership:** BRICS comprises emerging economies from diverse regions, whereas the G7 includes advanced industrialized nations.
 - » **Objectives:** BRICS focuses on reforming global financial institutions and promoting multipolarity, while the G7 emphasizes maintaining the existing international order.
- **BRICS vs. G20:**
 - » **Scope:**
 - The G20 includes both developed and developing economies, while BRICS focuses specifically on emerging markets.
 - » **Decision-Making:**
 - G20 discussions are consensus-driven, with influence from Western economies like the US and EU.
 - BRICS promotes multipolarity and South-South cooperation, often challenging Western-led global financial institutions.
 - » **Institutional Mechanisms:**
 - G20 does not have a development bank, while BRICS established the New Development Bank (NDB) to finance

(Yugoslavia), **Jawaharlal Nehru (India)**, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Sukarno (Indonesia), and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana).

» **Core Principles (Derived from the Bandung Conference, 1955):**

- Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity
- Non-aggression
- Non-interference in domestic affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful coexistence

» **Current Membership:** 121 member states, 27 observer countries

» **Major Summits:**

- 2023 NAM Ministerial Meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2024 Kampala Summit, Uganda (Theme: **“Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence”**)

● **India’s Position in NAM Today:**

- » **Strategic Autonomy:** While India remains a committed NAM member, it has evolved its foreign policy to engage with multiple global alliances (QUAD, BRICS, G20).
- » **Relevance in the 21st Century:** India sees NAM as a diplomatic platform for South-South cooperation, particularly in trade, technology sharing, and development financing.
- » **Multilateral Engagement:** India has pushed for reforms in global governance structures within NAM discussions, advocating for UN Security Council reform and a stronger role for developing nations.

Current Relevance for UPSC:

- **Global Geopolitical Shifts:** As the world moves towards multipolarity, NAM’s relevance is debated—whether it remains a Cold War relic or an essential voice for the

Global South.

- **India’s Foreign Policy:** How India balances NAM membership with other strategic partnerships (like the QUAD, BRICS, and G20) is crucial.
- **Global South Representation:** NAM still acts as a major voice for developing nations, challenging Western dominance in institutions like the UN, WTO, and World Bank.
- **NAM’s Role in Contemporary Issues:** COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, trade barriers, debt restructuring—all remain key discussion points in NAM’s recent summits.

Conclusion

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), originally founded during the Cold War, remains a key diplomatic platform for developing nations, advocating for economic sovereignty, political non-alignment, and multilateral cooperation.

For UPSC exams, understanding NAM’s historical relevance, India’s engagement, and its position in global geopolitics is essential for GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Global Economy & Trade).

1.2.5 Group of 77 (G77)

Name of the Organization

- Group of 77 (G77)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The Group of 77 (G77) is a coalition of developing countries within the United Nations, established to promote its members’ collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on major international economic issues. It serves as a platform for these countries to articulate and advocate for their economic and developmental concerns on the global stage.

Year of Formation

activities.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **2023 Update of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises:** In 2023, the OECD revised its Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct. This update addresses pressing social, environmental, and technological challenges, ensuring that multinational enterprises adhere to responsible business practices in a rapidly evolving global context.
- **Economic Policy Reforms 2023 – Going for Growth:** The OECD’s “Going for Growth 2023” report outlines structural reform priorities for member and partner countries. It emphasizes the need for long-term growth strategies, focusing on areas such as digitalization, green energy transitions, and inclusive economic policies.
- **Tax Policy Reforms 2023:** This report tracks global tax policy developments, highlighting trends and reforms across OECD countries. It provides insights into how nations are adjusting their tax systems in response to economic challenges and opportunities.
- **Science, Technology, and Innovation Outlook 2023:** The OECD explores key issues and trends affecting science, technology, and innovation (STI). The 2023 outlook discusses the new operating environment for STI, shaped by global challenges and geopolitical tensions, and underscores the importance of international cooperation.
- **Development Co-operation Report 2023:** Marking its 60th anniversary, this report assesses current challenges in development cooperation. It proposes actions such as fulfilling existing commitments, supporting locally led transformations, modernizing business models, and rebalancing power dynamics in international decision-making.

- **Education Policy Outlook 2023:** Aiming to support countries in achieving the goals set by the 2022 OECD Declaration, this report provides an analysis of education policies. It offers guidance on navigating the evolving educational landscape to ensure quality and inclusive education for all.
- **Place-Based Policies for the Future:** In collaboration with the European Commission, the OECD organized a series of seminars in 2023 to evaluate “**place-based policies**.” These discussions provided valuable insights for policymakers on promoting equitable and sustainable economic development tailored to specific regional contexts.

India-Specific Developments

- **India’s 2023 G20 Presidency:** During its G20 presidency in 2023, India collaborated closely with the OECD to shape discussions on development and climate agendas. The OECD contributed by identifying bottlenecks and providing policy recommendations to advance these critical areas.
- **Economic Outlook for India:** The OECD’s Economic Outlook reports have provided projections for India’s GDP growth. In the November 2023 report, real GDP growth was projected to slow to 6.3% in FY 2023-24 and 6.1% in FY 2024-25, influenced by adverse weather events and a weakening international outlook.
- **Key Partnership Status:** Since 2007, India has been an OECD Key Partner, engaging in various collaborative efforts across economic policy, corporate governance, anti-corruption, trade, and investment. This partnership has facilitated mutual learning and policy alignment in areas of shared interest.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **OECD vs. G20:**
 - » **Membership:** The OECD comprises

» India's collaboration with the OECD during its 2023 G20 Presidency was a significant global development.

» OECD's Economic Outlook projections for India's GDP (2023–24, 2024–25) impact fiscal policy discussions.

● **Comparison with Other Organizations:**

» G7, G20, BRICS, IMF, and World Bank are often compared in UPSC Mains questions—understanding OECD's role in this landscape is crucial.

Potential UPSC Mains Questions:

- Discuss the role of the OECD in shaping global economic policies and its relevance to India.
- Compare and contrast the objectives and functions of the OECD and the G20.
- Analyze India's engagement with the OECD and its implications for domestic policy reforms.
- How does the OECD's 2023 Global Tax Reform Agreement impact India's corporate tax policies?
- Critically examine the significance of the OECD's Economic Outlook Reports for India's financial planning.

The OECD remains one of the most influential economic organizations, providing policy recommendations that shape global governance, trade, taxation, technology, climate change policies, and digital transformation.

While India is not a member, its Key Partner status allows it to engage with the OECD on critical issues like corporate taxation, trade regulations, and development financing.

For UPSC exams, understanding the OECD's objectives, India's role, and its influence on global economic policies is essential for GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Economic Development & Globalization).

Name of the Organization

- Commonwealth of Nations

What it is (Nature and Function)

The Commonwealth of Nations, commonly known as the Commonwealth, is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal countries. It serves as a platform for member states to collaborate on mutual goals, including the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law. The organization facilitates cooperation in areas such as economic development, education, health, and cultural exchange.

Year of Formation

- The modern Commonwealth was formally established in 1949 with the signing of the London Declaration, which allowed republics and other countries to join the association.

Why they formed it?

The Commonwealth evolved from the British Empire's decolonization process. As former colonies gained independence, there was a desire to maintain cooperative ties and shared values without political dependence. The London Declaration of 1949 marked a turning point, allowing member countries to acknowledge the British monarch as the symbolic Head of the Commonwealth while affirming their own sovereignty.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Marlborough House, London, United Kingdom

Members

- **Number of Members:** 56 independent

1.2.7 Commonwealth of Nations

countries

- **Full List of Members:** Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Eswatini, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zambia.
- **Criteria for Membership:** Membership is open to countries that accept the association's values and principles, as outlined in the Commonwealth Charter. While many members have historical ties to the British Empire, countries without such connections, like Mozambique and Rwanda, have also joined, reflecting the organization's evolving nature.

Who are its members?

- **Diversity:** The Commonwealth encompasses a wide range of nations, from some of the world's largest economies to small island developing states. This diversity is a strength, fostering a rich exchange of cultures, experiences, and perspectives.
- **Voluntary Association:** Unlike other international organizations, the Commonwealth is a voluntary association. Members are free to join or withdraw, emphasizing the non-binding nature of the union.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India joined the Commonwealth upon independence in 1947. *(It became the first republic in the Commonwealth in 1950 via the London Declaration.)*

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Promotion of Democracy and Good Governance:** The Commonwealth supports democratic processes, electoral integrity, and political stability among member states.
- **Economic Development:** It facilitates trade and investment opportunities, aiming to boost economic growth and reduce poverty.
- **Education and Youth Empowerment:** Through scholarships and capacity-building programs, the Commonwealth invests in education and empowers young people.
- **Cultural Exchange:** It promotes cultural understanding and cooperation through events like the Commonwealth Games.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability:** Recognizing the unique challenges faced by member states, especially small island nations, the Commonwealth advocates for collective action on climate change.

Recent Activities

- **2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM):** Held in Apia, Samoa, this meeting focused on climate change, adopting the 'Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration' to protect oceans and address rising sea levels. Discussions also included financial reparations for historical injustices.
- **Leadership Transition:** In October 2024, Ghanaian Foreign Minister Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey was elected as the new Commonwealth Secretary-General, succeeding Patricia Scotland.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Climate Action Advocacy:** Outgoing Secretary-General Patricia Scotland urged member countries to continue robust climate action, emphasizing support for small and vulnerable nations.

- » Discuss the role of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in addressing issues faced by Muslim-majority countries.
- » Analyze the impact of OIC's statements on India's internal affairs and India's foreign policy responses.

- **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Establishment:** 1969, in response to the Al-Aqsa Mosque incident.
- » **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- » **Membership:** 57 countries across four continents.
- » **India's Status:** Not a member; OIC has been critical of India's policies in Jammu and Kashmir.

Relevance to UPSC Exams:

- **International Relations (GS Paper II):**

- » Understanding OIC's influence on global geopolitics and how it affects India's foreign relations with key Islamic nations.
- » India's diplomatic engagements with OIC member states, particularly in trade, energy, and security cooperation.
- » The impact of OIC's stance on issues like Kashmir, Palestine, and Islamophobia on India's diplomatic strategies.

- **Geopolitics & Regional Groupings (GS-II):**

- » The role of religion-based organizations in global diplomacy and conflict resolution.
- » OIC's statements on India and their diplomatic consequences.

- **Current Affairs & Policy (Prelims & Mains):**

- » Recent OIC summits and resolutions, particularly regarding Afghanistan, Palestine, and Kashmir.
- » India's response to OIC statements and how it navigates relations with key

Islamic nations like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Indonesia.

- **Comparison with Other Regional & Religious Organizations:**

- » **OIC vs. Arab League:** While both focus on issues related to Arab and Muslim-majority nations, the Arab League is region-specific, whereas OIC has a global outreach.
- » **OIC vs. NAM (Non-Aligned Movement):** OIC represents Muslim nations, while NAM includes a diverse group of developing countries with a focus on sovereignty and non-alignment.
- » **OIC vs. G77:** G77 focuses on economic cooperation among developing nations, whereas OIC has a broader religious-political agenda.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is one of the most significant intergovernmental organizations focused on representing the interests of Muslim-majority countries. Despite India's large Muslim population, it is not a member due to geopolitical factors, particularly opposition from Pakistan.

For UPSC exams, understanding OIC's objectives, key resolutions, and its impact on India's diplomatic relations is essential for GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Global Affairs & Security Issues).

1.2.9 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Name of the Organization

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance that provides a collective defense mechanism for its member countries. It serves as a political and military alliance, enabling member nations to consult and cooperate on defense and

security-related issues to maintain peace and security.

Year of Formation

- **NATO was established on April 4, 1949, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty.**

Why they formed it?

In the aftermath of World War II, European nations faced the daunting task of rebuilding their economies and ensuring security against potential aggression, particularly from the Soviet Union. The United States recognized that a stable and secure Europe was vital to its own national interests. This led to the formation of NATO as a collective defense alliance to deter Soviet expansion and foster political integration in Europe.

Type

- **Intergovernmental Military Alliance**

Status

- **Active**

Headquarters

- **Brussels, Belgium**

Members

- **Number of Members:** 32
- **Full List of Members:** Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » Aspirant countries must demonstrate a commitment to democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

» They must be willing and able to contribute to the alliance's defense and security.

» Membership decisions are made by unanimous agreement among existing members.

Who are its members?

- **Expansion:** NATO has undergone several rounds of enlargement since its inception, with the most recent addition being Sweden in March 2024.
- **Notable Exclusions:** Countries like Ukraine and Georgia have expressed interest in joining NATO. However, their membership has been a subject of extensive debate and has not been realized, partly due to geopolitical tensions with Russia.

India's Membership

- **No** – India has no membership (NATO is a North Atlantic military alliance of which India is not part).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Collective Defense:** Under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an armed attack against one member is considered an attack against all, obligating members to assist in defense.
- **Crisis Management:** NATO engages in conflict prevention and conducts crisis-management operations, including peacekeeping missions.
- **Cooperative Security:** The alliance promotes security through partnerships and cooperative engagements with non-member countries and international organizations.
- **Deterrence and Defense:** Maintaining a credible deterrence posture to prevent aggression against member states.

Recent Activities

- **2024 Washington Summit:** Held in July 2024, this summit marked NATO's 75th

anniversary. Key discussions included support for Ukraine amidst ongoing conflicts and addressing challenges posed by China and Russia. The summit also saw the approval of the Washington Summit Declaration, outlining NATO's strategic priorities.

- **Steadfast Defender 2024 Exercise:** Conducted from January to May 2024, this was NATO's largest military exercise since the Cold War, involving over 90,000 troops. The exercise aimed to enhance readiness and interoperability among member forces.
- **Leadership Transition:** In October 2024, Jens Stoltenberg stepped down after a decade as Secretary General. He was succeeded by Mark Rutte, the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **U.S. Policy Shift:** In February 2025, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced a shift in America's security priorities, emphasizing homeland security over European defense. This move has raised doubts about America's commitment to NATO's collective security guarantees, particularly Article 5, which ensures mutual defense among member nations.
- **European Defense Autonomy:** In response to the U.S. policy shift, European leaders are deliberating on increasing defense spending and enhancing strategic cooperation to assume greater responsibility for regional security. Discussions include potential deployment of European troops in conflict zones like Ukraine, contingent on substantial U.S. support.
- **NATO Air Defense Initiatives:** On February 13, 2025, NATO launched two new multinational High-Visibility initiatives to enhance airspace protection against low-level threats. Fifteen Allies committed to developing efficient solutions targeting threats flying below 500 feet (150 meters).

India-Specific Developments

- **Exploration of NATO-India Cooperation:** While India is not a NATO member, there have been discussions about strengthening cooperation between NATO and India. Shared values such as democracy, sovereignty, and the rule of law form the basis for potential collaboration in areas like maritime security, cyber defense, and counter-terrorism.
- **Strategic Autonomy Considerations:** India maintains a policy of strategic autonomy and has historically refrained from entering military alliances. Its longstanding defense relationship with Russia and its strategic position in the Indo-Pacific influence its cautious approach toward formal ties with NATO.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **NATO vs. United Nations (UN):** While both are international organizations, NATO is a military alliance focused on collective defense among member states, whereas the UN is a broader organization aimed at promoting international cooperation across various sectors, including peacekeeping, human rights, and development.
- **NATO vs. European Union (EU):** The EU is a political and economic union of European countries, focusing on economic integration and political cooperation. In contrast, NATO is a defense alliance with a primary focus on military cooperation and collective security.
- **NATO vs. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO):** The CSTO is a military alliance comprising select post-Soviet states, serving as a counterpart to NATO in the Eurasian region. While both are defense alliances, NATO has a broader international presence and a larger number of member states.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**

- » Discuss the role of NATO in maintaining global security in the post-Cold War era.
- » Analyze the implications of NATO's eastward expansion on international relations.

● **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Establishment:** 1949, through the North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty).
- » **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
- » **Membership:** 32 countries across North America and Europe.
- » **Article 5:** Collective defense clause stating that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all.
- » **India's Status:** Not a member; maintains strategic autonomy with a focus on independent foreign policy.

● **Relevance to UPSC Exams:**

- » **International Relations (GS Paper II):** Understanding NATO's structure, objectives, and its impact on global geopolitics is crucial.
- » **Current Affairs:** Recent shifts in U.S. defense policy and their implications for NATO and global security dynamics.
- » **India's Foreign Policy:** Insights into India's stance on military alliances and its strategic partnerships, especially in the context of NATO's outreach in the Indo-Pacific region.

(SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organization that focuses on fostering mutual trust, promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research, technology, and culture, and ensuring peace, security, and stability in the Eurasian region.

Year of Formation

- The SCO was established on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China.

Why they formed it?

The SCO evolved from the "Shanghai Five" group, which was formed in 1996 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to resolve border disputes and enhance regional security. With the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001, the group was renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, aiming to address broader regional challenges such as terrorism, separatism, extremism, and to promote economic cooperation among member states.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization International

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- The SCO Secretariat is headquartered in Beijing, China.

Members

- **Number of Members:** 10
- **Full List of Members:** China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran (joined in 2023), Belarus (joined in 2024)
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » Commitment to the principles and objectives of the SCO Charter.
 - » Geographical proximity to the existing member states.

1.2.10 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Name of the Organization

- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- » Consensus among all member states regarding the admission of new members.

Who are its members?

- **Expansion:** The SCO has gradually expanded its membership since its inception, reflecting its growing influence in regional and global affairs. The inclusion of India and Pakistan in 2017 marked a significant enlargement, bringing together major South Asian powers. Iran's accession in 2023 and Belarus's in 2024 further extended the organization's reach into the Middle East and Europe, respectively.
- **Notable Exclusions:** While the SCO has several dialogue partners and observer states, countries like Afghanistan and Mongolia have not attained full membership, despite their strategic locations and interest in joining.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India became a full member of SCO in June 2017 (after being an observer since 2005).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Security Cooperation:** The SCO prioritizes combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism through joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and coordinated law enforcement efforts. The establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) exemplifies this commitment.
- **Economic Collaboration:** Member states engage in initiatives to enhance trade, investment, and economic integration. Discussions have included proposals for creating a free trade area and collaborative infrastructure projects.
- **Cultural and Humanitarian Exchange:** The SCO promotes cultural understanding and people-to-people connections through forums, educational exchanges, and cultural events. Initiatives like the SCO University facilitate academic collaboration

among member countries.

