UNSC Reforms:

Context:

India and nations like Germany, Brazil and Japan are “absolutely needed” as permanent members of a reformed and enlarged UN Security Council to better reflect contemporary realities and the addition of these key members to the UN high-table is among France’s “strategic” priorities, the French envoy to the UN has said.

Reform Proposal:

Reform of the UNSC encompasses five key issues:

– Categories of membership
– The question of the veto held by the five permanent members
– Regional representation
– The size of an enlarged Council and its working methods
– Security Council-General Assembly relationship

There is also a proposal to admit more permanent members.

Reforms till date:

– In 1965, the number of elected, non-permanent seats without veto power was extended from six to ten, bringing the Council up to its current configuration.
– In 2015 General Assembly adopted a framework text for further discussion on UNSC reform by means of an Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN).
– This indicates most of the members support the restructuring of UNSC.

G-4 and India’s quest for a permanent seat:
India has been very vocal in demanding for a permanent seat in UNSC.

India is also a part of G-4, a group of 4 nations (India, Brazil, Germany and Japan) to lobby for permanent positions on the UNSC or at least to make the council more representative.

Many member-states have been pledging support for our aspiration for permanent membership.

Several P-5 countries have also announced their support. At present, China is the only P-5 member opposing India’s bid.

G-4 wants to expand the permanent seats in the UNSC to 10 to include 6 new members G-4 nations apart from one seat to Africa and one seat to Arabs.

The G-4’s initial position was for the same rights as the present permanent members, essentially the veto right.

Arguments in favour of India:

- As the world’s largest democracy, the second most populous and, perhaps, the most diverse nation, the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, India clearly would meet almost any criteria to be a member of UNSC.
- On other hand, India was among the founding members of United Nations, and it has been the temporary member of UNSC for 7 terms.
- It is the second largest and a one of the largest constant contributor of troops to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.
- India has contributed nearly 160,000 troops, participated in more than 43 missions, more than twice as many as the UN’s five big powers combined.
- India is party to six core human rights conventions. India has always been on the forefront in fight against colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination.
- India was the first country to raise the issue of apartheid and racial discrimination being practised in the South Africa.
India, since long time, has been demanding expansion of UNSC and its inclusion as permanent member in it.

It has been a member of UNSC for 7 terms and a member of G-77 and G-4.

**Obstacles**

- The Permanent members will never agree to give up their veto right, nor will they agree to accord this right to any other country
- US and China are opposed to any major restructuring
- France has reiterated India’s view of veto for additional members
- United Kingdom has supported G-4 as new permanent member without Veto power
- Russia, while not opposing expansion has supported two or three classes of UNSC members.
- The G-5 with veto powers, G-4 permanent members without the veto and whoever else may be elected by the General Assembly.
- There is lack of unity and difference of views in terms of reform agenda among G-4 members also their regional rivals are opposed to the G-4 becoming permanent members.
- Any changes in the structure of UNSC will require amendment in the UN charter that will have to be signed and ratified by two third majority of UNGA membership and it will also require concurrence of current P-5 members.
- General membership of the UN wants to eliminate the existing veto; they will never agree to new veto-wielding powers.
- China is most likely to block India’s and Japan’s bid for permanent seat considering its border disputes with these two nations.
- There are pressure groups within UN such as Uniting for consensus (Ufc) who are against any expansion in the permanent membership with veto power.
UNSC:

- The United Nations Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created following World War II to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace.
- The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946.

Role and powers:

- The Security Council is the United Nations' most powerful body, with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
- It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- Under the UN Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council's decisions.

Membership

- It has 15 Members, and each member has one vote.
- The council has five permanent members (known as P-5) United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France.
- These permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.
• The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms.
• The body’s presidency rotates monthly among its members.
• These ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

Relevance:

• UNSC being started as a council of victorious nations of Second World War, it doesn’t reflect interests of other Nations.
• There’s a lot of criticism of the Security Council today, and its general ineffectiveness, its strong bent towards the already powerful P5, the veto power and the issue of geographic representation.
• UNSC has lately become more and more irrelevant with the various US invasions in different regions.
• The UN Security Council remains the supreme decision-making body in the area of international security.
• In this body political understanding can be hammered out among major powers and then, if their national perspectives can be reconciled, codified in decisions that are published, affording a degree of transparency.
• UNSC reforms will take certain time, till then flexible ways need to be found to sustain a continuous engagement with the new major powers, both regarding what constitutes a threat to international peace and security and in crafting a response.

Source: RSTV, TH, ORF