

CURRENT AFFAIRS: 22.06.2026

Mombasa Declaration Adopted to Combat Illegal Fishing

The **Mombasa Declaration** was adopted at the **11th Our Ocean Conference** in **Mombasa, Kenya**, by countries from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean and the Pacific to strengthen action against **illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**.

- **Coalition for Fisheries Transparency:** It was developed with support from the **Coalition for Fisheries Transparency**, a global network of over **60 civil society organisations** working to improve transparency and accountability in fisheries governance and management.
- **About the Declaration:** It is a call to action for **coastal and flag States to improve fisheries transparency**, especially through better collection, sharing and public access to information related to fishing vessels and fishing activities.
- **Governance Mechanism:** It supports the **Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency**, which outlines **10 low-cost policy principles** aimed at strengthening fisheries governance and ensuring sustainable marine resource management.
- **Key Commitments:** Signatory countries agreed to **introduce transparency reforms such as modernising vessel registries, publishing fishing authorisations, improving vessel ownership data** and strengthening information-sharing mechanisms.
- **Participating Countries:** Countries such as Belgium, Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Somalia, South Korea, France, The Gambia, Dominican Republic, Republic of the Congo and others endorsed the declaration, showing broad global support. (**India is not a signatory**).
- **Need:** IUU fishing threatens marine ecosystems, coastal communities, small-scale fishers, food security and livelihoods, especially in **developing and low-income countries** dependent on fisheries.
- **Impact:** IUU fishing is estimated to cost the global economy up to **\$50 billion annually, while also distorting markets**, reducing income for legitimate fishers and contributing to declining fish stocks.
- **Concerns:** The issue is linked to serious **human rights violations**, including **forced labour, exploitation, and unsafe working conditions** in parts of the global fishing industry.
- **Significance:** Countries that signed the Mombasa Declaration are expected to begin implementing its commitments, while a wider campaign will encourage more nations to join before the next **Our Ocean Conference in 2027**, making transparency a global norm in fisheries governance.

Bimal N. Patel Elected as ITLOS Judge

Indian jurist **Prof. Bimal N. Patel** has been elected as a Judge of the **International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)** for the 2026–2035 term, strengthening India's profile in international maritime law and multilateral legal institutions.

- Bimal N. Patel is a member of the **UN International Law Commission**, Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Public International Law at Rashtriya Raksha University, and has earlier served as Director of Gujarat National Law University and Member of the **21st Law Commission of India**.

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)