Recent Activities

- **2024 Astana Summit:** Held in July 2024, this summit marked Belarus's accession as the first European member state, expanding the SCO's geographical scope. Discussions focused on enhancing regional security, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges.
- **Iran's Membership:** In 2023, Iran was officially admitted as a full member, reflecting the organization's intent to include key regional players and enhance its strategic depth in the Middle East.
- **Economic Initiatives:** The SCO has continued to emphasize economic collaboration, with member states advocating for increased trade in local currencies and the development of infrastructure projects under China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Pakistan's Advocacy for BRI Expansion:** At the October 2024 meeting in Islamabad, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative to enhance regional connectivity and economic integration among SCO member states.
- **Enhanced Trilateral Cooperation:** In October 2024, China proposed strengthening trilateral cooperation with Russia and Mongolia during a meeting on the sidelines of the SCO summit, aiming to bolster regional stability and economic ties.
- **Turkey's Engagement:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed Turkey's intention to deepen ties with Eastern entities, including the SCO, while maintaining its orientation towards the West, highlighting the organization's growing appeal beyond its traditional sphere.

India-Specific Developments

- **Leadership in Cultural Initiatives:** During its chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), India hosted the 20th Session of Culture Ministers on April 3, 2023. The virtual meeting, chaired by India's Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Development of the North Eastern Region, Shri G. Kishan Reddy, focused on enhancing cultural cooperation among member states. Ministers from Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated, underscoring India's commitment to fostering cultural ties within the SCO framework.
- **Hosting the 4th SCO Startup Forum:** On March 19, 2024, India organized the fourth edition of the SCO Startup Forum in New Delhi. This initiative aimed to broaden startup interactions among member states, create an environment conducive to innovation, promote job creation, and inspire young talent to develop innovative solutions. The forum highlighted India's role in driving economic collaboration and entrepreneurial spirit within the SCO.
- **Participation in the 23rd SCO Council of Heads of Government Meeting:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar represented India at the 23rd Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, held on October 15-16, 2024, in Islamabad, Pakistan. The meeting focused on trade and economic cooperation among member states. Despite strained bilateral relations, India's participation demonstrated its commitment to regional collaboration within the SCO framework.
- **Stance on Bilateral Discussions:** During the October 2024 SCO summit in Islamabad, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar ruled out bilateral talks with Pakistan, emphasizing that his visit was solely for multilateral engagements within the SCO context. This position reflects India's cautious approach to bilateral relations with Pakistan, focusing instead on broader regional cooperation.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **SCO vs. BRICS:**
 - » **Membership and Focus:** Both the SCO and BRICS include China, Russia, and India as members. However, the SCO primarily focuses on regional security, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange in the Eurasian context, while BRICS centers on economic issues and development among emerging economies globally.
 - » **Organizational Structure:** The SCO is a formal intergovernmental organization with a charter and permanent bodies, such as the Secretariat in Beijing. In contrast, BRICS operates as an informal group without a permanent secretariat, relying on annual summits and meetings to coordinate activities.
 - » **Geopolitical Orientation:** While both organizations aim to provide alternatives to Western-dominated global structures, the SCO has a stronger emphasis on regional security and counterterrorism, particularly in Central Asia. BRICS focuses more on reshaping global financial and economic governance to reflect the interests of emerging economies.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**
 - » Discuss the significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in promoting regional security and economic cooperation in Eurasia.
 - » Analyze India's role and strategic interests in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** The SCO was founded on June 15, 2001, in Shanghai, China.
 - » **Headquarters:** The organization's secretariat is located in Beijing, China.
 - » **Membership:** As of 2024, the SCO

comprises 10 member states: China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran (joined in 2023), and Belarus (joined in 2024).

- » **Objectives:** The SCO aims to strengthen mutual trust and neighborliness among member states, promote effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research, technology, and culture, and ensure peace, security, and stability in the region.
- » **India's Involvement:** India became a full member of the SCO in 2017 and has actively participated in various initiatives, including hosting cultural and startup forums, reflecting its commitment to regional cooperation.

- **Relevance to UPSC Exams:**

- » **International Relations (GS Paper II):** Understanding the role of regional organizations like the SCO is crucial for analyzing India's foreign policy and strategic interests.
- » **Current Affairs:** Recent developments, such as India's leadership in cultural and economic initiatives within the SCO and its diplomatic engagements with member states, are pertinent for examination preparation.
- » **Geopolitical Dynamics:** Insights into how the SCO influences regional security, economic cooperation, and India's strategic positioning provide a comprehensive understanding of Eurasian geopolitics.

2. Regional Integration and Cooperation Organizations

These organizations bring together countries from the same region to work on common goals like trade, security, and development. For example, **ASEAN** connects Southeast Asian nations, **SAARC** links South Asian countries, and the **European Union (EU)** unites European countries with a common currency and policies. Some groups focus on trade, like **Mercosur** and **RCEP**, while others focus on security, like **NATO** and **SCO**. These organizations help neighboring countries solve problems together and make their region stronger in world affairs.

2.1 Intergovernmental Regional Organizations

Intergovernmental regional organizations are formal institutions where countries from a specific region collaborate on economic, political, and social issues. These organizations promote regional unity, economic growth, and collective security, often acting as a bridge between national governments and global institutions like the United Nations. Some organizations, like the **European Union (EU)**, are highly integrated with shared laws and policies, while others, like **ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)** and **SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)**, focus on economic cooperation and diplomatic coordination. Many of these organizations work on regional trade, infrastructure development, and cross-border issues such as migration and climate change. Some also have military or security dimensions, ensuring stability in their respective regions. They play an important role in shaping regional policies and strengthening economic ties among neighboring countries.

2.1.1 African Union (AU)

promote economic recovery through integration. Initial efforts led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, followed by the European Economic Community in 1957, eventually evolving into the European Union in 1993.

Type

- Intergovernmental and supranational organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Brussels, Belgium

Members

- **The EU comprises 27 member countries:**

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to European countries that uphold democratic values and are committed to promoting them. Prospective members must meet the Copenhagen criteria, which include stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, a functioning market economy, and the acceptance of existing EU laws and regulations.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member (the EU is composed of European countries).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **The EU's primary objectives include:**
 - » Promoting peace, its values, and the well-being of its citizens
 - » Offering freedom, security, and justice

without internal borders

- » Ensuring sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and social justice
- » Combating social exclusion and discrimination
- » Enhancing economic, social, and territorial cohesion among member states
- » Establishing an economic and monetary union with the euro as its currency

Recent Activities

- **2023:** The EU agreed on new rules to more evenly share the responsibility of hosting migrants and reformed asylum and border security procedures.
- **2024:** The European Commission awarded contracts to develop IRIS², a €10.6 billion secure satellite constellation aimed at providing encrypted communications and new commercial services.
- **2025:** European defense stocks surged as U.S. officials met with Russian counterparts to discuss ending the war in Ukraine, reflecting the EU's focus on regional security.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Ukraine Conflict:** The EU has been actively involved in addressing the Ukraine crisis, with member states expressing concerns over U.S.-Russia talks that excluded European representatives.
- **EU Enlargement:** Discussions continue regarding the potential expansion of the EU to include countries like Ukraine and those in the Western Balkans, though challenges persist.

India-Specific Developments

- **Trade Relations:** The EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for €124 billion worth of trade in goods in 2023, representing 12.2% of India's total trade.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **BIMSTEC aims to:**
 - » Create an enabling environment for rapid economic development through the identification and implementation of specific cooperation projects.
 - » Accelerate social progress in the region through joint endeavors in a spirit of equality and partnership.
 - » Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in areas such as trade, investment, technology, energy, transportation, tourism, and fisheries.
- **The organization operates through 14 priority sectors, each led by a member country:**
 - » Trade and Investment
 - » Technology
 - » Energy
 - » Transport and Communication
 - » Tourism
 - » Fisheries
 - » Agriculture
 - » Public Health
 - » Poverty Alleviation
 - » Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime
 - » Environment and Disaster Management
 - » People-to-People Contact
 - » Cultural Cooperation
 - » Climate Change
- India leads the sectors on Transport and Communication, Tourism, Environment and Disaster Management, and Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime.

Recent Activities

- **2022:** Adoption of the BIMSTEC Master

Plan for Transport Connectivity, outlining a comprehensive 10-year strategy to enhance regional transport linkages.

- **2024:**
 - » India organized the first BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship on February 6, aiming to foster sports cooperation among member countries.
 - » The Fourth Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group on the Future Directions of BIMSTEC was held in June, focusing on strategic recommendations for the organization's future.
- **2025:**
 - » The 1st BIMSTEC Youth Summit took place in Gandhinagar, India, from February 7-11, bringing together young leaders to discuss regional challenges and opportunities.
 - » Thailand is scheduled to host the BIMSTEC Summit from April 2-4, providing a platform for leaders to discuss regional cooperation and integration.

Recent News & Initiatives

- In February 2025, the BIMSTEC Digital Conclave was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, focusing on advancing digital public infrastructure in the region.
- The BIMSTEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework 2030 was published in December 2022, outlining strategies to reduce non-tariff barriers and enhance intra-regional trade.

India-Specific Developments

- India has been proactive in strengthening BIMSTEC by hosting key events such as the BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship in 2024 and the BIMSTEC Youth Summit in 2025, underscoring its commitment to regional cooperation.
- India continues to lead initiatives in sectors like counterterrorism, telecommunication, and transport, playing a pivotal role in

track glacial melt, sea ice movements, and atmospheric conditions in the Arctic.

- **India's Role in Arctic Council Working Groups:**
- India actively contributes to Arctic Council scientific projects and environmental studies.
- **India is particularly interested in:**
 - Arctic climate studies (impact of melting ice on monsoons).
 - Impact of Arctic changes on global weather patterns.
 - Sustainable development opportunities (especially shipping routes through the Arctic).

Comparison with other Orgs

Unique Aspects of Arctic Council

- **Non-Military Nature:**
 - » Unlike NATO or other security alliances, the Arctic Council strictly focuses on environmental and scientific cooperation, avoiding military issues.
- **Permanent Participants (Indigenous Representation):**
 - » Unlike most intergovernmental organizations, the Arctic Council grants Indigenous groups a formal voice in decision-making, recognizing their deep connection to Arctic ecosystems.
- **Consensus-Based Decision-Making:**
 - » Unlike majority-vote-based organizations, the Arctic Council requires unanimous agreement from all member states for policy decisions.

Similar Organizations in Polar and Environmental Cooperation

1. Antarctic Treaty System (ATS):

- **Founded:** 1959
- **Focus:** Governs Antarctica, ensuring scientific cooperation and environmental

protection.

- **Comparison with Arctic Council:**

- » ATS bans military activity, while the Arctic Council does not cover military issues.
- » ATS applies to an uninhabited continent, while the Arctic Council focuses on regions inhabited by Indigenous peoples and Arctic communities.

2. International Maritime Organization (IMO):

- **Focus:** Regulation of Arctic and Antarctic shipping routes (e.g., Polar Code for safe Arctic navigation).
- **Comparison with Arctic Council:**
 - » The IMO deals specifically with maritime rules, while Arctic Council has a broader environmental and socio-economic focus.

3. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- **Focus:** Climate research on a global scale, including the Arctic and Antarctic.
- **Comparison with Arctic Council:**
 - » The IPCC conducts global climate studies, while the Arctic Council focuses only on Arctic-specific climate and environmental changes.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions on Arctic Council and Related Topics

- **UPSC has previously asked about:**
 - » Arctic Council's objectives and role in environmental protection.
 - » India's observer status in Arctic Council and its engagement in polar research.
 - » Comparisons between Arctic Council, Antarctic Treaty, and other environmental organizations.
 - » The impact of Arctic ice melt on global climate and India's monsoon patterns.

Key Facts for UPSC Exams

- **Headquarters:** Tromsø, Norway.
- **Founded:** 1996 (Ottawa Declaration).
- **Member States:** 8 (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, USA).
- **Permanent Participants:** 6 Indigenous groups (e.g., Inuit Circumpolar Council, Aleut International Association).
- **Observers:** Includes India, China, Japan, Germany, UK, and other non-Arctic nations.
- **Key Climate Agreements:** Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF).
- **India's Arctic Presence:** Himadri Research Station, National Arctic Policy (2022), Arctic Monsoon Studies.

How to Approach Arctic Council in UPSC Exam

For Prelims

- Memorize the Arctic Council's headquarters, members, and India's observer status.
- Know India's Arctic research programs (Himadri station, satellite monitoring, climate studies).
- Understand the impact of Arctic ice melt on global sea levels and monsoons.

For Mains (GS Paper II – International Relations & GS Paper III – Environment)

- Arctic Council's role in global climate governance.
- Impact of Arctic climate change on India's weather and economy.
- Comparison of Arctic Council with Antarctic Treaty System.
- India's Arctic strategy and scientific engagement.

Association (IORA)

Name of the Organization

- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

What it is (Nature and Function)

IORA is an intergovernmental organization aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region. It serves as a platform for member states to collaborate on various economic, environmental, and security issues pertinent to the Indian Ocean Rim.

Year of Formation

- Established in 1997.

Why they formed it?

- **Historical Context:** The end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization highlighted the strategic and economic significance of the Indian Ocean region.
- **Reasons for Formation:**
 - » To promote sustained economic growth and balanced development among member states.
 - » To facilitate trade and investment opportunities.
 - » To address shared challenges such as maritime security, environmental conservation, and disaster management.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Ebene, Mauritius.

Members

- **Number of Members:** 23 member states.

2.1.13 Indian Ocean Rim

- **Full List:**

Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

- **Criteria for Membership:**

- » Sovereign states bordering the Indian Ocean.
- » Adherence to the principles and objectives outlined in the IORA Charter.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is open to countries with a coastline on the Indian Ocean, ensuring that all member states have a direct stake in the region's maritime affairs.
- **Notable Inclusions:**
 - » **France:** Included due to its overseas territories in the Indian Ocean, such as Réunion and Mayotte.
- **Observers and Dialogue Partners:**
 - » IORA also engages with dialogue partners, including countries and organizations that have strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India is a founding member of IORA (1997) and one of its 23 member states, given its Indian Ocean littoral status.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Key Objectives:**
 - » Promote sustainable growth and balanced development in the Indian Ocean region.
 - » Enhance regional trade and investment. Strengthen maritime security and safety.
 - » Encourage cooperation in disaster risk management.

- » Foster academic, science, and technology collaboration.

- **Areas of Work:**

- » **Maritime Safety and Security:** Collaborative efforts to combat piracy, illegal fishing, and ensure safe navigation.
- » **Trade and Investment Facilitation:** Initiatives to reduce trade barriers and promote economic integration.
- » **Fisheries Management:** Sustainable practices to preserve marine resources.
- » **Disaster Risk Management:** Coordinated responses to natural disasters and capacity building.
- » **Academic and Scientific Cooperation:** Research collaborations on oceanography, climate change, and environmental protection.
- » **Tourism Promotion:** Developing the region as a prime tourist destination.

Recent Activities

- **26th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (May 2024):**
 - » Held virtually, focusing on strengthening regional architecture and reinforcing Indian Ocean cooperation.
- **India-IORA Cruise Tourism Conference (June 2024):**
 - » Hosted in New Delhi, India, with participation from 10 member states.
 - » Aimed at promoting cruise tourism and enhancing regional connectivity.
- **Participation in the Fourth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue (May 2024):**
 - » IORA engaged in discussions on maritime security and cooperation in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- **IORA Business Forum (2023, Abu Dhabi, UAE):**
 - » Focused on increasing intra-regional

trade and investment among Indian Ocean economies.

» Key discussions on blue economy, energy cooperation, and technology-driven trade solutions.

● **First-Ever IORA Ocean Ministers Meeting (2023, Bangladesh):**

» Adopted the Dhaka Declaration to strengthen ocean governance and sustainable marine resource management.

» Launched initiatives on blue economy and fisheries conservation.

● **IORA Working Group on Maritime Safety and Security (2022, Sri Lanka):**

» Strengthened maritime security cooperation among members.

» Developed frameworks to counter piracy, illegal fishing, and maritime terrorism.

● **IORA's Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (2022-2023):**

» Focused on increasing the participation of women in trade, business, and technology sectors within IORA member states.

Recent News & Initiatives

● **IORA and Climate Change (2024):**

» Launched a new Climate Resilience Fund to help vulnerable member states (especially small island nations) tackle climate challenges.

» Enhancing disaster preparedness and response mechanisms for Indian Ocean coastal communities.

● **IORA-ASEAN Cooperation (2023-2024):**

» Strengthening ties with ASEAN to develop shared maritime security policies and economic cooperation frameworks.

● **IORA's Indo-Pacific Engagement (2024):**

» Deepening cooperation with the Quad (India, USA, Japan, Australia) and European Union on Indian Ocean security, connectivity, and economic development.

● **IORA Blue Economy Ministerial Conference (2023):**

» Discussed sustainable fisheries, renewable energy (offshore wind, tidal energy), and marine conservation policies.

● **IORA's Counter-Piracy Operations (2023-2024):**

» Increased naval cooperation among India, Seychelles, and East African members to tackle piracy near Somalia.

India-Specific Developments

India's Strategic Engagement with IORA

- India is one of IORA's founding members and a key leader in the organization.
- India hosts several IORA ministerial meetings on trade, climate change, and security.

India-IORA Blue Economy Cooperation (2023-2024):

- India has invested in deep-sea fishing, marine biotechnology, and ocean-based renewable energy projects within IORA states.
- Indian companies are collaborating with Mauritius, Maldives, and Sri Lanka on offshore wind energy and sustainable fisheries projects.

IORA Cruise Tourism Initiative (2024):

- India hosted a Cruise Tourism Summit for IORA in 2024 to boost maritime tourism and coastal connectivity.
- Strengthening Indian Ocean tourism circuits, linking ports in India, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, and Mauritius.

IORA and India's Act East Policy:

- IORA has become a key pillar of India's

Act East Policy, strengthening links with Southeast Asia and Africa.

