

**Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory meeting of the United Nations Conference to  
Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14**

**Inputs by the UNCTAD Secretariat**

**2) Activities, challenges and opportunities for the implementation of SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

**2(a) Introduction**

Maritime transport – including shipping, ports and auxiliary services – is an economic sector that generates growth, employment, income and revenue. It is also a key enabler of the productivity of other economic sectors including trade, fisheries and tourism. With over 80 per cent of world merchandise trade by volume and more than 70 per cent by value estimated to be carried by sea, maritime transport is the backbone of international trade and global interconnectedness. International shipping and ports provide crucial linkages in closely interconnected global supply-chains and are essential for the ability of all countries, including those that are landlocked, to access global markets.

While the maritime transport sector continues to grow, with the world ship carrying capacity reaching 1.8 billion deadweight tons and seaborne shipments exceeding 10 billion tons in 2015, developing countries are emerging as important players both as drivers of demand and suppliers of maritime transport services. In 2015, 60 per cent of global goods loaded and 62 per cent unloaded were handled by seaports in developing countries. In addition, significant shares of shipbuilding, seafaring, ship scrapping, ship registration as well terminal cargo handling and global port operation activities were accounted for by developing countries. This continuous growth of the maritime sector and shipping generates impacts on the health and wealth of the Oceans and seas.

**2 (b) Current activities, toward the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources, including capacity building activities.**

UNCTAD analyzes and reports on a wide range of issues that relate to the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and their resources for sustainable development, viewed from the perspective of developing countries.

UNCTAD's research and analytical work in the field aims to assist in the understanding of the often complex international legal regime, with a view to assessing the merits of ratification of relevant legal instruments and implementation at the national level. UNCTAD was involved, inter alia, in the adoption or preparation of six international Conventions, four sets of non-mandatory modal rules and standards, as well as a number of analytical reports in the field of commercial maritime law.<sup>1</sup>

Of particular importance for UNCTAD's work on legal and regulatory issues in the field of transport is SDG 14 Target 14c: *“Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on Oceans and the Law of*

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Legal/Maritime-Conventions.aspx>. Information on the status of these Conventions is readily available online, in the UNCTAD website [unctad.org/ttl/legal](http://unctad.org/ttl/legal), as well as in the UN Treaty Series Database <https://treaties.un.org>. Like for other UN Conventions, including UNCLOS, UN is their depositary.

*the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The Future We Want”.* Target 14.c covers a range of international Conventions that have been adopted under the auspices of UNCTAD over the years, and/or have been the subject of some analytical studies and reports by UNCTAD.<sup>2</sup> Progress on the implementation of target 14.c can be measured, for instance, by the number of countries that make progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.

UNCTAD has published an analytical report on the international legal framework for liability and compensation from tanker oil pollution (IOPC-FUND regime)<sup>3</sup> and regularly monitors and reports on relevant regulatory and legal developments as part of its annual flagship publication, Review of Maritime Transport, as well as through its quarterly Transport and Trade Facilitation Newsletter.<sup>4</sup>

Also worth noting is UNCTAD’s work on the implications of climate change for maritime transport, with a focus on climate change impacts and adaptation for ports and other coastal transport infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> A technical assistance project on "*Climate change impacts on coastal transport infrastructure in the Caribbean: enhancing the adaptive capacity of SIDS*" is being implemented over the period 2015-17. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of policy makers, transport planners and transport infrastructure managers in SIDS to (a) understand climate change impacts on coastal transport infrastructure – in particular seaports and airports - and (b) take appropriate adaptation response measures. A case-study focusing on two vulnerable SIDS in the Caribbean region (Jamaica and St. Lucia) is being carried out to enhance the knowledge and understanding at the national level and to develop a methodology for assessing climate-related impacts and adaptation options. The methodology will, subject to location-specific modifications, be available for use in other SIDS within the Caribbean region as well as in other geographical regions.

