



## In an uncertain world, a seat at the global high table

### Context:

- India will be back in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2021. India is serving for the eighth time in the UNSC.
- India's membership of the UNSC comes at a critical time in the history of the UN. By 2021, it is likely that COVID-19 would have subsided and the contours of a new world order may have emerged.



### Background:

- Initially, the contest for the non-permanent seats takes place in the respective regional groups and their sub-groups. Most times a consensus candidate emerges.
- Unlike earlier, when India, Japan, Pakistan and some others used to get elected more frequently, many countries which have never served on the Council have begun to claim their turn.
- The candidate countries will have to next **secure a two-thirds majority of the member states in the General Assembly voting.**
- Out of the 192 votes cast, India got 184. In the order of the number of votes received by each one, the countries elected were Mexico, India, Norway, Ireland and Kenya.

### What are India's priorities?

- In the COVID and the post-COVID world, India will work towards a new orientation for a reformed multilateral system.
- Counter-terrorism will be one of India's highest priorities as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.
- The 9/11 terrorist attack was expected to change the outlook towards terrorism but that never materialised because of vested interests and traditional



positions. The UN did not succeed in either defining terrorism or in adopting the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

### What is the significance for India?

- India will have a higher profile at the UN for the next two years as the non-permanent members have a collective veto over every resolution in the Council.
- Permanent members can prevent the adoption of resolutions by themselves, but they need at least nine votes to get a resolution passed.
- India will also have a rare peep into the consultations chamber of the UNSC, which is closed to non-members of the Council.
- India's election as a non-permanent member has ignited the hope that its quest for permanent membership of the Council may succeed.

### What is significance for UNSC?

- India has a record of contributing to some of the seminal resolutions of the UNSC.
- India's reputation for taking balanced positions and consensus building will be welcomed by the other members.

### What are the challenges?

- **Strategic aspects:** India will get involved in many issues in which it may not have any direct interest.
- Since India does not have a veto, it shall have to proceed cautiously not to offend anyone, lest they should go against it when a matter of vital interest for the country comes up in the Council.
- **Permanent membership:** The debate on extending the permanent membership has thrown up many ideas, but till today, none of the proposals has the possibility of securing a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly and the votes of the five permanent members.
- The permanent members are being adamant about protecting their privileged positions and also a majority of the UN members are against the privileges of the permanent members, particularly the veto being extended to new members. The opposition to the expansion is not India-specific.