- India is promoting IORA-BIMSTEC-ASEAN cooperation on maritime connectivity and security.

IORA and India's Security Interests (2024):

- IORA supports India's Indo-Pacific vision, ensuring freedom of navigation, countering piracy, and deterring Chinese expansion in the Indian Ocean.
- IORA members have backed India's position on maritime security, opposing militarization in the Indian Ocean.

Comparison with other Orgs

Unique Aspects of IORA

- **Focus on the Entire Indian Ocean Region:**
 - » Unlike ASEAN or BIMSTEC, IORA covers the entire Indian Ocean, from Africa to Australia, and South Asia to Southeast Asia.
- **Combination of Economic and Security Cooperation:**
 - » IORA is unique in balancing economic, maritime security, and environmental issues.
 - » Unlike SAARC or BIMSTEC, IORA integrates blue economy policies with maritime security and trade facilitation.
- **Diverse Membership:**
 - » IORA includes major global powers (India, Australia, UAE, France) and small island states (Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles).

Comparison with Similar Organizations

Organi- zation	Focus	Member Coun- tries	Security Role	Eco- nomic Integra- tion
IORA	Mar- itime security, trade, blue econo- my	Indian Ocean nations (23 mem- bers)	Yes (count- er-pira- cy, mar- itime safety)	Grow- ing, but no com- mon market yet
ASEAN	Eco- nom- ic & political integra- tion	South- east Asian nations (10)	Limited	Strong eco- nomic bloc
BIMS- TEC	Trade & security	South & South- east Asia (7)	Limited	Focused on connec- tivity
SADC (South- ern African Devel- opment Com- munity)	Eco- nomic & social devel- opment	16 African nations	Limited	More trade Focused

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions on IORA and Related Topics

- IORA's role in regional trade and security has been covered in previous UPSC questions.
- UPSC has asked about India's involvement in IORA and how it complements India's Indo-Pacific strategy.
- IORA's role in countering China's influence in the Indian Ocean has been an emerging area in UPSC IR questions.

Key Facts for UPSC Exams

- **Headquarters:** Ebene, Mauritius.
- **Founded:** 1997.

- **Number of Members:** 23.
- **Key Agreements:**
 - » IORA's Maritime Security Framework.
 - » Blue Economy Declaration (2015).
 - » Climate Resilience Fund (2024).
- **India's Role:**
 - » Leading country in IORA's Maritime Security and Blue Economy Initiatives.
 - » Strengthening ties with Africa, Southeast Asia, and island nations via IORA.

2.2 Regional Economic Blocs and Trade Agreements

Regional economic blocs and trade agreements are formed to **boost trade and economic cooperation among neighboring countries**. These agreements reduce tariffs, ease trade restrictions, and encourage investment among member states. Some of them, like **USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement)** and Mercosur, focus on removing trade barriers within specific regions, while others, like **RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership)**, include multiple continents and major economies. Economic blocs can provide advantages such as increased exports, job creation, and stronger supply chains, making them critical for global commerce. However, they can also create trade dependencies and political challenges among members. These agreements shape international trade policies and influence the global economic order.

2.2.1 USMCA

Name of the Organization

- United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The USMCA is a free trade agreement among the United States, Mexico, and Canada, designed to facilitate trade and investment by reducing barriers and establishing robust trade rules. **It replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** and aims to modernize trade relations among the three countries.

Year of Formation

- The USMCA was signed on November 30, 2018, and entered into force on July 1, 2020.

Why they formed it?

- **Historical Context:** NAFTA, implemented in 1994, was the original trade agreement among the three nations. Over time, the need arose to update its provisions to address modern trade challenges, including digital trade, intellectual property rights, and labor standards.
- **Reasons for Formation:**
 - » Modernize and address gaps in the original NAFTA framework.
 - » Enhance labor and environmental standards.
 - » Strengthen intellectual property protections.
 - » Facilitate digital trade and e-commerce.
 - » Rebalance trade to support North American workers and industries.

Type

- Intergovernmental Agreement.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- The USMCA does not have a centralized headquarters. Administration and oversight are managed collaboratively by the trade authorities of the three member countries:

- » **United States Trade Representative (USTR)**
- » **Mexico's Secretariat of Economy**
- » **Global Affairs Canada**

- » Facilitate digital trade and cross-border data flows.
- » Strengthen labor rights and environmental protections.

Members

- **Number of Members:** Three.
- **Full List:**
United States, Mexico, Canada
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » Sovereign nations within North America.
 - » Mutual agreement to adhere to the terms and provisions outlined in the USMCA.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is exclusive to the three North American countries that were parties to NAFTA, aiming to strengthen regional economic integration.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:**
 - » The agreement does not include other countries from the Americas, focusing solely on the original NAFTA members.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not party to this North American trade pact (formerly NAFTA).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Key Objectives:**
 - » Promote fair and balanced trade among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.
 - » Enhance competitiveness of the regional economy.
 - » Support high-paying jobs and economic growth.
 - » Protect and enforce intellectual property rights.

● **Areas of Work:**

- » **Trade in Goods and Services:** Reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers.
- » **Digital Trade:** Establishing frameworks for e-commerce and data exchange.
- » **Intellectual Property:** Enhancing protections for patents, trademarks, and copyrights.
- » **Labor and Environment:** Implementing standards to protect workers and the environment.
- » **Dispute Settlement:** Providing mechanisms to resolve trade disputes.

Recent Activities (Last 4 Years - Continued)

USMCA Dispute Resolution Cases (2021-2024)

- US vs. Canada (Dairy Market Access Dispute)
 - » **2021:** The U.S. filed a complaint under USMCA dispute resolution regarding Canada's tariff rate quotas (TRQs) for dairy imports.
 - » **2022:** The US won the dispute, leading Canada to adjust its dairy import policies.
 - » **2023:** The U.S. launched a second dispute case, alleging that Canada's revised TRQs still violated the agreement.
- US vs. Mexico (Automobile Content Rules Dispute)
 - » **2022:** Mexico and Canada challenged the U.S. interpretation of "rules of origin" for automobiles.
 - » **2023:** A USMCA panel ruled against the U.S., stating its stricter requirement for auto content was inconsistent with the agreement.

- » **2024:** The U.S. complied, allowing more flexibility in vehicle parts' origin calculations.
- USMCA and Biotech Corn Dispute (2024)
 - » The U.S. won a dispute against Mexico's ban on genetically engineered corn, arguing it was unscientific and violated USMCA rules.

Recent News & Initiatives

1. USMCA Joint Review (Scheduled for 2026)

- USMCA members are preparing for a major review in 2026.
- This review could lead to:
 - » Modifications in labor and digital trade provisions.
 - » Potential renegotiation or renewal (USMCA has a sunset clause for 2036).

2. Strengthening Supply Chains in North America

- USMCA nations have increased cooperation to reduce dependence on China for critical supply chains, especially:
 - » Semiconductors (chip manufacturing)
 - » Electric vehicles (EV)
 - » Pharmaceuticals and rare earth minerals

3. Green Energy and Environmental Commitments

- USMCA includes new environmental protection measures:
 - » Reducing carbon emissions in trade and manufacturing
 - » Stricter labor standards in oil & gas industries
 - » Cross-border cooperation on renewable energy projects

India-Specific Developments

1. Impact of USMCA on India's Trade

- India is not a part of USMCA, but the

agreement has indirect implications on India's exports.

- India's exports to the U.S. and Canada face competition from Mexico due to lower tariffs under USMCA.
- Sectors impacted: Automobiles, textiles, and IT services.

2. USMCA and India's Pharma Industry

- Mexico and Canada's demand for pharmaceuticals is rising, and Indian companies are increasing exports.
- India is negotiating trade partnerships with Mexico and Canada to counterbalance USMCA advantages.

3. India's Role in USMCA Supply Chains

- With USMCA countries reducing dependence on China, India is emerging as a potential alternative supplier in semiconductors, auto parts, and electronics.

Comparison with other Orgs (Unique Aspects vs. Similar Organizations)

USMCA vs. NAFTA (Its Predecessor)

- **Modernization of Trade Rules:** USMCA updates NAFTA by incorporating digital trade, intellectual property rights, and environmental standards that were missing in the original agreement.
- **Stronger Labor Provisions:** USMCA introduces stricter labor protections than NAFTA, particularly in Mexico, requiring higher wages and better conditions in key industries like automotive manufacturing.
- **Sunset Clause & Periodic Reviews:** Unlike NAFTA, which had no expiry date, USMCA includes a 16-year sunset clause with a mandatory review every six years. This ensures continuous assessment and potential modifications.

USMCA vs. RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership)

- **Regional Scope:** USMCA is a North American trade pact, whereas RCEP covers

15 Asia-Pacific economies including China, Japan, ASEAN countries, and Australia.

- **Trade Liberalization Approach:** RCEP focuses on reducing tariffs and trade barriers without significant labor or environmental standards, while USMCA has stronger regulatory frameworks in these areas.
- **Geopolitical Implications:** USMCA strengthens North American economic integration, whereas RCEP is viewed as China-centric, with India opting out of RCEP due to trade imbalance concerns.

USMCA vs. CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership)

- **U.S. Absence in CPTPP:** The U.S. withdrew from the original TPP under President Trump, but it later renegotiated NAFTA into USMCA. CPTPP, however, still includes Canada and Mexico.
- **Higher Trade Standards in CPTPP:** The CPTPP has even stronger trade liberalization measures than USMCA, particularly in services trade, investment rules, and environmental regulations.
- **Stronger Protectionist Elements in USMCA:** USMCA includes more restrictive "rules of origin" requirements for the auto industry, favoring domestic manufacturing in North America.

USMCA vs. EU Customs Union

- **Market Access & Tariffs:** The European Union Customs Union ensures tariff-free trade and common external tariffs, whereas USMCA still allows some country-specific tariffs and dispute mechanisms.
- **Regulatory Harmonization:** The EU follows a more centralized approach, with uniform regulations and single-market integration, whereas USMCA allows each member country more national autonomy.
- **Mobility of Labor:** Unlike the EU's free movement of workers, USMCA does not establish open labor mobility between the

U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

USMCA vs. WTO (World Trade Organization)

- **Scope of Agreements:** USMCA is a regional trade bloc, whereas the WTO provides a global framework for trade rules.
- **Dispute Settlement:** WTO has a formal dispute settlement body, while USMCA relies on specific dispute panels between the three North American countries.
- **Regulatory Standards:** USMCA has higher environmental, digital trade, and labor protections, which the WTO does not strictly enforce on its member states.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions on USMCA and Related Topics

- UPSC has asked about major regional trade agreements like NAFTA, USMCA, RCEP, and CPTPP.
- Trade protectionism, regionalism in trade agreements, and India's response to major FTAs have been themes in Mains and Prelims.
- India's trade relations with North America and the challenges posed by regional FTAs like USMCA have been analyzed in various economic and international relations questions.

Key Facts for UPSC Exam

- USMCA replaced NAFTA in 2020 to modernize North American trade.
- The agreement includes the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, with a 16-year sunset clause and reviews every six years.
- USMCA enhances labor and environmental standards, digital trade rules, and dispute settlement mechanisms.
- India is not a member but faces trade competition in sectors like textiles, pharma, and IT services due to tariff advantages given to Mexico under USMCA.

- USMCA's impact on global trade and supplychains is significant, particularly in semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs), and renewable energy industries.

2.2.2 Mercosur

Name of the Organization

- Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur)

What it is (Nature and Function)

Mercosur is a regional economic and political bloc in South America, aiming to promote free trade and the fluid movement of goods, people, and currency among its member countries.

Year of Formation

- 1991

Why they formed it?

- **Historical Context:** In the late 20th century, South American countries sought to enhance economic integration to boost development and reduce external dependencies.
- **Reasons for Formation:**
 - » Strengthen economic ties among neighboring countries.
 - » Create a common market to enhance competitiveness.
 - » Promote regional development through coordinated economic policies.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Montevideo, Uruguay

Members

- **Number of Members:** 5 full members
- **Full List:**
 - Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia (joined in July 2024)
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » Geographical location in South America.
 - » Commitment to democratic governance.
 - » Adherence to the bloc's economic and political agreements.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is primarily open to South American nations that align with Mercosur's democratic and economic principles.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:**
 - » Venezuela was admitted as a full member in 2012 but has been suspended since December 2016 due to political and economic issues.
 - » **Associate Members:** Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname have associate status, allowing for limited participation without full membership benefits.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member of the Mercosur customs union (South American bloc). *(India has a limited trade agreement with Mercosur, but is not a member state.)*

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Key Objectives:**
 - » Facilitate free trade and movement of goods, services, and people among member states.
 - » Establish a common external tariff and trade policy.
 - » Coordinate macroeconomic and sectoral policies among members.
 - » Promote economic development and

integration into the global economy.

- **Areas of Work:**

- » **Trade Liberalization:** Reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers.
- » **Customs Union:** Implementing a common external tariff.
- » **Policy Coordination:** Aligning economic, industrial, and fiscal policies.
- » **Social and Cultural Integration:** Encouraging cooperation in education, culture, and labor.

Recent Activities

- **Inclusion of Bolivia as a Full Member:** After years of negotiations, Bolivia's membership was ratified, and it officially joined Mercosur in July 2024.
- **EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement:** In December 2024, after 25 years of negotiations, Mercosur and the European Union finalized a free trade agreement aiming to create one of the world's largest free trade areas.
- **Response to Global Trade Dynamics:** Amid rising global trade tensions, Mercosur has emphasized the importance of strengthening internal ties and diversifying trade partnerships to reduce dependency on traditional markets.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Strengthening Ties with the European Union:** The EU-Mercosur agreement is poised to enhance economic cooperation, reduce tariffs, and open markets, benefiting various sectors across both regions.
- **Environmental and Agricultural Discussions:** The trade deal has sparked debates concerning environmental standards and agricultural practices, with discussions focusing on sustainable development and fair competition.

India-Specific Developments

1. Expansion of India-Mercosur

Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)

- **Current PTA:** India and Mercosur signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2004, which grants tariff concessions on 450 products.
- **Expansion Plans:**
 - » India and Mercosur are negotiating an expansion of the PTA, aiming to increase the number of products covered to over 2,000 items.
 - » India is pushing for greater access to Mercosur markets for pharmaceuticals, textiles, automobiles, and engineering goods.
 - » Mercosur members seek better access to the Indian market for agricultural products, including soy, wheat, beef, and sugar.

2. Bilateral Trade Growth

- India's trade with Mercosur exceeded \$15 billion in 2023, with exports of refined petroleum, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods and imports of agricultural products and minerals.
- Brazil and Argentina are key trade partners, with increasing investment in renewable energy, agribusiness, and information technology.

3. Energy and Renewable Cooperation

- India and Brazil signed agreements on ethanol production and biofuels, aligning with India's Ethanol Blending Program.
- India is investing in lithium mining projects in Argentina, essential for electric vehicle (EV) battery production.
- Solar energy partnerships are being developed under India's International Solar Alliance (ISA) with Mercosur nations.

4. Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare Sector Collaboration

- Indian pharmaceutical companies have expanded operations in Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay to boost affordable generic

drug supply in the region.

- Discussions are underway for joint vaccine production and health technology exchange between India and Mercosur.

5. Connectivity and Trade Logistics Improvements

- India is working on enhancing shipping connectivity with Latin America, including direct maritime routes to Mercosur ports to reduce trade costs and transit times.

Comparison with other Orgs

Mercosur vs. Other Regional Trade Blocs

1. Mercosur vs. European Union (EU)

- **Similarities:**
 - » Both operate as customs unions with common external tariffs and free trade among members.
 - » Both focus on political and economic integration.
- **Differences:**
 - » Mercosur lacks the strong political and institutional integration of the EU, such as a common parliament or single currency.
 - » EU has deeper legal and regulatory integration, while Mercosur countries retain greater national sovereignty.

2. Mercosur vs. USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement)

- USMCA is more trade-focused, with stronger intellectual property and labor provisions.
- Mercosur includes social and political cooperation, beyond trade.
- USMCA allows its members to sign independent trade deals, whereas Mercosur members negotiate trade agreements as a bloc.

3. Mercosur vs. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

- ASEAN has a looser economic structure,

while Mercosur is a customs union with stricter trade policies.

- ASEAN allows free trade with external countries more flexibly, whereas Mercosur has a common external tariff.
- ASEAN has a more diverse economy with high global trade integration, while Mercosur remains focused on intra-regional trade.

4. Mercosur vs. BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)

- Mercosur is a regional trade bloc, while BRICS is a geopolitical and economic alliance of emerging economies.
- Mercosur's focus is South American trade integration, whereas BRICS members have broader global cooperation in finance, energy, and technology.
- India is a BRICS member but not part of Mercosur, though it maintains trade agreements with both.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions on Mercosur and Related Topics

- UPSC has asked about regional trade blocs like Mercosur, NAFTA (now USMCA), RCEP, and EU, particularly regarding their impact on India's foreign trade policies.
- Previous questions have focused on India-Mercosur trade agreements and challenges faced in expanding economic ties.
- Mercosur's role in global trade and its comparison with other economic alliances has also been part of Mains questions.

Key Facts for UPSC Exam

- Mercosur was founded in 1991 with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay as full members.
- Bolivia became a full member in 2024.
- Venezuela was suspended from Mercosur in 2016 due to political and economic instability.

- Mercosur is a customs union with a common external tariff but struggles with internal trade barriers.
- India has a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Mercosur since 2004, and negotiations are ongoing to expand it.
- Key Indian exports to Mercosur: Pharmaceuticals, automobiles, textiles, and machinery.
- Key Indian imports from Mercosur: Soybean oil, sugar, minerals, and crude oil.
- The EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement (expected to take effect in 2025) could impact India's trade relations with Mercosur.

and tariffs in the Asia-Pacific region.

- » Enhance market access for goods, services, and investments.
- » Promote regional supply chains and economic integration.
- » Provide a counterbalance to other regional trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

2.2.3 RCEP

Name of the Organization

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

What it is (Nature and Function)

RCEP is a regional free trade agreement among 15 Asia-Pacific nations, aiming to establish a comprehensive economic partnership that facilitates trade and investment, enhances economic integration, and promotes sustainable development across member countries.

Year of Formation

- 2020

Why they formed it?