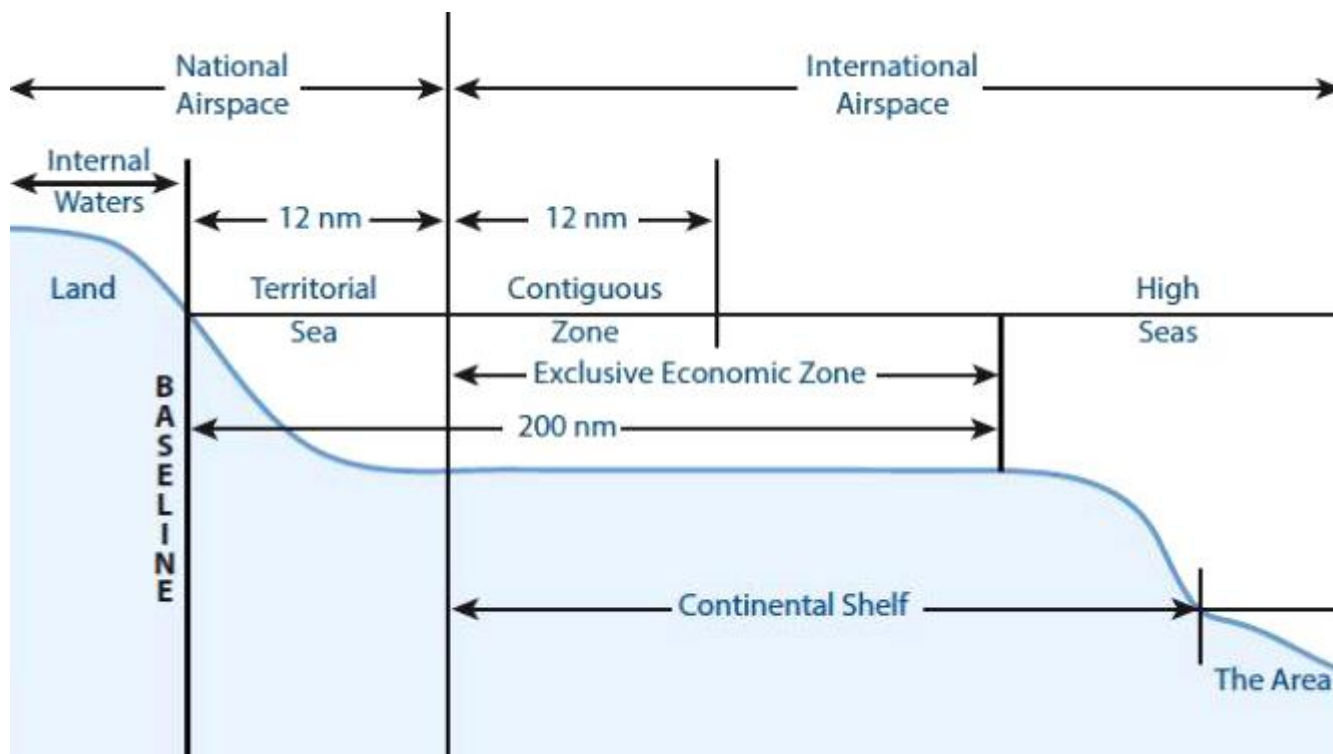
- **About:** ITLOS is an **independent judicial body established in 1996** under the framework of the **1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** to adjudicate disputes relating to the interpretation and application of the Convention.
- **Headquarters:** The Tribunal is based in **Hamburg, Germany**, and functions as one of the key dispute-settlement mechanisms under UNCLOS.
- **Jurisdiction:** ITLOS deals with disputes related to **maritime boundary delimitation, navigation, conservation and management of marine resources, protection of the marine environment, marine scientific research**, and matters under other international agreements that confer jurisdiction on it.
- **Composition:** ITLOS consists of **21 independent members**, elected by secret ballot by States Parties to UNCLOS, selected for their integrity, fairness and recognised competence in the law of the sea.
- **India and UNCLOS:** India is a party to **UNCLOS since 1995** and supports rules-based maritime governance, peaceful settlement of ocean disputes and multilateral cooperation in the maritime domain.
 - **Dr Neeru Chadha was the first Indian woman judge of ITLOS and only the second woman judge in the Tribunal's history**, while Prof. Bimal N. Patel's election further strengthens India's judicial presence in the Tribunal.
- **Significance:** The election reflects India's growing role in international maritime law, ocean governance, UNCLOS-based dispute settlement, **blue economy** regulation, maritime security and protection of marine resources, making it important for global diplomacy and India's maritime interests.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982

- The **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982** is an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities.
- It is also known as **Law of the Sea**. It divides marine areas into **five main zones** namely- **Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and the **High Seas**.
- It is the only international convention which **stipulates a framework for state jurisdiction in maritime spaces**. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones.
- It provides **the backbone for offshore governance by coastal states and those navigating the oceans**.
- It not only zones coastal states' offshore areas but also **provides specific guidance for states' rights and responsibilities** in the five concentric zones.

- While UNCLOS has been signed and ratified by nearly all the coastal countries in the **South China Sea**, its interpretation is still hotly disputed.
- There is a maritime dispute in the **East China Sea** as well.

Maritime Zones



Exercise Khaan Quest 2026

An **Indian Army contingent** participated in the opening ceremony of **Multilateral Exercise Khaan Quest 2026** in **Mongolia**, scheduled from 20th June to 3 July 2026.

- **About:** Exercise Khaan Quest is a multilateral military exercise that prepares participating defence forces for United Nations peacekeeping and peace support operations in a multinational environment.
- **Historical Background:** Started in **2003** as a bilateral exercise between the **United States** and Mongolian Defence Forces, it became a multilateral peacekeeping exercise in 2006, with the 2026 edition marking its 23rd iteration.

- **Participation:** The 2026 edition features **troops from 18 countries**, including a **40-member Indian Army** contingent comprising troops from a battalion of the JAT Regiment and personnel from other Arms and Services.
- **Objective:** The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, cooperation, operational readiness and coordination among participating militaries for peace support operations under **Chapter VII of the UN Charter**.
 - **Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter** deals with action that the **UN Security Council** may take in response to **threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression**, including enforcement measures to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- **Training Focus:** Includes **joint planning, tactical drills, checkpoint establishment, cordon and search operations, patrolling, evacuation of civilians, counter-IED drills, combat first aid, and casualty evacuation**.
- **Strategic Significance:** India's participation reflects its commitment to global peace, stability, international cooperation and UN peacekeeping, while also strengthening its strategic partnership with Mongolia.

Joint Military Exercises of India with Other Countries

Name of Exercise	Country
Garuda Shakti	Indonesia
Ekuverin	Maldives
Hand-in-Hand	China
Bold Kurukshetra	Singapore
Mitra Shakti	Sri Lanka
Nomadic Elephant	Mongolia
Shakti	France
Surya Kiran	Nepal
Yudh Abhyas	USA