

Wassenaar Arrangement

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Context- Recently, on 26th annual plenary of the Wassenaar Arrangement in Vienna, India was handed over chairmanship by Ireland and it will officially assume the chairmanship from 1st January, 2023.

Wassenaar Arrangement

- The Wassenaar Arrangement is a voluntary export control regime which was formally established in July 1996, has 42 members who exchange information on transfers of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies.
- Dual-use means the ability of a good or technology to be used for multiple purposes, usually peaceful and military.
- Wassenaar Arrangement's Secretariat is situated in Vienna, Austria.
- It has 42 member states in total comprising mostly NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and EU states.
- Participating States are required to report their arms transfers and transfers or denials of certain dual-use goods and technologies to destinations outside the Arrangement on a six-monthly basis.
- India became a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017.

Objectives:

- Its main objective is group work by regularly exchanging information in respect of

technology, both conventional and nuclear-capable, that is sold to, or denied to countries outside the grouping.

- This is done through maintenance and updating of detailed lists of chemicals, technologies, processes and products that are considered militarily important.
- It also aims at controlling the movement of technology, material or components to countries or entities which undermine international security and stability.

Wassenaar Arrangement Plenary

- It serves as the decision-making body of the Arrangement.
- The body is composed of representatives of all Participating States and normally meets once a year, usually in December.
- The position of Plenary Chair is subject to annual rotation among the Participating States.
- In 2018 the Plenary Chair was held by the United Kingdom, whereas in 2019 the Chair is held by Greece.
- However the Plenary decisions are taken by consensus.

Significance of Chairmanship for India

Anti-Terrorism Efforts:

- The timing of India's Wassenaar Arrangement chairmanship coincides with a recent increase in country's anti-terrorism position in international bodies.
- India is actively engaging global stakeholders in curbing terrorist financing.
- Indian home minister presently serves as the chair of the No Money for Terrorism (NMFT) ministerial initiative.

Prevent Arms Diversion to Terrorists:

- As a chair of the plenary, India would be in a position to hold discussions of the group to further strengthen the export controls to prevent arms diversion to terrorists or to sovereign nations supporting terrorism.

Strong Anti-Proliferation Framework:

- The worsening economic crisis in India's western neighbour coupled with rapid radicalization of historically moderate sects in communities in the country poses a particular set of challenges to India.
- Strengthening the licensing and enforcement practices under the WA and adoption of new export controls in areas like flight technology, interception technology and digital investigation tools will pave the way for the creation of a strong anti-proliferation framework for the South Asian region.

Democratization of space and Defense Technologies:

- India can play an important role in democratising access to technologies and processes that can serve as crucial building blocks for the newly emerging defence and space manufacturing sectors in India.

- India is slowly emerging as a low-cost producer of many items in the WA's control lists.

Way Ahead

- Membership to these bodies not only allows greater technology and material access but enhances the credibility of a nation as a responsible member of the world order.
- India is poised to become a crucial player in the world and thus requires a voice to further its claim as a rising power.