- **Historical Context:** Initiated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2012, RCEP was conceived to strengthen economic ties among member countries and address the complexities arising from overlapping bilateral and regional trade agreements.
- **Reasons for Formation:**
 - » Streamline and harmonize trade rules

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- RCEP does not have a permanent headquarters. The ASEAN Secretariat, located in Jakarta, Indonesia, serves as the depository for the agreement.

Members

- **Number of Members:** 15
- **Full List:** Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » Being an ASEAN member or having existing free trade agreements with ASEAN.
 - » Commitment to the principles and objectives outlined in the RCEP agreement.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is based on existing economic ties with ASEAN, either as member states or through established free trade agreements.

● **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:**

- » **Inclusion:** RCEP is the first multilateral free trade agreement involving China, Japan, and South Korea simultaneously.
- » **Exclusion:** India was initially part of the negotiations but opted out in 2019 due to concerns over trade imbalances and the potential impact on domestic industries.

India's Membership

- **No** – India ultimately opted not to join RCEP in 2019. (India was an initial negotiator but withdrew before conclusion, so it's not among the 15 RCEP parties.)

What it does (Key Objectives)

● **Key Objectives:**

- » Reduce or eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers on goods and services.
- » Enhance investment opportunities and promote transparency in investment regulations.
- » Simplify customs procedures and facilitate efficient cross-border trade.
- » Protect intellectual property rights and promote technological cooperation.
- » Establish mechanisms for dispute resolution among member countries.

● **Areas of Work:**

- » **Trade in Goods:** Phased reduction of tariffs to boost intra-regional trade.
- » **Trade in Services:** Liberalization of service sectors to enhance market access.
- » **Investment:** Creating a conducive environment for investors through predictable policies.
- » **Intellectual Property:** Strengthening legal frameworks to protect innovations and creative works.
- » **E-commerce:** Facilitating digital trade by

promoting online consumer protection and data privacy.

Recent Activities

● **Implementation and Meetings:**

- » **January 1, 2022:** RCEP officially entered into force, creating the world's largest free trade area.
- » **2022-2024:** Regular meetings, including Joint Committee and Ministers' Meetings, were held to oversee the implementation and address operational issues.

● **Economic Impact:**

- » **2023:** China's trade with other RCEP members reached approximately RMB 12.6 trillion, marking a 5.3% increase from 2021.

● **Membership**

Developments:

- » **2023:** The Philippines ratified the agreement, bringing all 15 signatories into the partnership.
- » **2024:** Discussions emerged regarding potential expansion, with countries like the United Kingdom expressing interest in joining RCEP.

Recent News & Initiatives

● **Trade Facilitation:**

- » Efforts are ongoing to harmonize customs procedures and rules of origin to streamline trade among member countries.

● **Digital Economy:**

- » Initiatives are being developed to support e-commerce and digital services, recognizing the growing importance of the digital economy in the region.

● **Investment Promotion:**

- » RCEP aims to attract more foreign direct investment into regional manufacturing, enhancing regional value chains and

competitiveness.

India-Specific Developments

- **Reconsideration of Membership:**
 - » In November 2024, B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, CEO of NITI Aayog, suggested that India should consider joining RCEP to boost its manufacturing and export sectors.
- **Strategic Trade Discussions:**
 - » Despite not being a member, India continues to engage in dialogues with RCEP countries to address trade imbalances and explore potential collaborations.

Comparison with other Orgs

RCEP vs. USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement)

- **Regional Focus:** RCEP is centered around Asia-Pacific, while USMCA is a North American trade agreement.
- **Trade Liberalization:**
 - » RCEP aims for gradual tariff elimination but allows more flexibility for developing economies in tariff commitments.
 - » USMCA has stricter labor and environmental standards, particularly targeting trade relations with Mexico's manufacturing sector.
- **Digital Trade:**
 - » RCEP includes some digital trade provisions but is less comprehensive than USMCA in data protection and e-commerce.

RCEP vs. CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership)

- **Membership Differences:**
 - » RCEP includes China, while CPTPP excludes China but includes Canada, Mexico, and South American economies.
- **Trade Liberalization Standards:**

- » CPTPP has higher standards for intellectual property, environmental regulations, and labor rights.
- » RCEP focuses more on lowering tariffs and enhancing regional supply chains rather than stringent regulations.

RCEP vs. ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA)

- **Scope of Agreement:**
 - » AFTA applies only to ASEAN countries, while RCEP includes non-ASEAN trade giants like China, Japan, Australia, and South Korea.
- **Rules of Origin:**
 - » RCEP's unified rules of origin allow regional manufacturers to source inputs from multiple member countries while qualifying for preferential tariffs.

RCEP vs. WTO (World Trade Organization)

- **Trade Scope:**
 - » The WTO provides global trade rules, while RCEP focuses only on Asia-Pacific trade integration.
- **Flexibility in Commitments:**
 - » RCEP allows gradual tariff reductions and exemptions for developing economies, unlike the WTO's binding commitments on tariff ceilings.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions on RCEP and Related Trade Agreements

- UPSC Prelims and Mains have covered major regional trade agreements, particularly in the context of India's economic policy.
- **Questions have focused on:**
 - » The economic implications of RCEP and why India opted out.
 - » Comparisons between RCEP, CPTPP, and WTO-based trade frameworks.
 - » India's trade policy adjustments after refusing to join RCEP.

Key Facts for UPSC Exams

- RCEP is the world's largest free trade agreement, covering 30% of global GDP and population.
- India withdrew from RCEP in 2019, citing concerns over cheap Chinese imports, trade deficits, and agricultural sector risks.
- The deal was signed in 2020 and became effective in January 2022.
- **Members:** 10 ASEAN countries + China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand.
- RCEP aims to gradually eliminate tariffs on 90% of goods over 20 years.
- India has an option to join RCEP later if it chooses.

2.2.4 European Free Trade Association

Name of the Organization

- European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

What it is (Nature and Function)

EFTA is an intergovernmental organization established to promote free trade and economic integration among its member states. It facilitates the liberalization of trade in goods and services, aiming to enhance economic cooperation and growth.

Year of Formation

- 1960

Why they formed it?

- **Historical Context:** EFTA was founded on May 3, 1960, as an alternative trade bloc for European countries that chose not to join the then European Economic Community (EEC), now the European Union (EU).
- **Reasons for Formation:**
 - » To eliminate customs duties on industrial

products among member countries.

- » To provide a framework for economic cooperation without the political integration associated with the EEC.
- » To maintain the sovereignty of member states in conducting their external trade policies.

Type

- Intergovernmental Organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Geneva, Switzerland

Members

- **Number of Members:** 4
- **Full List:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland
- **Criteria for Membership:**
 - » European countries committed to promoting free trade and economic cooperation.
 - » Willingness to uphold the principles and obligations outlined in the EFTA Convention.

Who are its members?

- **Basis of Selection:** Membership is open to European states that seek economic integration without political union, allowing them to maintain independent trade policies.
- **Notable Inclusions or Exclusions:**
 - » **Exclusions:** Several founding members, such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Portugal, left EFTA to join the European Union.
 - » **Inclusions:** Liechtenstein joined EFTA in 1991, enhancing its economic ties

within Europe.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member of EFTA (which comprises Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein). (*India is negotiating a trade deal with EFTA, but not a member.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Key Objectives:**
 - » Promote free trade and economic integration among member states.
 - » Establish and manage a network of free trade agreements with non-EU countries.
 - » Collaborate with the EU through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, enabling members (except Switzerland) to participate in the EU's Internal Market.
- **Areas of Work:**
 - » **Trade Relations:** Negotiating and implementing free trade agreements globally.
 - » **Statistical Cooperation:** Providing reliable statistics to support trade and economic policies.
 - » **Legal Affairs:** Ensuring the implementation of EFTA conventions and agreements.

Recent Activities

- **Expansion of Free Trade Agreements:**
 - » **Kosovo and Thailand:** On January 22, 2025, EFTA signed free trade agreements with Kosovo and Thailand, aiming to enhance trade relations and economic cooperation with these nations.
- **India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA):**
 - » **Signing of TEPA:** After 21 rounds of negotiations since 2008, EFTA and India signed the TEPA on March 10, 2024. This

landmark agreement aims to enhance trade and investment flows between the parties.

- » **Parliamentary Approvals:** In September 2024, the Swiss government submitted the TEPA with India to its parliament for approval. The agreement is expected to come into effect in late 2025 or early 2026, significantly reducing tariffs and enhancing market access.
- **Establishment of Business Support Initiatives:**
 - » **India-EFTA Desk:** Launched in February 2025, the India-EFTA Desk serves as a single-window mechanism to support EFTA businesses in navigating the Indian market, facilitating investments, and fostering economic cooperation.
- **EFTA Consultative Committee Work Programme 2025:**
 - » **Monitoring Legislative Proposals:** In February 2025, the EFTA Consultative Committee outlined its work programme, prioritizing the monitoring of new legislative proposals to identify interests of the EEA EFTA States at an early stage.
- **EFTA Council Meetings:**
 - » **First Meeting of 2025:** The EFTA Council convened for the first time in 2025 to discuss recent developments, including the signing of free trade agreements with Kosovo and Thailand.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Economic Impact Assessments:**
 - » **Projected Investments:** The TEPA is expected to bring \$100 billion in investments to India over the next 15 years, creating approximately 1 million jobs. This significant economic boost underscores the importance of the agreement for both EFTA and India.
- **Sectoral Benefits:**

» **Market Access Enhancements:** The agreement includes concessions on various products, such as reduced duties on Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds, benefiting both EFTA exporters and Indian consumers.

- **Business Support Initiatives:**

» **New Business Support Desk:** EFTA established a dedicated resource to assist companies from EFTA states in navigating the Indian market, building connections, and preparing for the implementation of the TEPA.

India-Specific Developments

- **Implementation Timeline of TEPA:**

» **Expected Enactment:** The TEPA is anticipated to come into force before the end of 2025, following the completion of necessary parliamentary approvals and procedural formalities.

- **Investment Commitments:**

» **Significant Pledges:** EFTA countries have committed to investing \$100 billion in India over the next 15 years, a move expected to generate substantial employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth.

- **Establishment of India-EFTA Desk:**

» **Facilitating Business Relations:** In February 2025, the India-EFTA Desk was inaugurated to provide structured support to EFTA businesses looking to invest or establish operations in India, promoting ease of doing business and strengthening economic ties.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **EFTA vs. European Union (EU):**

» **Scope of Integration:** While both EFTA and the EU aim to promote economic cooperation among European countries, EFTA focuses solely on free trade and economic integration without political union, allowing members to maintain

independent foreign policies. In contrast, the EU involves deeper political and economic integration, including a common currency for some members and shared legislative frameworks.

- **EFTA vs. European Economic Area (EEA):**

» **Membership and Market Access:**

The EEA includes EU member states and three EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway), facilitating their participation in the EU's Internal Market. Switzerland, an EFTA member, is not part of the EEA but maintains bilateral agreements with the EU to access specific sectors of the Internal Market.

- **EFTA vs. World Trade Organization (WTO):**

» **Nature of Agreements:** EFTA operates through regional free trade agreements among its members and with other countries, focusing on comprehensive economic cooperation. The WTO, on the other hand, is a global organization that regulates international trade between nations, providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and resolving disputes.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**

» UPSC examinations have featured questions on international organizations, including EFTA, focusing on their roles, member countries, and India's trade relations.

- **Key Facts to Remember:**

» **Formation and Purpose:** EFTA was established in 1960 to promote free trade and economic integration among its member states.

» **Current Members:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

» **India-EFTA Relations:** The signing of the TEPA in March 2024 marks a

significant milestone in India's trade relations, with expected investments of \$100 billion over 15 years and the creation of approximately 1 million jobs.

- » **Comparison with EU:** Understanding the distinctions between EFTA and the EU is crucial, particularly regarding the scope of economic and political integration.

2.3 Regional Security Alliances and Defense Cooperation Bodies

Regional security alliances and defense cooperation bodies are **military and security-focused organizations** where member countries agree to work together in case of external threats. These alliances help maintain regional peace, prevent conflicts, and coordinate joint military actions. The most powerful among them is **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**, which provides collective defense to its members, mainly in North America and Europe. In Asia, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** plays a key role in counterterrorism and regional security, especially in Central and South Asia. Some alliances also focus on cyber security, intelligence-sharing, and defense modernization. These organizations ensure stability by deterring military aggression and enhancing defense coordination between allied nations.

2.3.1 NATO

Already Covered in 1.2.9

2.3.2 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Already Covered in 1.2.10

2.3.3 CSTO

Name of the Organization

- Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The CSTO is an intergovernmental military alliance comprising select post-Soviet states. Its primary function is to ensure collective defense and security among member nations, fostering military and political cooperation to address regional threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration.

Year of Formation

- The Collective Security Treaty (CST) was signed on May 15, 1992. The CSTO was formally established on October 7, 2002.

Why they formed it?

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, newly independent states sought mechanisms to maintain regional stability and security. The CST was initiated to promote collective defense and cooperation among these nations, addressing common security concerns in the post-Soviet landscape.

Type

- Intergovernmental Military Alliance

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Moscow, Russia

Members

- As of February 2025, the CSTO comprises six member states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan

Who are its Members?

Membership is primarily composed of post-Soviet states that have committed to mutual defense and security cooperation. Notably, Armenia suspended its participation in the CSTO in February 2024 and announced its intention to withdraw in June 2024, citing dissatisfaction with the organization's response to regional conflicts.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a member of this Russia-led defense alliance.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Collective Defense:** An attack against one member is considered an attack against all, obligating collective response.
- **Military Cooperation:** Conducts joint exercises and trainings to enhance interoperability among member states' armed forces.
- **Counterterrorism:** Collaborates to combat terrorism and extremism within the region.
- **Drug Trafficking Prevention:** Implements measures to curb illegal drug trade across member states' borders.
- **Crisis Response:** Deploys peacekeeping forces in response to internal or regional crises upon request.

Recent Activities

- **Kazakhstan Unrest (January 2022):** In response to mass protests, CSTO deployed peacekeeping forces to Kazakhstan to stabilize the situation, marking its first significant collective action.
- **Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict (September 2022):** Armenia requested CSTO assistance during border clashes with Azerbaijan. The organization sent observers but did not engage militarily, leading to criticism and Armenia's subsequent suspension of participation.
- **Military Exercises:** Conducted joint drills in member states, focusing on enhancing readiness and coordination among forces.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Armenia's Suspension and Withdrawal:** In early 2024, Armenia suspended its CSTO membership and announced plans to withdraw, expressing dissatisfaction with the organization's support during conflicts with Azerbaijan.
- **Engagement with Observers:** India has participated as an observer in CSTO military exercises, indicating potential for broader cooperation.

India-Specific Developments

- **Observer Participation:** India has engaged with the CSTO by observing military maneuvers, reflecting its interest in regional security dynamics and potential collaboration.

Comparison Factors

- **Regional Focus:** Unlike NATO's broader transatlantic scope, the CSTO concentrates on Eurasian security, particularly among former Soviet states.
- **Russian Dominance:** Russia plays a central role in the CSTO, influencing its strategic direction and operations.
- **Collective Defense Clause:** Similar to NATO's Article 5, the CSTO has provisions for mutual defense, though its practical application has been limited.

Relevance to UPSC

- **UPSC Relevance:** Understanding the CSTO is pertinent for topics on international relations, regional security alliances, and India's foreign policy.
- **Key Facts:**
 - » Established in 2002, succeeding the 1992 Collective Security Treaty.
 - » Headquartered in Moscow, Russia.
 - » Comprises six member states as of 2025.
 - » Armenia suspended participation in 2024, indicating internal challenges.

- » India has engaged as an observer, reflecting its strategic interest in Eurasian security.

A comprehensive understanding of the CSTO offers insights into regional security architectures, the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia, and India's strategic considerations—essential knowledge areas for UPSC exams.

3. Security and Defense Alliances

These are groups of countries that promise to protect each other in case of threats like war, terrorism, or cyberattacks. The most powerful among them is **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**, which is a military alliance mainly led by the US and European countries. **SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)** also deals with regional security, especially in Asia. Other alliances, like **CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization)** and **ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-US Treaty)**, focus on protecting their member countries. These organizations strengthen military cooperation and prevent conflicts.

3.1 UNSC

Already Covered in 1.1.1.2

3.2 NATO

Already Covered in 1.2.9

3.3 CSTO

Already Covered in 3.3

3.4 SCO

Already Covered in 1.2.10

3.5 OPCW

Already Covered in 1.1.4.8

3.6 IAEA

Already Covered in 1.1.4.6

4. Economic and Financial Institutions

These organizations control money and economic policies at the global level. They help countries with financial crises, trade rules, and development projects. The most important ones are the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, which gives loans to countries in trouble, and the **World Bank**, which helps poor countries build roads, schools, and hospitals. Other groups like the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, **New Development Bank (BRICS Bank)**, and **AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank)** provide financial support, especially to developing nations. These organizations shape the global economy and influence how countries grow.

4.1 IMF

Already Covered in 1.1.2.6

4.2 WORLD BANK GROUP

Already Covered in 1.1.2.11

4.3 Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established to promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific.

Name of the Organization

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)

What it is (Nature and Function)

ADB is a multilateral development bank that provides financial and technical assistance to its member countries for development projects and programs, aiming to foster economic growth and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Year of Formation

- Established on December 19, 1966.

Why they formed it?

Post-World War II, Asia faced significant challenges, including widespread poverty and the need for economic development. The ADB was formed to facilitate regional cooperation and provide financial support for development projects to improve living standards and economic growth in member countries.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City 1550, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Members

- As of 2024, ADB has 69 member countries.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to countries in the Asia-Pacific region and other regions that are members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as well as developed countries from other regions. Notably, Israel is poised to join ADB as its newest member, with formalization expected soon.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – Founding regional member in 1966. India is one of ADB's largest borrowing members.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **ADB's primary objectives include:**
 - » Promoting economic growth and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

- » Providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to support development projects.
- » Focusing on areas such as infrastructure, education, environment, regional integration, and sustainable development.

- » Promoting power sector reforms.
- » Building climate resilience.
- » Enhancing horticulture.
- » Improving connectivity to economic clusters, markets, and rural communities.

