4. UN Human Rights Council

Prelims: International Institutions
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Why in News?

➤ Venezuela was elected to UN Human Rights Council recently. Brazil and Venezuela won the two Latin American seats on the rights body that were up for grabs.

About UNHRC:

➤ The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations around the world. **It was established in the year 2006.**

➤ The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis from 5 groups.

➤ **The Regional Groupings were as follows:**
  1. African Group
  2. Asia and the Pacific Group
  3. Eastern European Group
  4. Latin American and Caribbean Group
  5. Western European and Others Group

➤ To become a member, a country must receive the votes of at least 96 of the 191 states of the UN General Assembly (**an absolute majority**). Elections takes place through secret ballot. The members are elected for a period of three years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Members meet around three times a year to debate human rights issues and pass non-binding resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.

➤ The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

News Regarding India:

➤ India has been elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for a period of three years beginning January 1, 2019 as a part of Asia- Pacific category.

➤ India was among the first batch of 47 countries elected to the Council in 2006 soon after it was set up and received an initial one-year term instead of three to facilitate a rotating roster of vacancies each year.