

UNCTAD contribution to the UN SG Report on the Law of the Sea

Executive summary

30 January 2015

In accordance with its mandate¹, UNCTAD, the UN system focal point for the integrated consideration of trade and development issues, carries out a wide range of research, technical assistance and consensus-building activities in the field of transport and trade logistics and its sustainable development, taking particular account of the needs of developing countries. Areas of intervention and relevant activities with a focus on maritime transport and its sustainable development include the following:

1. Climate change implications for maritime transport²

UNCTAD, as part of its work on transport policy and legislation, has been working, 'ahead of the curve', on the implications of climate change for maritime transportation, since 2008. The particular focus of this work is on impacts and adaptation needs of seaports and other coastal transport infrastructure. Ports are likely to be affected directly and indirectly by climatic changes, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events and rising temperatures, with broader implications for international trade and for the development prospects of the most vulnerable nations, in particular LDCs and SIDS. Given their strategic role as part of the globalized trading system, adapting ports in different parts of the world to the impacts of climate change/enhancing their climate-resilience is of considerable importance. UNCTAD's research and analytical work in the field as well as relevant consensus-building activities have significantly helped to raise awareness and advance the international debate. Important synergies are created through excellent inter-agency cooperation and through the establishment of a committed multidisciplinary network of experts.

2. Ship-source pollution and environmental sustainability

Other relevant work with a focus on pollution and on environmental sustainability includes research and analysis on liability and compensation for ship-source oil pollution³ as well as on the implications of energy costs for freight rates, climate change mitigation and environmental sustainability in transport⁴

3. Environmental sustainability in freight/maritime transport

Relevant work pertaining to environmental sustainability in freight transport, in particular maritime transport, is also disseminated through the annual Review of Maritime Transport (RMT). A number of consensus-building activities have also focused on sustainability in freight transport. These include the third and fourth session of the UNCTAD Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation (2010 and 2011) as well as a panel discussion on "*Paving the Way for Sustainable Freight Transport*" held at UNCTAD XIII in Doha, Qatar, on 25 April 2012. In terms of technical assistance and capacity building, relevant initiatives by UNCTAD include a technical assistance project on "***Building capacities of developing countries to shift towards sustainable freight transport***" through transport policy measures and creative financing mechanisms.

¹ See in particular the Accra Accord (2008), at paras. 165,168 and the Doha Mandate at paras. 56(h) and (j).

² For further details and documentation see <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Legal/Climate-Change-and-Maritime-Transport.aspx>.

³ http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtltlb20114_en.pdf.

⁴ http://unctad.org/en/docs/dtltlb20092_en.pdf