Recent Activities

- **Climate Finance Initiatives:** In November 2024, ADB announced an increase in climate-related lending by up to \$7.2 billion, supported by sovereign guarantees from the United States and Japan.
- **Membership Expansion:** Israel is set to become a new member, with formalization expected soon.
- **Strategic Lending Goals:** ADB aims to allocate 50% of its annual lending to climate finance by 2030, up from the current 35% target.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Climate Adaptation Funding:** ADB highlighted the need for increased spending on climate adaptation in Asia, estimating annual requirements between \$102 billion to \$431 billion.
- **Economic Growth Forecasts:** In September 2024, ADB raised its growth forecast for developing Asian economies to 5.0% for 2024, citing strong demand for technology products.

India-Specific Developments

- **Sovereign Lending and Project Commitments:**
 - » In 2023, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$2.6 billion in sovereign funding to India. These funds were allocated to various projects aimed at:
 - » Strengthening urban development.
 - » Supporting industrial corridor development.

● Climate Financing Initiatives:

- » In line with India's climate action agenda, ADB has significantly increased its focus on climate financing.
- » In 2024, ADB's lending to India surpassed \$4 billion, with \$4.24 billion dedicated to sovereign financing and \$575 million to private sector financing.

● Key Infrastructure Projects:

- » Mumbai Metro Line 2: ADB provided substantial funding for the development of Mumbai's Metro Line 2, enhancing urban mobility and reducing traffic congestion in the city.
- » East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC): ADB is supporting the development of the ECEC, India's first coastal economic corridor, which spans approximately 2,500 kilometers along the eastern coastline. This project aims to boost industrial growth and regional economic integration.

● Collaborations for Educational Development:

- » In 2024, ADB partnered with the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) to authorize an initial disbursement of over \$100 million. This funding is designated to improve education in ten Asian countries, including India, addressing critical issues such as global illiteracy and the aftermath of pandemic-induced school closures.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **How ADB Differs from Similar Organizations Regional Focus:** ADB

primarily works in the Asia-Pacific region, unlike the World Bank and IMF, which have a global reach.

» Recent initiatives and funding commitments by ADB in the Asia-Pacific region.

- **Project-Based Approach:** ADB funds infrastructure, education, health, and climate projects, similar to the World Bank but with a stronger emphasis on regional development.
- **Climate Finance Leadership:** ADB is increasing its climate financing and plans to allocate 50% of its lending to climate-related projects by 2030.
- **Funding Mechanism:** Unlike the IMF, which provides short-term financial support to stabilize economies, ADB provides long-term project funding through loans, grants, and technical assistance.
- **Governance:** ADB's decisions are influenced by its member countries, ensuring projects align with regional development goals.

Key Differences from the World Bank & IMF

- **World Bank:** Focuses on long-term poverty reduction worldwide.
- **IMF:** Primarily stabilizes global financial systems and offers short-term financial aid to countries in crisis.
- **ADB:** Concentrates on regional infrastructure and economic growth in Asia-Pacific.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** Questions have been asked regarding the role of ADB in India's development, its functions, and recent initiatives.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » India is a founding member and the fourth-largest shareholder of ADB.
 - » ADB's significant contributions to infrastructure and climate finance in India.

4.4 African Development Bank

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is a regional multilateral development finance institution established to promote economic and social progress across the African continent.

Name of the Organization

- African Development Bank (AfDB)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The AfDB is a regional multilateral development finance institution dedicated to supporting the economic development and social progress of African countries.

Year of Formation

- Established in 1964; operations commenced in 1966.

Why they formed it?

Post-independence, African nations sought to foster economic unity and development. The AfDB was created to mobilize resources for the continent's development and reduce reliance on external financial institutions.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Members

- 81 member countries: 54 African nations and 27 non-African countries.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to African countries and non-African countries interested in Africa's development. Notably, non-regional members were allowed to join starting in 1982, enhancing the bank's resource base and expertise.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India joined as a non-regional member (1983). (*India contributes capital to AfDB and engages in Africa-India development cooperation.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **The AfDB aims to:**
 - » Promote sustainable economic growth.
 - » Reduce poverty in Africa.
 - » Provide financing for development projects and programs.
 - » Mobilize resources for investment in African countries.
 - » Offer technical assistance and policy advice to support development efforts.

Recent Activities

- **Financial Stability Initiatives:** In February 2025, African leaders approved the creation of the African Financial Stability Mechanism (AFSM), hosted by the AfDB, to prevent potential debt crises by providing concessional loans to member countries.
- **Innovative Financing:** In January 2024, under the leadership of CFO Hassatou N'Sele, the AfDB issued a groundbreaking \$750 million "**hybrid**" bond to scale up climate finance without burdening African governments.
- **Infrastructure Development:** In December 2024, the AfDB approved a €650 million loan to Morocco to enhance transportation infrastructure in preparation for the 2030 World Cup.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Green Economy Summit Sponsorship:** In February 2025, the AfDB sponsored Africa's Green Economy Summit, focusing on building a climate-resilient Africa through investment and innovation in green and blue economies.
- **Macroeconomic Performance Report:** The AfDB released its 2025 Macroeconomic Performance and Outlook report, projecting real GDP growth in Africa to accelerate to 4.1% in 2025 and 4.4% in 2026, attributed to economic reforms and improved fiscal positions.
- **Mission 300 Initiative:** Launched in January 2025, this initiative aims to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030, with the AfDB committing \$10-15 billion to the effort.

India-Specific Developments

- **Membership and Contributions:**
 - » **Membership:** India has been a non-regional member of the AfDB since December 6, 1983.
 - » **Financial Contributions:**
 - **Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility (ADFI):** In March 2023, India announced a \$2 million contribution to ADFI, aiming to enhance digital financial inclusion across Africa.
 - **Technical Cooperation Agreement:** In March 2024, India signed a bilateral Technical Cooperation Agreement with the AfDB, contributing \$6 million towards a new trust fund managed by the Bank.
- **Collaborative Initiatives:**
 - » **Africa-India Cooperation:** India has been actively engaging with African nations through platforms like the Indo-Africa Business Conclave, emphasizing partnerships in healthcare, infrastructure, and capacity building.
 - » **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC):** Launched in 2017, the AAGC is a

collaborative initiative between India, Japan, and African countries, focusing on development projects in health, agriculture, disaster management, and skill enhancement.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Regional Focus:** Unlike global institutions like the World Bank and IMF, the AfDB concentrates exclusively on Africa's development needs.
- **Membership Composition:** The AfDB includes both African and non-African countries, fostering a blend of regional insight and external expertise.
- **Operational Emphasis:** The AfDB prioritizes infrastructure development, regional integration, and poverty reduction tailored to African contexts.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While specific questions on the AfDB are rare, understanding its role is crucial for topics related to international organizations and regional development in Africa.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » Established in 1964 to promote economic and social development in Africa.
 - » Headquartered in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.
 - » Comprises 81 member countries, including 27 non-African nations.
 - » Focuses on infrastructure, poverty reduction, and regional integration.
 - » Engages in innovative financing mechanisms to support sustainable development.

4.5 AIIB

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development

bank established to enhance infrastructure development and economic integration in Asia and beyond.

Name of the Organization

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The AIIB is a multilateral development bank focused on financing infrastructure projects that promote sustainable economic development and regional connectivity. Its mission is "**Financing Infrastructure for Tomorrow,**" emphasizing infrastructure with sustainability at its core.

Year of Formation

- Established in 2016.

Why they formed it?

The AIIB was conceived to address the substantial infrastructure financing gap in Asia, estimated to be in the trillions of dollars. Traditional financial institutions were unable to meet this demand fully, prompting the creation of a new multilateral bank to mobilize resources for infrastructure development. Additionally, the AIIB provides an avenue for China to play a more significant role in global economic governance.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Beijing, China.

Members

- As of 2025, the AIIB has 110 approved members worldwide.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to members of the

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the Asian Development Bank. Notably, major economies such as the United States and Japan have not joined the AIIB. China holds the largest voting share, reflecting its significant financial contribution to the bank.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India is a founding member of AIIB (joined in 2016) and is the second-largest shareholder.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **The AIIB aims to:**
 - » Promote sustainable infrastructure development.
 - » Enhance regional connectivity and economic integration.
 - » Mobilize private capital for infrastructure projects.
 - » Support projects that are financially and environmentally sustainable.
 - » Focus on sectors such as energy, transportation, urban development, and water supply.

Recent Activities

- **Climate Finance Commitment:** The AIIB has set a target to ensure that 50% of its approved financing by 2025 is directed toward climate finance, reflecting its commitment to support the Paris Agreement.
- **Global Expansion:** The bank has extended its financing beyond Asia, including projects in Latin America and Africa, thereby broadening its global impact.
- **Suspension of Operations in Russia:** In response to geopolitical developments, the AIIB suspended its operations in Russia and Belarus in 2022.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Financing Agreements:** In February 2025, the AIIB signed a memorandum of understanding with Turkey to provide \$5 billion in financing for public sector projects over three years, focusing on sustainable and green development.
- **Promoting Local Currency Bonds:** The AIIB has been encouraging the issuance of renminbi-denominated bonds (“panda bonds”) by developing nations to attract Chinese investors and reduce dependency on the US dollar.
- **Partnerships in Latin America:** In November 2024, the AIIB entered into an agreement with Brazil's development bank, BNDES, for an investment of approximately \$2.89 billion to fund projects aligned with Brazil's climate initiatives and economic growth policies.

India-Specific Developments

- **Membership and Shareholding:**
 - » **Founding Member:** India is a founding member of the AIIB and holds a significant position within the organization.
 - » **Second-Largest Shareholder:** India is the second-largest shareholder in the AIIB, following China.
- **Financial Engagement:**
 - » **Largest Beneficiary:** As of August 2024, India has emerged as the largest beneficiary of AIIB financing, with the bank approving 48 projects amounting to USD 10.45 billion.
 - » **Sectoral Investments:** The AIIB's investments in India span various sectors, including energy, transport, and public health.
- **Recent Projects and Initiatives:**
 - » **ENGIE Solar Power Project:** In August 2024, the AIIB committed up to INR 7.3 billion (approximately USD 88 million) to support a 400 MW solar photovoltaic plant in Gujarat, co-financed with the

Asian Development Bank (ADB).

- » **Endiya Partners Fund III Investment:** In January 2025, the AIIB approved investments in Endiya Partners Fund III under its Venture Capital Investment Program, aiming to support early-stage companies focused on green and technology-enabled infrastructure in India and Southeast Asia.
- » **AMPIN Energy Transition Funding:** In 2023, the AIIB, along with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and Intermediate Capital Group, invested up to USD 250 million in AMPIN Energy Transition, an Indian renewable energy company, to bolster its renewable energy portfolio.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Regional Focus with Global Reach:** While the AIIB primarily focuses on Asia, it has expanded its operations globally, distinguishing it from other regional development banks.
- **Lean Organizational Structure:** The AIIB operates with a streamlined governance model, aiming for efficient and timely project approvals.
- **Emphasis on Sustainability:** A significant portion of the AIIB's financing is directed toward sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure, aligning with global environmental goals.
- **Collaboration with Other MDBs:** The AIIB often co-finances projects with institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, leveraging combined expertise and resources.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**
 - » The AIIB has been featured in UPSC examinations. For instance, the 2019 exam included a question assessing knowledge about AIIB's membership and India's shareholding.

Key Facts to Remember:

- » **Establishment:** The AIIB was established in 2016 with its headquarters in Beijing, China.
- » **Membership:** As of 2025, the AIIB comprises 110 approved members worldwide.
- » **Shareholding Structure:**
 - » **China:** Largest shareholder with 26.61% voting shares.
 - » **India:** Second-largest shareholder with 7.6% voting shares.
- » **Focus Areas:** The AIIB primarily invests in sustainable infrastructure and developmental projects, including energy, transportation, urban development, and water supply.
- » **India's Engagement:** India is not only a founding member but also the largest beneficiary of AIIB financing, with significant investments across various infrastructure sectors.

Understanding the AIIB's structure, objectives, and India's involvement is crucial for UPSC exams, especially concerning topics in international relations and economic development.

4.6 New Development Bank (NDB- BRICS)

The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly known as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Its primary purpose is to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries (EMDCs).

Name of the Organization

- New Development Bank (NDB)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The NDB is an international financial

institution that provides funding for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. It offers financial products such as loans, guarantees, equity participation, and other financial instruments to both public and private sector projects.

Year of Formation

- The NDB was established in July 2014, following the signing of the Agreement on the New Development Bank during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil. The bank became operational in July 2015.

Why they formed it?

The idea of creating the NDB was proposed during the 4th BRICS Summit in 2012, held in New Delhi, India. The motivation behind establishing the bank was to address the infrastructure financing gap in BRICS and other emerging economies, reduce dependence on existing financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and promote a more balanced global financial architecture.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Shanghai, China

Members

- As of 2024, the NDB has expanded its membership beyond the founding BRICS nations to include: Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Egypt, Algeria.

This brings the total number of members to ten. Membership is open to members of the United Nations, with the stipulation that the BRICS nations must collectively hold at least 55% of the voting power.

Who are its members?

- The NDB aims to expand its membership to enhance its global reach and resource base. The inclusion of countries like Egypt and the United Arab Emirates reflects the bank's strategy to strengthen ties with nations beyond the BRICS bloc. Notably, Algeria was authorized to join the NDB in August 2024. However, in October 2024, Algeria decided not to formalize its membership, citing political considerations within the BRICS framework.

India's Membership

- Yes – India co-founded the NDB in 2015 as one of the five BRICS countries.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- The NDB's primary objectives include:
 - » Financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects that have a significant development impact in member countries.
 - » Mobilizing resources for such projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation, and other financial instruments.
 - » Establishing partnerships with other multilateral development institutions and national development banks to coordinate efforts and share expertise.

The bank focuses on sectors such as clean energy, transport infrastructure, water and sanitation, environmental protection, social infrastructure, and digital infrastructure.

Recent Activities

- **Expansion of Membership:** Between 2021 and 2024, the NDB admitted several new members, including Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Egypt, and Algeria (though Algeria later chose not to formalize its membership).
- **Leadership Changes:** In March 2023, former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was elected as the President of the NDB,

becoming the first woman to lead the institution.

- **Project Financing:** The NDB has continued to approve and finance projects across its member countries, focusing on infrastructure development and sustainability. Over the next five years, the bank expects to approve USD 30 billion in new projects, with 40% dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Climate Financing Commitment:** The NDB has pledged that 40% of its project approvals over the next five years will be directed towards climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- **Global Partnerships:** The bank has been actively seeking to establish partnerships with other multilateral development banks and financial institutions to co-finance projects and share best practices.

India-Specific Developments

- **Project Approvals and Investments:**
 - » **Madhya Pradesh State Highways Improvement Project:** In December 2024, the NDB approved a loan of up to USD 490 million to India for the enhancement of state highways in Madhya Pradesh. This project aims to strengthen transport infrastructure by widening and reconstructing roads, thereby improving connectivity between district headquarters, major commercial centers, and industrial areas.
 - » **Gujarat Rural Roads Program:** In 2023, the NDB signed a USD 500 million loan agreement with India to develop approximately 13,500 kilometers of rural roads in Gujarat. This initiative is expected to benefit around 12.5 million people by providing better connectivity and supporting economic development in rural regions.
 - » **Integrated Sewerage System in Imphal, Manipur:** The NDB extended

a USD 115 million loan to India for the development of an integrated sewerage system in Imphal. The project includes the construction of sewerage treatment plants, pumping stations, and a comprehensive sewer network to enhance sanitation services and improve the water quality of the Imphal River.

- » **Lamphelpat Waterbody Rejuvenation Project:** A loan of USD 70.27 million was sanctioned by the NDB for the rejuvenation of the Lamphelpat waterbody in Imphal. This project aims to prevent urban flooding, improve water security, and promote eco-tourism, contributing to sustainable urban development in the region.

- **Evaluation and Oversight:**

- » **Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE):** In 2024, the NDB's Independent Evaluation Office initiated its first Country Portfolio Evaluation focusing on India. By the end of 2023, the NDB had approved 26 projects in India, underscoring the country's significant engagement with the bank. The CPE aims to assess the partnership between the NDB and India in fostering economic and social development, covering activities from 2015 to 2023.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Governance and Shareholding Structure:**

- » **New Development Bank (NDB):** The NDB emphasizes equality among its founding members—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—each holding an equal share in the bank's capital and voting rights. This structure ensures balanced decision-making and reflects the collaborative spirit of the BRICS nations.
- » **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB):** In contrast, the AIIB's governance is influenced by the economic size and contributions of its members, with

China being the largest shareholder. This structure allows for a broader membership base, including several developed countries, which enhances its credit rating and financial capacity.

- **Operational Focus and Scale:**

- » **NDB:** Primarily focuses on financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects within BRICS countries and other emerging economies. As of 2024, the NDB has disbursed approximately USD 15 billion in infrastructure financing.
- » **World Bank:** Operates on a global scale, providing financial and technical assistance to developing countries worldwide. In 2021 alone, the World Bank Group disbursed over USD 60 billion, highlighting its extensive reach and resource base.

- **Project Approval and Implementation:**

- » **NDB:** Aims for a streamlined project approval process to address the urgent infrastructure needs of its member countries.
- » **Traditional Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):** Often have more prolonged project cycles due to comprehensive safeguard policies and procedures, which, while ensuring project quality and social/environmental considerations, can extend the time from project proposal to implementation.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**

- » The NDB has been a topic in UPSC examinations, particularly in the context of international organizations and India's role in global economic forums. Questions have focused on the bank's establishment, objectives, and India's involvement.

- **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Establishment:** The NDB was founded

in July 2014 during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, and became operational in July 2015.

- » **Headquarters:** Located in Shanghai, China.
- » **Membership:** Initially comprising the five BRICS countries, the NDB has expanded to include Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Egypt, bringing the total membership to nine as of 2024.
- » **India's Role:** As a founding member, India holds an equal share in the NDB's capital and has been a significant beneficiary of its financing, with multiple infrastructure projects approved across various sectors.
- » **Objective:** To mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies, aiming to complement existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions.

