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World Wildlife Day 2023 & CITES

Why in news?

March 3 is known as World Wildlife Day (WWD), marked annually to draw attention to issues of conservation of flora and fauna.

Why is World Wildlife Day marked?

- In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed March 3 as the UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of protecting the world's wild animals and plants.
- **CITES** - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed in 1973 on this day.
- It is considered a landmark agreement on conservation that focuses on ensuring the sustainability of endangered species.
- **Theme for 2023** - Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation.

What is the CITES?

- CITES is an **international agreement** between governments.
- **Aim** - Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
- **Protected Species** - It accords varying degrees of protection to more than 37,000 species of animals and plants.
- They range from live animals and plants to wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, medicines, etc.
- **Secretariat** - The CITES Secretariat is administered by UNEP and is located in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **COP** - The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme consensus-based decision-making body, comprises all its parties.
- Currently, there are 184 parties to the convention, including India.
- **CITES in India** - Both the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, a statutory body under the Ministry, are meant to combat wildlife crime.
- It assists and advises the customs authorities in the inspection of the consignments of flora and fauna as per the provisions of the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972.

How does CITES work?

- The species covered under CITES are listed in 3 Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need.
- **Appendix I** - It includes species *threatened with extinction*.
- Trade in specimens of these species is permitted rarely, only in exceptional circumstances, such as gorillas, and lions from India.
- **Appendix II** - It includes species *not necessarily threatened* with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to ensure their survival.
- For example, certain kinds of foxes and Hippopotamuses.
- **Appendix III** - It contains species that are *protected in at least one country*, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.
- For example, Bengal fox or the Golden Jackal from India.

To know more about CITES - [Click Here](#).

Why is CITES criticised?

- **Legitimises Illegal Trade** - Having wildlife allowed to be traded, legitimises their movement and increases their illegal trade.
- **Lagging behind** - CITES protections lag after a species is determined to be threatened by international trade.
- For example, while pangolins were finally added to Appendix I in 2017, an estimated million were trafficked between 2000 and 2013.
- Many animals that are in the wildlife trade are not protected by CITES.
- **Trade related issues** - If a party violates the convention, CITES can respond with sanctions, which prevent a country from trading in CITES-listed species.
- **Voluntary Membership** - Due to the voluntary nature of CITES membership, nobody is strictly bound to follow its direction.
- **Laxity** - CITES has been questioned on matters such as the ivory trade being allowed at times despite the convention banning it in 1989.
- CITES has had some **successes**, helping in recovering the South American vicuña (a small member of the camel family) and the Nile crocodile.

Reference

1. [Indian Express | World Wildlife Day 2023](#)



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