Understanding the NDB's structure, objectives, and India's active participation is crucial for UPSC exams, especially in topics related to international relations, global economic governance, and infrastructure development.

4.7 OECD

Already Covered in 1.2.6

4.8 OPEC

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a permanent intergovernmental organization established to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries, ensuring the stabilization of oil markets to secure efficient and economic supplies to consumers, a steady income to producers, and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry.

Name of the Organization

- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

What it is (Nature and Function)

OPEC is an intergovernmental organization that collaborates among oil-producing countries to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price on the world market. This coordination aims to ensure stable and fair oil prices for both producers and consumers, as well as a regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations.

Year of Formation

- OPEC was founded in September 1960 during the Baghdad Conference held from September 10 to 14.

Why they formed it?

In the late 1950s, multinational oil companies unilaterally reduced the prices of crude oil, significantly impacting the revenues of oil-producing countries. In response, five nations—Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela—came together to form OPEC, aiming to unify and coordinate their petroleum policies to safeguard their interests and gain greater control over their natural resources.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Vienna, Austria

Members

- **As of February 2025, OPEC comprises 13 member countries:** Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela.

Membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and shares the ideals of

the organization, subject to approval by existing members.

Who are its members?

- OPEC's membership has evolved over time, with some countries joining or leaving based on their national interests and oil production statuses. Notably, countries like Indonesia have suspended and reactivated their membership due to changes in their oil-exporting capacities. The organization's decisions require unanimous agreement, ensuring that all member countries have a say in its policies.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not an OPEC member (India is an oil importer, not exporter).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **OPEC's primary objectives include:**
 - » Coordinating and unifying petroleum policies among member countries.
 - » Ensuring the stabilization of oil markets to secure efficient, economic, and regular supplies of petroleum to consumers.
 - » Providing a steady income to producers.
 - » Ensuring a fair return on capital for investors in the petroleum industry.

To achieve these goals, OPEC assesses market conditions and determines appropriate production levels to influence oil prices and maintain market balance.

Recent Activities

- **Brazil's Inclusion in OPEC+:** In February 2025, Brazil announced its decision to join OPEC+, the extended group of oil-exporting nations. This move allows Brazil to participate in strategic dialogues among oil-producing countries without binding production commitments.
- **Production Adjustments:** Throughout 2024 and early 2025, OPEC+ made several decisions regarding oil production levels

to address market dynamics:

- » In November 2024, the alliance postponed planned production increases due to weaker demand and competition from non-member countries.
- » In December 2024, OPEC extended its existing oil output cuts by one month, lasting until the end of December 2024, to stabilize prices amid fluctuating demand.
- **Market Stabilization Efforts:** In February 2025, OPEC emphasized its long-term approach to ensuring market stability, focusing on balanced oil markets despite external pressures.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Global Oil Market Dynamics:** In early 2025, OPEC addressed concerns over potential crude supply shortages due to geopolitical tensions, highlighting the importance of spare production capacity held by key members like Saudi Arabia to stabilize global oil markets.
- **Collaborations on Climate and Energy:** In November 2024, during COP29 in Baku, OPEC and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) strengthened their collaboration on climate and energy issues, emphasizing the significance of their partnership in addressing global challenges.

India-Specific Developments

- **Increased OPEC Imports:** In 2024, OPEC's share in India's annual oil imports rose for the first time in nine years, increasing from 49.6% in 2023 to 51.5%. This shift was influenced by reduced Russian oil supplies and heightened demand from Indian refiners for Middle Eastern crude.
- **High-Level Energy Dialogues:** The 6th High-Level Meeting of the OPEC-India Energy Dialogue took place in late 2023, emphasizing the strategic importance of the OPEC-India relationship. Discussions

focused on energy security, market stability, and collaborative efforts to address mutual challenges.

- **Calls for Production Adjustments:** In September 2024, India urged OPEC+ to increase oil production to meet the country's rising fuel demand. Despite OPEC+'s decision to delay planned production increases, India emphasized the necessity for higher output from major producers to ensure market stability and reasonable pricing.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Market Influence:** OPEC, comprising 13 member countries, controls about 40% of the world's crude oil production and over 80% of proven oil reserves. This significant share allows OPEC to influence global oil prices by coordinating production levels among members.
- **OPEC+ Collaboration:** To enhance its market influence, OPEC collaborates with non-member oil-producing countries, forming the OPEC+ alliance. This coalition includes major producers like Russia, aiming to coordinate production policies and stabilize the global oil market.
- **Comparison with Other Entities:** Unlike individual national oil companies or multinational corporations, OPEC operates as a collective of sovereign nations, making decisions through consensus to manage oil production and pricing. This structure differentiates it from corporate entities and other international organizations that may not have the same level of coordinated policy-making.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:**
 - » The UPSC examination has featured questions related to OPEC, focusing on its objectives, member countries, and its impact on global oil prices. For instance, questions have asked about the reasons behind fluctuations in crude oil prices

and OPEC's role in such changes.

- **Key Facts to Remember:**

- » **Formation:** OPEC was established in 1960 by five founding members: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- » **Headquarters:** Located in Vienna, Austria.
- » **Membership:** As of 2025, OPEC consists of 13 member countries, primarily from the Middle East, Africa, and South America.
- » **Objectives:** OPEC aims to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers, ensure efficient and regular supply to consuming nations, and provide a fair return on capital for investors.
- » **India's Relationship with OPEC:** India is not a member of OPEC but maintains a significant relationship due to its status as a major oil importer. High-level dialogues and strategic partnerships have been established to address energy security and market stability.
- » **Recent Developments:** India's increasing import of OPEC oil, active participation in energy dialogues, and calls for production adjustments highlight its ongoing engagement with OPEC to manage domestic energy needs and address global oil market dynamics.

Understanding OPEC's structure, objectives, and its relationship with major oil-importing countries like India is crucial for UPSC exams, especially in topics related to international relations, energy security, and global economic policies.

5. Trade and Commerce Organizations

These organizations make international trade easier by setting rules and reducing extra taxes (tariffs) between countries. The most important is the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, which makes sure trade between countries is fair and without unnecessary restrictions. **RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership)**, **USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement)**, and **Mercosur** are trade agreements that help countries in specific regions trade more freely. These organizations promote global business and economic growth by making trade smoother.

5.1 WTO

Already Covered in 1.1.4.10

5.2 WCO

Name of the Organization

- World Customs Organization (WCO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The WCO is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of customs administrations worldwide. It serves as a global center of customs expertise, developing international standards, fostering cooperation, and facilitating legitimate trade while securing the international supply chain.

Year of Formation

- Established on January 26, 1953, as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC); adopted the working name World Customs Organization in 1994.

Why they formed it?

Post-World War II, there was a pressing need

to rebuild economies and promote international trade. The formation of the CCC aimed to harmonize and standardize customs procedures among nations, reducing trade barriers and fostering economic cooperation.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Brussels, Belgium

Members

- As of 2025, the WCO comprises 186 customs administrations, representing approximately 98% of global trade.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to customs administrations of sovereign states. The extensive membership base underscores the WCO's global influence and commitment to facilitating international trade.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India's customs administration joined the WCO (Customs Co-operation Council) in 1971. (*India is an active WCO member, currently Vice-Chair for the Asia-Pacific region.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Standardization:** Develops international conventions and tools, such as the Harmonized System (HS) for commodity classification, to standardize customs procedures.
- **Trade Facilitation:** Promotes the simplification and harmonization of customs processes to expedite the movement of goods across borders.
- **Security:** Implements frameworks like the

SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade, ensuring supply chain security.

- **Capacity Building:** Provides training and technical assistance to member administrations to enhance their capabilities.
- **Enforcement:** Coordinates efforts to combat illicit trade, including drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and smuggling.

Recent Activities

- **Leadership Change:** In June 2023, Ian Saunders from the United States was elected as the WCO Secretary General, assuming office on January 1, 2024.
- **Digital Initiatives:** Launched the “WCO Trade Tools” online platform, integrating the Harmonized System, Rules of Origin, and Valuation to provide a comprehensive resource for international trade stakeholders.
- **Global Collaboration:** Participated in the Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters in New Delhi, India, in November 2023, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in customs enforcement.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **E-Learning Platforms:** The WCO has enhanced its e-learning platforms, offering comprehensive training for customs professionals worldwide to adapt to evolving trade environments.
- **Focus on Data Analytics:** Emphasizing the role of data in informed decision-making, the WCO has encouraged members to adopt data-driven approaches to improve customs processes.

India-Specific Developments

- **Trade Facilitation and Time Release Studies (TRS):** India has been proactive in enhancing trade facilitation measures. By February 2022, the country fulfilled

all its commitments under the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement. A significant aspect of this commitment is the annual conduct of Time Release Studies (TRS) to assess the efficiency of cargo clearance processes. Initially conducted at the Jawaharlal Nehru Custom House, these studies have expanded since 2021 to a national level, covering major seaports, inland dry ports, air cargo complexes, and land customs stations. The findings are publicly shared and reported to the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Committee, reflecting India's dedication to transparency and continuous improvement in customs operations.

- **Collaboration with the WCO:** In October 2024, India, in partnership with Japan and Korea, funded the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme for 2024/2025. This initiative aims to enhance the technical expertise of customs laboratory professionals, ensuring accurate and efficient analysis of goods, which is crucial for correct tariff classification and trade facilitation.
- **Policy Reforms in Customs Duties:** In February 2025, during the annual budget presentation, India announced the removal of customs duties on waste and scrap of twelve critical minerals, including antimony, cobalt, tungsten, and copper scrap. This policy aims to secure the availability of these materials for domestic manufacturing, reflecting India's strategic focus on bolstering its industrial base and reducing dependency on imports for essential raw materials.
- **Import Regulations for Electronics:** In September 2024, India introduced a policy requiring companies to seek fresh approvals for importing laptops, tablets, and other related electronics starting January 1, 2025. This move is part of India's broader strategy to monitor and manage electronic imports, encouraging local manufacturing and ensuring a trusted supply chain for these critical products.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Global Reach:** With 186 member administrations, the WCO's influence spans nearly the entire global trade landscape, unlike some regional customs organizations.
- **Comprehensive Scope:** The WCO addresses a wide range of customs-related issues, from standardization and trade facilitation to enforcement and capacity building, providing a holistic approach to customs administration.
- **Standard-Setting Authority:** As the developer of the Harmonized System and other key international conventions, the WCO plays a pivotal role in setting global customs standards.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The UPSC examination has featured questions on international organizations, including the WCO, focusing on its functions, conventions like the Harmonized System, and India's role in global customs cooperation.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Formation:** Established in 1953 as the Customs Co-operation Council; renamed the World Customs Organization in 1994.
 - » **Headquarters:** Brussels, Belgium.
 - » **Membership:** 186 customs administrations, covering about 98% of global trade.
 - » **Key Instruments:** Harmonized System (HS), Revised Kyoto Convention, SAFE Framework of Standards.
 - » **India's Engagement:** Active participation in WCO initiatives, hosting international conferences, and implementing WCO-recommended practices to enhance trade facilitation and enforcement.

5.3 ISO

Name of the Organization

- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

ISO is an independent, non-governmental international organization that develops and publishes international standards across a wide range of industries and sectors.

Year of Formation

- Founded on February 23, 1947.

Why they formed it?

Post-World War II, there was a recognized need for international coordination and unification of industrial standards to facilitate global trade and ensure product compatibility and safety.

Type

- Non-governmental organization (NGO)

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Geneva, Switzerland

Members

- As of 2024, ISO comprises 167 national standards bodies.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to national standards bodies representing countries. Each member has one vote, ensuring equal representation. Notably, ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on electrical and electronic standards.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India (through the Bureau of Indian Standards) is a founder member of ISO

(since 1947).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Standard Development:** Formulates international standards to ensure quality, safety, efficiency, and interoperability of products and services.
- **Facilitating Trade:** Aims to break down barriers to international trade by providing common standards among nations.
- **Innovation Support:** Encourages innovation by setting frameworks that industries can build upon.

Recent Activities

- **Artificial Intelligence Standardization:** ISO, through its subcommittee ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 42, has been actively developing standards in the area of Artificial Intelligence to address emerging technologies and their global implications.
- **Environmental Management:** ISO has been promoting the adoption of ISO 14001, focusing on environmental management systems to help organizations enhance their environmental performance.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Net Zero Guidelines:** In collaboration with Colombia's ICONTEC, ISO is developing an independently verifiable international standard on net zero, aiming for launch at COP30 in 2025. This initiative seeks to provide a clear pathway for organizations to achieve net zero emissions and ensure global consistency in sustainability efforts.

India-Specific Developments

- **Hosting the 64th International Sugar Organization (ISO) Council Meeting:** In June 2024, India hosted the 64th ISO Council Meeting in New Delhi, bringing together delegates from over 30 countries to discuss critical issues in the sugar and biofuel sectors. As the world's largest consumer and second-largest producer of sugar, India was nominated to chair the

ISO for 2024.

- **BIS Collaboration with Indian Institute of Science (IISc):** In July 2024, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IISc Bengaluru to establish the 'BIS Standardization Chair Professor.' This initiative aims to promote collaborative activities in standardization and conformity assessment, integrating Indian standards into academic curricula and fostering active academic participation in standards formulation.
- **Implementation of Mandatory BIS Standards for Chemicals and Petrochemicals:** In July 2024, India announced the enforcement of mandatory BIS certification for chemicals and petrochemical products, applicable to both domestically manufactured and imported items. This regulation, effective from October 2024, aims to ensure adherence to stringent quality standards, preventing the use of hazardous and substandard products in the market.
- **Expansion of Quality Compliance Requirements:** By February 2025, the Indian government expanded quality compliance by mandating Quality Control Orders (QCOs) for over 150 products, ranging from household appliances to industrial materials. This move, overseen by BIS, aims to enforce stricter safety and performance standards across various sectors, enhancing consumer safety and product reliability.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Global Reach:** ISO stands out for its extensive global membership, encompassing 167 national standards bodies, which facilitates widespread international consensus on standards.
- **Diverse Scope:** Unlike organizations with a specific focus, ISO develops standards across virtually all sectors, from technology and manufacturing to healthcare and agriculture.

- **Non-Governmental Structure:** As an NGO, ISO operates independently of governmental influence, allowing for a more flexible and industry-driven approach to standardization.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The UPSC examination has included questions related to ISO standards, particularly focusing on their impact on trade, quality management, and India's involvement in international standardization efforts.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **ISO 9001:** A widely adopted standard for quality management systems, emphasizing customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.
 - » **ISO 14001:** Focuses on environmental management systems, guiding organizations to enhance their environmental performance.
 - » **India's Participation:** Through the Bureau of Indian Standards, India plays a significant role in ISO's activities, contributing to and adopting international standards to align with global best practices.

Understanding ISO's role in global standardization, its collaborative efforts, and India's active participation is crucial for exams, especially in topics related to international trade, quality management, and economic development.

5.4 RCEP

Already Covered in 2.2.3

5.5 ICO

Name of the Organization

- International Coffee Organization (ICO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The ICO is an intergovernmental organization that serves as a global forum for coffee-exporting and coffee-importing countries. It aims to strengthen the global coffee sector and promote its sustainable expansion by facilitating international cooperation, providing market information, and addressing challenges faced by the coffee industry.

Year of Formation

- Established in 1963.

Why they formed it?

In the early 1960s, coffee was a vital commodity for many developing countries, but the market was plagued by price volatility and economic instability. To address these issues, the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) was negotiated in 1962 under the United Nations' auspices, leading to the establishment of the ICO in 1963. The organization's primary goal was to stabilize the coffee market through international cooperation and agreements.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- London, United Kingdom.

Members

- As of February 2022, the ICO comprises 49 member countries, including 42 coffee-exporting nations and 7 coffee-importing nations.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to any country involved in the coffee trade, either as an exporter or importer. Notable inclusions are major coffee producers like Brazil and Colombia, while significant consumers like

the United States have withdrawn from the organization, with the U.S. officially exiting in June 2018.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India is a member as a coffee-exporting country. (*India's Coffee Board represents it in the ICO.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Market Stabilization:** Historically, the ICO administered a quota system under the International Coffee Agreements to stabilize coffee prices.
- **Sustainability Promotion:** Encourages sustainable coffee production practices to improve living standards in developing countries.
- **Market Transparency:** Provides comprehensive data on coffee production, exports, imports, and consumption to inform stakeholders.
- **International Cooperation:** Serves as a platform for dialogue between coffee-producing and coffee-consuming countries.

Recent Activities

- **International Coffee Agreement 2022:** In 2023, the ICO introduced the International Coffee Agreement 2022, aiming to enhance cooperation among member countries and address contemporary challenges in the coffee sector.
- **138th International Coffee Council Session:** Held in September 2024 in London, this session brought together member states, industry leaders, and stakeholders to discuss the future of the coffee sector and the ICO's role in promoting global coffee diplomacy.
- **Advocacy on EU Deforestation Regulation:** In September 2024, the ICO sought a postponement of the European Union's regulation requiring imported coffee to be sourced from deforestation-

free areas, citing challenges in meeting the imminent deadline.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **EU Deforestation Regulation Concerns:** The ICO has been actively engaging with the European Union regarding its deforestation regulation, advocating for realistic timelines and support for coffee-producing countries to comply with new requirements.
- **Global Coffee Forum Participation:** The ICO continues to participate in global forums, collaborating with international organizations to address issues like climate change, sustainability, and economic viability in the coffee sector.

India-Specific Developments

- **Hosting the 5th World Coffee Conference:** In 2023, India hosted the 5th World Coffee Conference in Bengaluru, organized by the ICO. This event highlighted India's significant role in the global coffee industry and provided a platform for discussions on challenges and opportunities within the sector.
- **Ratification of the International Coffee Agreement 2022:** In May 2024, the High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom signed the International Coffee Agreement 2022, reaffirming India's commitment to international cooperation in the coffee sector.
- **Production and Export Statistics:** India ranks as the 6th largest global exporter of coffee, with approximately 80% of its coffee produced by smallholder farmers.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Comprehensive Focus:** Unlike commodity-specific organizations that may focus solely on trade, the ICO addresses a broad spectrum of issues, including market stabilization, sustainability, and socio-economic development.
- **Intergovernmental Structure:** The

ICO's composition of both exporting and importing member countries facilitates balanced decision-making and comprehensive policy development.

- **Historical Quota System:** Historically, the ICO implemented a quota system to regulate coffee prices, a unique approach among commodity organizations.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

Past UPSC Questions

- While there have been no direct questions on the International Coffee Organization (ICO), UPSC has previously asked about:
 - » Commodity-specific international organizations (e.g., OPEC, WTO, and FAO).
 - » India's role in global trade agreements and international commodity markets.
 - » Sustainability concerns in agriculture and trade policies.
 - » Government policies related to exports of agricultural commodities, including coffee.

Key Facts for Exams

- **Formation:** Established in 1963 under the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) to regulate and stabilize the global coffee market.
- **Headquarters:** London, United Kingdom.
- **Membership:** 49 member countries, including 42 coffee-exporting nations and 7 importing countries.
- **India's Role:**
 - » India ratified the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) 2022 in May 2024.
 - » Hosted the 5th World Coffee Conference in Bengaluru in 2023.
 - » India is the 6th largest coffee exporter in the world, with about 80% of coffee production coming from smallholder farmers.

- **Objectives:**
 - » Promotes sustainable coffee production and trade.
 - » Ensures market stability by addressing price volatility.
 - » Facilitates international cooperation in the coffee sector.
- **Relevance to Global Trade & UPSC Syllabus:**
 - » Related to GS Paper 2 (International Relations): Role of India in global organizations.
 - » GS Paper 3 (Agriculture & Economy): Impact of trade agreements on agricultural exports, government policies on coffee production, and sustainability concerns in India's plantation sector.

Understanding ICO is crucial for topics related to international trade, India's agricultural exports, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the impact of climate change on global commodity markets.

5.6 ICCO

Name of the Organization

- International Cocoa Organization (ICCO)

What it is (Nature and Function)

- The ICCO is an intergovernmental organization that brings together cocoa-producing and cocoa-consuming countries. Its primary functions include:
 - » Facilitating international cooperation on cocoa-related issues.
 - » Promoting a sustainable world cocoa economy.
 - » Collecting and disseminating data on the global cocoa market.
 - » Implementing projects to support cocoa production and trade.

Year of Formation

- Established in 1973.

Why they formed it?

In the early 1970s, the cocoa market experienced significant volatility, affecting both producers and consumers. To address these challenges, the United Nations facilitated negotiations leading to the first International Cocoa Agreement in 1972. The ICCO was established in 1973 to implement this agreement, aiming to stabilize the cocoa market and promote equitable trading practices.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Members

- As of 2020, the ICCO comprises 51 member countries, including both cocoa exporters and importers.

Who are its members?

Membership is open to countries involved in the cocoa trade, either as producers or consumers. Notably, while major cocoa-producing countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are members, some significant consuming countries have not joined the organization.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not currently a member of the cocoa agreement (India is a small cocoa producer and has been encouraged to join, but as of now it remains outside).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Market Stabilization:** Aims to reduce volatility in cocoa prices through international agreements and cooperation.

- **Sustainability Promotion:** Encourages sustainable cocoa farming practices to ensure long-term viability of the cocoa sector.
- **Data Collection and Dissemination:** Provides comprehensive statistics on cocoa production, consumption, and market trends.
- **Project Implementation:** Develops and oversees projects that support cocoa farmers and enhance trade efficiency.

Recent Activities

- **Relocation of Headquarters:** In April 2017, the ICCO moved its headquarters from London to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, to be closer to the major cocoa-producing regions.
- **Market Analysis:** The ICCO projected an 11% decline in global cocoa supply for the 2023–2024 season, leading to a deficit of approximately 374,000 tons.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Global Cocoa Supply Concerns:** In March 2024, cocoa bean prices surged to \$10,000 per tonne due to adverse weather in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, which produce 60% of the global supply. This situation highlighted issues such as underinvestment, deforestation, and child labor in the cocoa industry.

India-Specific Developments

- **Emerging Market Status:** India is recognized as an emerging market for cocoa consumption. The ICCO has suggested that India should consider becoming a member to actively participate in policy discussions and benefit from international cooperation in the cocoa sector.
- **Market Growth Potential:** The ICCO predicts that India could become the fastest-growing cocoa market due to the country's rising wealth and currently low demand base.

- **Domestic Production:** In the 2015–2016 period, India harvested 17,200 metric tonnes of cocoa beans, accounting for only 1.1% of the yield in Côte d'Ivoire, the largest cocoa bean producer globally.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Comprehensive Focus:** Unlike some commodity organizations that focus solely on trade, the ICCO addresses a wide range of issues, including market stabilization, sustainability, and socio-economic development in the cocoa sector.
- **Balanced Representation:** The ICCO's membership includes both producing and consuming countries, facilitating balanced decision-making and policy formulation.
- **Data and Expertise:** The organization is a leading source of cocoa statistics and offers expertise in market analysis, project development, and capacity-building programs.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While there may not have been direct questions on the ICCO, topics related to international commodity organizations, global trade agreements, and India's role in such organizations are pertinent to the UPSC syllabus.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Formation and Purpose:** Established in 1973 to implement the International Cocoa Agreement, aiming to stabilize the cocoa market and promote sustainable practices.
 - » **Headquarters:** Relocated to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 2017 to be closer to major cocoa-producing regions.
 - » **India's Potential Membership:** As an emerging market for cocoa consumption, India's potential membership in the ICCO could influence domestic cocoa policies and international trade relations.
 - » **Sustainability Initiatives:** The ICCO's focus on sustainable cocoa production

aligns with global environmental goals, making it relevant for topics on sustainable agriculture and international environmental agreements.

6. Development and Humanitarian Organizations

These organizations work to improve people's lives by reducing poverty, providing food and medicine, and responding to disasters. The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and **World Food Programme (WFP)** help poor countries develop and provide food to those in need. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** deals with global health issues like COVID-19, while **UNICEF** focuses on helping children. Many of these organizations are part of the UN system and aim to create a better world for everyone.

6.1 IFRC

Name of the Organization

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network, comprising 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It coordinates international assistance to respond to disasters and health emergencies, promotes humanitarian values, and supports community resilience and development.

Year of Formation

- Founded in 1919.

Why they formed it?

In the aftermath of World War I, there was a pressing need for a unified organization to coordinate international relief efforts and address health crises. The IFRC was established to unite national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, facilitating collaboration and enhancing the efficiency of humanitarian aid.

Type

- International non-governmental organization (NGO).

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Geneva, Switzerland.

Members

- 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Who are its members?

Membership includes National Societies from nearly every country, reflecting a diverse and global commitment to humanitarian principles. Notable inclusions are societies from both developed and developing nations, fostering a comprehensive approach to disaster response and community health.

India's Membership

- **Yes** – India's national Red Cross (Indian Red Cross Society) is a member of the IFRC. (*Countries per se aren't members, but India's Red Cross represents it in the Federation.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Disaster Response and Recovery:** Coordinates international assistance during natural and man-made disasters
- **Health and Care:** Implements health programs, including disease prevention, water and sanitation, and maternal health.
- **Capacity Building:** Strengthens the capabilities of National Societies through training and resource support.
- **Promotion of Humanitarian Values:** Advocates for the protection of human dignity and the alleviation of human suffering.

Recent Activities

- **COVID-19 Response:** Mobilized resources

and volunteers to support vaccination campaigns, health education, and provision of medical supplies globally.

- **Climate Disaster Insurance Payout:** In 2024, the IFRC activated an insurance policy following multiple climate-related disasters, resulting in a payout of over 7 million Swiss francs to support 1.5 million victims in countries like Nigeria and Nepal.
- **Aid Worker Safety Advocacy:** Addressed the increasing fatalities among aid workers, with 187 reported deaths as of August 2024, and called for enhanced protection measures.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Emergency Appeal for Lebanon:** In November 2024, launched an international emergency appeal for 100 million Swiss francs to support humanitarian efforts in Lebanon amid escalating conflicts.
- **Advocacy for Local Aid Workers:** Highlighted the disproportionate impact of violence on local humanitarian workers and urged for greater protection and recognition of their sacrifices.

India-Specific Developments

- **COVID-19 Response:** The Indian Red Cross Society, supported by the IFRC, played a pivotal role in health and hygiene promotion, case detection, surveillance, and contact tracing during the COVID-19 surge in India.
- **Tuberculosis Control Project:** The Indian Red Cross Society's Karnataka State Branch has been implementing a Tuberculosis Control Project since January 2009, funded by USAID and UK aid through the IFRC, in collaboration with the Tuberculosis Association of India and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Global Reach with Local Presence:** Unlike many international NGOs, the IFRC operates through a network of National

Societies deeply embedded in local communities, enabling culturally sensitive and immediate responses.

- **Comprehensive Scope:** Addresses a wide range of humanitarian issues, from disaster response to health crises, guided by universal principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While direct questions on the IFRC are uncommon, understanding its role is crucial for topics related to international organizations, disaster management, and global health initiatives.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Foundation:** Established in 1919 to coordinate international humanitarian efforts.
 - » **Membership:** Comprises 192 National Societies, including the Indian Red Cross Society.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - » **Core Areas:** Disaster response, health services, capacity building, and promotion of humanitarian values.
 - » **India's Engagement:** Active collaboration through the Indian Red Cross Society in health programs and disaster response initiatives.

Understanding the IFRC's structure and functions provides insights into global humanitarian coordination, which is pertinent for topics in international relations and disaster management within the UPSC syllabus.

6.2 MSF

Name of the Organization

- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders.

What it is (Nature and Function)

MSF is an international, independent medical humanitarian organization that provides medical assistance to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare.

Year of Formation

- Founded in 1971.

Why they formed it?

In response to the Nigerian Civil War and the famine in Biafra, a group of French doctors and journalists recognized the need for a new aid organization that would prioritize medical ethics and bear witness to the plight of affected populations. This led to the establishment of MSF.

Type

- Non-governmental organization (NGO).

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Geneva, Switzerland.

Members

- MSF operates in over 70 countries, with a workforce comprising tens of thousands of health professionals, logistics and administrative staff, most of whom are hired locally.

Who are its members?

- MSF's teams are composed of both international and local staff, ensuring culturally sensitive and effective medical care. The organization maintains independence by primarily relying on private donations, allowing it to operate impartially and free from political or economic influence.

India's Membership

- **No** – Not applicable. MSF is an independent humanitarian NGO, not a state-based

organization, so India as a country has no membership. (*India does host MSF field missions, but there is no state membership structure.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Emergency Medical Assistance:** Responds rapidly to natural disasters, conflicts, and disease outbreaks.
- **Long-term Medical Care:** Provides treatment for chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malnutrition.
- **Advocacy:** Raises awareness about humanitarian crises and advocates for access to essential medicines.

Recent Activities

- **COVID-19 Response:** MSF adapted its operations to support COVID-19 treatment and prevention efforts worldwide.
- **Conflict Zones:** Continued medical support in areas like Yemen, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- **Program Closure in Russia:** In September 2024, MSF closed its programs in Russia following an order from the Russian Justice Ministry to deregister.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Charity Appeal Partnership:** In December 2024, MSF was selected as one of the beneficiaries of The Guardian and Observer's charity appeal, focusing on aiding those affected by global conflicts.
- **Operations in Conflict Zones:** MSF continues to provide critical medical care in conflict-affected regions, including Gaza, where teams have been addressing the needs of displaced populations amid ongoing violence.

India-Specific Developments

- **Tuberculosis and HIV Care:** MSF runs programs in India aimed at improving care for tuberculosis (TB), HIV, and other infectious diseases, as well as increasing

access to essential healthcare for remote communities.

- **COVID-19 Response in Manipur:** In 2021, MSF's COVID-19 emergency response in Imphal, Manipur, included setting up treatment facilities and supporting local healthcare systems.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Operational Independence:** MSF maintains financial and operational independence, allowing it to provide impartial medical care without political interference.
- **Witnessing and Advocacy:** Beyond medical assistance, MSF actively speaks out about humanitarian crises, leveraging its on-the-ground experience to advocate for change.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While there may not have been direct questions on MSF, understanding its role is pertinent for topics related to international organizations, humanitarian aid, and global health.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Foundation:** Established in 1971 in response to the Biafra crisis.
 - » **Headquarters:** Located in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - » **Operations:** Active in over 70 countries, including significant programs in India.
 - » **Core Principles:** Impartiality, independence, and neutrality guide MSF's actions.
 - » **Recognition:** Awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1999** for its humanitarian efforts.

Understanding MSF's mission and operations provides insights into the complexities of delivering medical humanitarian aid in diverse and challenging environments, aligning with topics in international relations and global health within the UPSC syllabus.

7. Human Rights and International Justice Organizations

These organizations protect people's rights and punish those who commit serious crimes. The **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** and **Amnesty International** work to stop human rights violations like torture and unfair treatment. Courts like the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** and the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** investigate war crimes and punish leaders who commit crimes against humanity. These organizations make sure that justice is served globally and that every person's rights are respected.

7.1 International Criminal Court

Name of the Organization

- International Criminal Court (ICC)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The ICC is a permanent international court established to investigate and prosecute individuals accused of the gravest offenses, including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.

Year of Formation

- The Rome Statute, which established the ICC, was adopted on July 17, 1998, and the court began functioning on July 1, 2002.

Why they formed it?

The ICC was created in response to the atrocities committed during the 20th century, aiming to provide a permanent judicial body to hold individuals accountable for serious international crimes, thereby deterring future violations and promoting justice.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- The Hague, Netherlands

Members

- As of January 2025, 125 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to all countries willing to adhere to the Rome Statute. Notably, major powers such as the United States, China, Russia, and India have not joined, often citing concerns over sovereignty and potential political misuse of the court's authority.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not a State Party to the Rome Statute (India has not signed or ratified the ICC treaty).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Investigation and Prosecution:** Pursues individuals responsible for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression.
- **Complementarity:** Acts as a court of last resort, intervening only when national jurisdictions are unwilling or unable to prosecute.
- **Deterrence and Justice:** Aims to deter future atrocities and deliver justice to victims.

Recent Activities

- **Arrest Warrants:** Issued warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin in March 2023 over alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

- **Investigations:** Continued probes into conflicts in Ukraine, Venezuela, Myanmar, and the Philippines.
- **Operational Challenges:** Faced political pressures and non-cooperation from certain member states, impacting its effectiveness.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Arrest Warrants for Israeli Leaders:** In November 2024, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, alleging war crimes during the Gaza conflict.
- **Sanctions by the United States:** In February 2025, the U.S. imposed sanctions on ICC's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, following investigations into alleged war crimes by Israel.

India-Specific Developments

- **Non-Membership:** India remains a non-signatory to the Rome Statute, expressing concerns over jurisdictional sovereignty and potential misuse of the court's powers.
- **Advocacy and Criticism:** Various human rights organizations have urged India to reconsider its stance and join the ICC to strengthen international justice mechanisms.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Permanent Jurisdiction:** Unlike ad hoc tribunals, the ICC is a permanent institution with a broad mandate to address various international crimes.
- **Complementary Role:** Serves as a court of last resort, intervening only when national courts are unable or unwilling to prosecute.
- **Global Reach with Limitations:** While aiming for universal justice, its jurisdiction is limited to member states or situations referred by the UN Security Council.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The ICC has been a topic in international relations sections, with questions focusing on its role, jurisdiction, and India's position regarding the court.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Founded by the Rome Statute in 1998; commenced operations in 2002.
 - » **Jurisdiction:** Handles genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression.
 - » **Membership:** 125 member countries; notable non-members include the USA, China, Russia, and India.
 - » **India's Position:** Active participant in the Rome Statute negotiations but has not joined, citing concerns over sovereignty and potential political misuse.
 - » **Recent Developments:** Issued arrest warrants for high-profile leaders; faced sanctions from non-member states like the USA.

Understanding the ICC's framework, jurisdiction, and the geopolitical dynamics surrounding its operations is crucial for topics related to international law and relations in the UPSC syllabus.

7.2 European Court of Human Rights

Name of the Organization

- European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The ECHR is an international court established to oversee the enforcement of the European Convention on Human Rights. It adjudicates cases alleging violations of the civil and political rights set forth in the Convention by member states.

Year of Formation

- The ECHR was established in 1959.

Why they formed it?

In the aftermath of World War II, European nations sought to prevent the recurrence of atrocities and protect human rights. This led to the drafting of the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950, and subsequently, the establishment of the ECHR to ensure adherence to the Convention.

Type

- Intergovernmental organization

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Strasbourg, France

Members

- The ECHR comprises 46 member states, all of which are members of the Council of Europe.

Who are its members?

Membership is open to European countries committed to upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Notably, the European Union is preparing to sign the European Convention on Human Rights, creating a common European legal space for over 700 million citizens.

India's Membership

- **No** – India is not part of the Council of Europe, so it's not under the ECHR.

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Adjudication:** Hears applications from individuals or states alleging violations of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- **Interpretation:** Provides authoritative interpretations of the Convention's provisions.

- **Enforcement:** Ensures that member states comply with its judgments, thereby upholding human rights standards across Europe.

Recent Activities

- **Climate Change Litigation:** In April 2024, the ECHR ruled in Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland that Switzerland's inadequate action on climate change violated human rights, marking a significant precedent in environmental jurisprudence.
- **Migration and Asylum:** In January 2025, the Court found Greece guilty of systematically pushing back asylum seekers, ordering compensation for violations of human rights conventions.
- **Personal Autonomy:** In January 2025, the ECHR ruled in favor of a French woman who was penalized for refusing sexual relations with her husband, emphasizing the protection of bodily integrity and personal autonomy.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **National Sovereignty Debates:** Discussions have emerged in countries like the UK regarding the influence of the ECHR on domestic legal matters, particularly concerning deportations and immigration policies.
- **Climate Change Accountability:** The ECHR's landmark ruling against Switzerland in 2024 has spurred further climate-related cases, highlighting the Court's role in addressing environmental issues as human rights concerns.

India-Specific Developments

- **Non-Membership:** India is not a member of the Council of Europe and, consequently, not under the jurisdiction of the ECHR.
- **European Parliament Resolutions:** In July 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing concern over human rights situations in India, particularly

regarding ethnic and religious violence. While this does not directly involve the ECHR, it reflects Europe's engagement with human rights issues in India.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Regional Jurisdiction:** Unlike the International Court of Justice, which has a global mandate, the ECHR specifically addresses human rights issues within European member states.
- **Individual Access:** The ECHR allows individuals to directly file applications alleging human rights violations, a feature not commonly available in other international courts.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While direct questions on the ECHR are uncommon, understanding its role is pertinent for topics on international human rights mechanisms and India's foreign relations.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Establishment:** Founded in 1959 to enforce the European Convention on Human Rights.
 - » **Jurisdiction:** Covers 46 European countries, ensuring adherence to human rights standards.
 - » **Significant Rulings:** Has delivered landmark judgments influencing human rights law, including recent decisions on climate change and migration.
 - » **India's Position:** Not a member, but European human rights perspectives can impact international relations and policy discussions relevant to India.

Understanding the ECHR provides insights into the functioning of regional human rights courts and their influence on international law, which is valuable for topics in the UPSC syllabus related to global human rights frameworks and diplomatic relations.

7.3 Amnesty International

Name of the Organization

- Amnesty International

What it is (Nature and Function)

Amnesty International is a global non-governmental organization focused on human rights advocacy. It conducts research and generates action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated.

Year of Formation

- Founded on May 28, 1961.

Why they formed it?

Amnesty International was established in response to the global need for a unified movement to protect individuals' rights. Its formation aimed to address and prevent violations of rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), especially focusing on freedom of speech, conscience, and protection against torture.

Type

- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- London, United Kingdom

Members

- Amnesty International comprises a global movement of more than 10 million people across over 150 countries and territories.

Who are its members?

- Membership is open to individuals worldwide who support human rights advocacy. The organization prides itself

regions, Amnesty International addresses a broad spectrum of human rights issues worldwide.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** Questions have been asked regarding the role of international NGOs in human rights advocacy, with specific references to organizations like Amnesty International.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Founding Year:** 1961
 - » **Headquarters:** London, UK
 - » **Global Presence:** Over 10 million members in more than 150 countries.
 - » **Core Activities:** Research, advocacy, education, and lobbying in human rights.
 - » **India Operations:** Suspended in 2020 due to governmental actions; continues to monitor and report on India's human rights situation.

Understanding Amnesty International's role and challenges, especially in the context of India, is crucial for topics related to international human rights mechanisms and civil society's role in governance.

7.4 Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Name of the Organization

- Human Rights Watch (HRW)

What it is (Nature and Function)

Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights. It investigates and reports on abuses happening worldwide, aiming to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for victims.

Year of Formation

- Founded in 1978.

Why they formed it?

Initially established as Helsinki Watch, HRW was created to monitor the compliance of Soviet bloc countries with the Helsinki Accords. Over time, it expanded its focus to address human rights violations globally.

Type

- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- New York City, United States

Members

- HRW comprises over 250 staff members globally, including professionals such as journalists, lawyers, and academics.

Who are its members?

HRW's team is selected based on expertise in human rights, law, journalism, and related fields. The organization maintains independence by refusing government funding, relying instead on donations from private individuals and foundations.

India's Membership

- **No** – Not applicable. HRW is an NGO; countries do not join it (it independently monitors human rights worldwide, including in India).

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Research and Documentation:** Conducts on-the-ground investigations to document human rights abuses.
- **Advocacy and Public Awareness:** Publishes detailed reports to inform the public and influence policymakers.
- **Litigation and Legal Action:** Engages

in strategic litigation to hold violators accountable.

- **Campaigns and Partnerships:** Collaborates with local organizations to promote human rights reforms.

Recent Activities

- **Global Reporting:** Released annual World Reports summarizing human rights conditions in various countries.
- **Thematic Focus:** Addressed issues such as freedom of expression, women's rights, and abuses in conflict zones.
- **Advocacy Efforts:** Engaged with international bodies to press for action against human rights violators.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Global Human Rights Concerns:** In January 2025, HRW highlighted the failure of Western democracies to lead in human rights advocacy, citing crises in regions like Gaza and Sudan.
- **Leadership Warnings:** HRW's Executive Director, Tirana Hassan, expressed concerns in January 2025 about potential threats to freedoms with the possible return of leaders like Donald Trump.

India-Specific Developments

- **Legislative Changes:** In July 2024, the Indian government enacted new criminal laws, raising concerns about expanded police powers and potential impacts on freedoms of expression and fair trials.
- **Minority Rights:** HRW reported increased violence and harassment against minorities in India, particularly following the 2024 elections.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Independence:** HRW maintains strict independence by not accepting government funding, allowing for unbiased reporting.

- **Comprehensive Reporting:** Operates in over 100 countries, providing extensive coverage of human rights issues.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Works closely with local organizations to amplify impact and support grassroots movements.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** While direct questions on HRW are rare, understanding its role is crucial for topics on international human rights mechanisms and NGOs.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Founding Year:** 1978
 - » **Headquarters:** New York City, USA
 - » **Scope:** Operates in over 100 countries
 - » **Funding:** Does not accept government funds
 - » **India Focus:** Reports on issues like minority rights, freedom of expression, and legislative impacts on civil liberties.

Understanding HRW's operations and findings provides valuable insights into global human rights challenges, essential for UPSC topics on international relations, human rights, and the role of NGOs.

8. Environmental and Climate Organizations

These organizations focus on protecting the environment, stopping pollution, and fighting climate change. The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** leads global efforts to protect nature. The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** provides scientific reports on climate change. Groups like **IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)** and **WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)** work on saving forests, animals, and oceans. These organizations push countries to adopt clean energy, reduce carbon emissions, and take care of the planet.

Environment and Climate PDF shall be released separately. It will cover all Environmental related organisations and agreements. Join our telegram channel and visit our website to freely download the PDF.



9. Cultural and Identity-Based Organizations

These organizations bring together countries based on shared culture, language, or religion. The **Commonwealth of Nations** is a group of countries that were once ruled by the British Empire but still work together on trade and education. **La Francophonie** connects French-speaking countries, while the **Arab League** unites Arabic-speaking nations. The **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** represents Muslim-majority countries and focuses on issues affecting the Islamic world. These organizations strengthen cultural ties and promote unity among similar nations.

Most of these organisations are already covered in other sections.

10. International Non-Governmental and Multi-Stakeholder Organizations

These are not controlled by governments but have a major influence on global issues. Groups like **Greenpeace** and **WWF** fight for environmental protection. **Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)** provides free medical aid in war zones and disaster-hit areas. **World Economic Forum (WEF)** brings business and political leaders together to discuss global challenges. These organizations rely on donations and volunteers and often work where governments cannot.

10.1 Transparency International (TI)

Name of the Organization

- Transparency International (TI)

What it is (Nature and Function)

Transparency International is a global civil society organization dedicated to combating corruption and promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity across all sectors of society.

Year of Formation

- Founded in 1993.

Why they formed it?

Transparency International was established to address the pervasive issue of corruption worldwide. Recognizing corruption's detrimental impact on development, governance, and societal trust, the organization aimed to bring global attention to the problem and mobilize collective action against it.

Type

- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Berlin, Germany

Members

- Transparency International operates through a network of over 100 national chapters worldwide.

Who are its members?

Each national chapter is an independent entity focused on addressing corruption within its respective country. Membership criteria for these chapters include a commitment to Transparency International's mission and adherence to its guiding principles.

India's Membership

- **No** – TI is an NGO; countries don't join TI. (*India's status is as a country that TI evaluates for corruption index, not as a member.*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Research and Analysis:** Publishes the annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), assessing perceived levels of public sector corruption in countries worldwide.
- **Advocacy and Campaigning:** Engages in global and local campaigns to raise awareness about corruption and advocate for policy reforms.
- **Capacity Building:** Supports governments, businesses, and civil society organizations in developing and implementing effective anti-corruption measures.
- **Legal Assistance:** Provides legal advice and support to victims and witnesses of corruption.

Recent Activities

- **Corruption Perceptions Index 2024:** The

latest CPI revealed that many countries received their worst scores in over a decade, indicating persistent challenges in combating public sector corruption.

- **Global Advocacy:** Continued efforts to highlight the link between corruption and global challenges, such as climate change, emphasizing the need for transparent and accountable governance to address these issues effectively.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Global Corruption Concerns:** The 2024 CPI highlighted that 47 out of 180 surveyed countries had their lowest scores, reflecting growing concerns about public sector corruption.
- **Regional Highlights:** The index noted significant declines in countries like the United States, France, and Germany, while countries such as South Sudan and Somalia remained at the bottom of the rankings.

India-Specific Developments

- **Corruption Perceptions Index 2023:** India scored 39 out of 100, ranking 93rd out of 180 countries, indicating ongoing challenges in addressing public sector corruption.
- **Transparency International India:** The national chapter has been active in raising awareness about corruption and advocating for greater transparency and accountability in governance.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Global Reach:** With over 100 national chapters, Transparency International has a widespread presence, enabling it to address corruption issues on both global and local scales.
- **Flagship Publications:** The annual Corruption Perceptions Index is a widely recognized tool that provides a comparative assessment of corruption perceptions worldwide.

- **Collaborative Approach:** Works closely with governments, businesses, and civil society to develop and implement anti-corruption strategies, fostering a multi-stakeholder approach.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **Past UPSC Questions:** The UPSC exam has previously included questions related to global anti-corruption measures and indices, such as the Corruption Perceptions Index.
- **Key Facts to Remember:**
 - » **Founding Year:** 1993
 - » **Headquarters:** Berlin, Germany
 - » **Global Presence:** Over 100 national chapters worldwide
 - » **India's CPI 2023 Score:** 39/100, ranking 93rd out of 180 countries
 - » **Core Activities:** Research (e.g., Corruption Perceptions Index), advocacy, capacity building, and legal assistance

Understanding Transparency International's role and initiatives is crucial for topics related to governance, ethics, and international efforts to combat corruption, all of which are pertinent to the UPSC syllabus.

10.2 GAVI

Name of the Organization

- Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

What it is (Nature and Function)

Gavi is an international organization that brings together public and private sectors to improve access to vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.

Year of Formation

- Established in 2000.

Why they formed it?

In the late 1990s, immunization rates in developing countries were stagnating or declining, leaving millions of children vulnerable to preventable diseases. Gavi was created to address this gap by providing financial and technical support to strengthen health systems and make vaccines more affordable and accessible.

Type

- Public-private global health partnership.

Status

- Active.

Headquarters

- Geneva, Switzerland.

Members

- **Gavi operates through a broad alliance that includes:**
 - » Governments of developing and donor countries.
 - » The World Health Organization (WHO).
 - » United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
 - » The World Bank.
 - » Vaccine manufacturers.
 - » Research and technical agencies.
 - » Civil society organizations.
 - » The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Who are its members?

Gavi’s inclusive partnership model ensures collaboration across various sectors, leveraging the strengths of each member to achieve common immunization goals. Notably, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was a key founding partner, providing significant initial funding.

India’s Membership

- **Yes** – India is a major partner country of Gavi. It has had representation on the Gavi Board (e.g. India’s Health Minister served

as a Gavi Board member for 2021–2023). *(India both contributes to and receives vaccine assistance from Gavi.)*

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Vaccine Financing and Support:** Provides funding and negotiates with manufacturers to make vaccines more affordable for low-income countries.
- **Health Systems Strengthening:** Offers technical assistance to improve healthcare delivery and infrastructure.
- **Market Shaping:** Works to influence vaccine markets to ensure sufficient supply and lower prices.
- **Innovative Financing:** Utilizes mechanisms like the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) to secure long-term funding.

Recent Activities

- **COVID-19 Response:** Co-led the COVAX initiative to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines globally.
- **Malaria Vaccine Rollout:** Supported the introduction of the world’s first malaria vaccine in African countries.
- **Funding Challenges:** Faced financial constraints due to economic pressures on donor countries, leading to efforts in promoting “vaccine bonds” to secure necessary funds.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Funding Concerns:** The UK government is poised to significantly cut its funding for Gavi, raising concerns about the potential impact on global vaccination efforts.
- **Mpox Vaccine Distribution:** Collaborated with the Canadian government to deliver 200,000 doses of mpox vaccine to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

India-Specific Developments

In the past two years, Gavi, the Vaccine

Alliance, has significantly strengthened its collaboration with the Government of India to enhance immunization efforts and address challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

a. New Partnership to Protect Millions of Children

- **Three-Year Strategic Partnership (2023–2026):** In February 2023, Gavi and the Government of India launched a partnership aiming to reduce the number of “zero-dose” children—those who have not received any routine vaccines—by 30% by 2026.
- **Financial Commitment:** Gavi has pledged US\$ 250 million to support this initiative, focusing on:
 - » Identifying and vaccinating zero-dose children.
 - » Strengthening health systems.
 - » Introducing the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) into India’s routine immunization schedule.
- **Targeted Interventions:** The partnership has identified 143 priority districts across 11 states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, where immunization coverage is low. Tailored strategies are being implemented in these regions to ensure comprehensive vaccine coverage.

b. Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Immunization

- **Rise in Zero-Dose Children:** The pandemic disrupted routine immunization services, increasing the number of zero-dose children in India from 1.6 million in 2019 to 2.7 million in 2021.
- **The Big Catch-Up Initiative:** Launched during World Immunization Week in April 2023, this global effort aims to restore immunization progress lost during the pandemic. Gavi’s Board has invested an initial US\$ 290 million to fund catch-up doses for children missed during this

period.

c. Leveraging Digital Health Innovations

- **eVIN and Co-WIN Platforms:** India’s Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN), developed in 2015 with Gavi’s support, was adapted during the pandemic into the Co-WIN platform to manage COVID-19 vaccinations. This digital infrastructure has been pivotal in ensuring efficient vaccine distribution and is being highlighted in G20 dialogues to influence the global digital health agenda.

d. Financial Contributions and Sustainability

- **Increased Domestic Funding:** India has progressively increased its financial commitment to immunization programs, doubling its contribution to Gavi to US\$ 8 million for the 2018–2022 period. This reflects India’s transition towards self-financing and sustainable immunization efforts.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Public-Private Partnership:** Unlike some organizations that are solely governmental or non-governmental, Gavi’s model integrates both sectors for a comprehensive approach.
- **Innovative Financing:** Employs unique funding mechanisms like vaccine bonds through IFFIm, setting it apart from traditional funding models.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **UPSC Relevance:** Topics related to global health initiatives, public-private partnerships, and international organizations are pertinent to the General Studies papers, particularly GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Science and Technology).
- **Key Facts:**
 - » Gavi was established in 2000 to improve vaccine access in low-income countries.

- » It operates from Geneva, Switzerland.
- » India has been both a beneficiary and a donor, contributing US\$8 million for 2018–2022.
- » Gavi co-leads the COVAX initiative for equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Understanding Gavi’s role provides insights into global health governance, the impact of public-private partnerships, and India’s engagement in international health initiatives—key areas for the UPSC examination.

10.3 International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Name of the Organization

- International Olympic Committee (IOC)

What it is (Nature and Function)

The IOC is an international, non-governmental organization that serves as the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement. It oversees the organization of the modern Olympic Games and promotes Olympism worldwide.

Year of Formation

- 1894

Why they formed it?

The IOC was established to revive the ancient Olympic Games, aiming to foster international cooperation, peace, and the promotion of physical education through organized sports competitions.

Type

- International Organization **Non-Governmental**

Status

- Active

Headquarters

- Lausanne, Switzerland

Members

- As of 2025, the IOC comprises 109 active members and 39 honorary members. Membership includes individuals representing various countries, selected for their contributions to sport and Olympism.

Who are its members?

- Members are elected by the IOC Session and are considered representatives of the IOC in their respective countries, not delegates of their countries within the IOC.

India’s Membership

- **No** – Nations are not direct members of the IOC (National Olympic Committees send athletes; IOC members are individuals). (*India’s National Olympic Committee is recognized by the IOC, but India as a country is not an IOC “member state.”*)

What it does (Key Objectives)

- **Organizing the Olympic Games:** Oversees the selection of host cities and ensures the successful staging of the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.
- **Promoting Olympism:** Encourages the practice of sport to promote physical and mental well-being, education, and international understanding.
- **Supporting Athletes:** Provides financial and educational resources to athletes worldwide.
- **Ensuring Fair Play:** Implements anti-doping measures and upholds the integrity of sport.

Recent Activities

- **2030 and 2034 Winter Olympics Host Selection:** In July 2024, the IOC awarded the 2030 Winter Olympics to the French Alps and the 2034 Winter Olympics to Salt Lake City, Utah.

- **Inaugural Olympic Esports Games:** Announced in 2024, the first Olympic Esports Games are scheduled for 2027 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- **Leadership Transition:** Current IOC President Thomas Bach is set to conclude his term in 2025, with elections for a new president scheduled for March 2025.

Recent News & Initiatives

- **Olympism365 Initiative:** Launched to drive social change through cross-sector collaborative funding, aiming to make sport more accessible and inclusive.
- **Policy on Gender Eligibility:** The IOC is poised to implement policies ensuring that only biological women compete in women's sports categories, addressing ongoing debates about fairness in female competitions.

India-Specific Developments

- **Recognition of Indian Athletes:** In August 2024, Indian Olympic shooter Abhinav Bindra was awarded the prestigious Olympic Order for his contributions to sport.
- **Youth Olympic Games Participation:** India continues to actively participate in Youth Olympic events, fostering young talent and promoting sports at the grassroots level.

Comparison with other Orgs

- **Global Reach:** Unlike other international sports organizations that focus on specific sports, the IOC encompasses multiple disciplines, making it a unifying body for global sports.
- **Olympic Solidarity:** The IOC provides financial assistance to National Olympic Committees worldwide, promoting the development of sport universally.

Relevance to UPSC Exam

- **UPSC Relevance:** The IOC's role in

international sports governance, its initiatives promoting global peace and cooperation, and India's participation in the Olympics are pertinent topics for the General Studies papers, especially GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Sports and Development).

- **Key Facts:**

- » The IOC was founded in 1894 to revive the Olympic Games.
- » Headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- » India has been an active participant in the Olympic Movement, with athletes achieving significant milestones.

Understanding the IOC's structure, functions, and recent initiatives provides insights into global sports governance and India's role in the international sports arena, essential for comprehensive UPSC exam preparation.