UNCTAD also has a technical assistance programme on Sustainable freight transport, which focuses on building capacities and providing advisory services to developing countries to enable a reorientation towards sustainable freight transport through sound transport policy measures and financing mechanisms. Deliverables under the programme include a training toolkit on sustainable freight transport and its financing (modules, handbooks, best practices, visual material, simulation models and presentations); 2) a web platform and portal (<http://unctadsftportal.org/>) which includes on-line toolkit, reports, case studies, programmes and sustainable freight transport initiatives; 3) a Reference Framework on Sustainable Freight Transport that provides guidance and a step-by-step methodology on how to design and implement sustainable freight transport strategies and plans as well as a sustainable freight rating scheme for use by all interested parties and countries; and, 4) capacity building activities (workshops, training, advisory services, etc.).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more information see [unctad.org/ttl/legal](http://unctad.org/ttl/legal)

<sup>3</sup> *Liability and Compensation for Ship-Source Oil Pollution: An Overview of the International Legal Framework for Oil Pollution Damage from Tankers, 2014.* Available at [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlitb20114\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlitb20114_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see *Review of Maritime Transport, 2016.* Available at [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/rmt2016\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/rmt2016_en.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> For more information see <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Legal/Climate-Change-and-Maritime-Transport.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> Additional information about UNCTAD’s work in the field of transport and trade logistics, including sustainable and freight transport is available at: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Infrastructure-and-Services.aspx>.

## **2(c) Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (e.g. areas where gaps exist, where more action is needed)**

The Oceans and seas, which cover over two thirds of the earth's surface, provide food and minerals, generate oxygen, absorb greenhouse gases, determine weather patterns and temperatures, and serve as highways for sea-borne international trade. The impacts of the maritime sector on the oceans and seas include marine pollution (from oil and ballast water)<sup>7</sup>, resource depletion (from energy consumption - shipping being heavily dependent on oil for propulsion), CO2 emissions<sup>8</sup>, air pollution<sup>9</sup> and climate change, as well as other damages resulting from operations, accidents, noise, etc. Climatic changes such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events and rising temperatures are going to directly and indirectly impact maritime transport infrastructure such as ports, with broader implications for international trade and the tourism sector and for the development prospects of the most vulnerable nations, in particular LDCs and SIDS.

## **2(d) Opportunities (e.g. linkages of SDG 14 with other relevant SDGs)**

Enabling a sustainable maritime transport sector that is economically viable, socially inclusive and environmentally friendly is crucial for building the sustainability and resilience of the Oceans towards achieving SDG 14. In this respect, relevant actions may include (1) addressing the technical, operational and environmental aspects of the sector; (2) supporting countries to implement and enforce environmental treaties and standards; (3) switching to sustainable and low carbon shipping, i.e. vessels that are energy efficient, that use clean sources of energy, and are environmentally-sound (e.g. control the transfer of invasive aquatic species transported via ships' ballast water or hulls); (4) improving sustainability of ports; and (5) promoting collaboration and partnerships among various stakeholders (public, private, academia research institution, financiers, international and regional organizations, UN agencies, etc.).

SDG 14 is intended to be part of an "integrated, indivisible set of global priorities for sustainable development" and there are important interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs that are of direct relevance to various ocean-based economic sectors and activities including fisheries, tourism and transport and associated trade in goods and services. These include SDG 1 (on poverty), SDG 2 (on food security), SDG 6 (on water and sanitation), SDG 7 (on energy), SDG 8 (on economic growth), SDG 9 (on infrastructure), SDG 10 (on reduction of inequality), SDG 11 (on cities and human settlements), SDG 12 (on sustainable consumption and production), SDG 13 (on climate change), SDG 15 (on biodiversity), and SDG 17 (on means of implementation and partnerships).

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<sup>7</sup> Invasive aquatic species present a major threat to the marine ecosystems, and shipping has been identified as a major pathway for introducing species to new environments. When discharged without treatment, ballast water introduces harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens to new environments. The effects of the introduction of new species have in many areas of the world been devastating. 10 billion tonnes of ballast water are transferred globally each year. Ballast water and ships' hull fouling, are estimated to cost around \$100 billion per year.

[http://globallast.imo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Monograph\\_18\\_web.pdf](http://globallast.imo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Monograph_18_web.pdf) and [http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Control-and-Management-of-Ships'-Ballast-Water-and-Sediments-\(BWM\).aspx](http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Control-and-Management-of-Ships'-Ballast-Water-and-Sediments-(BWM).aspx).

<sup>8</sup> Global CO2 emissions from international shipping are projected at 2.2% in 2012 and are set to grow five-fold by 2050. 3<sup>rd</sup> IMO GHG Study (2014).

<sup>9</sup> International ship emissions of nitrogen oxide - NOx - & sulphur oxide – SOx - represent about 13% and 12% of global NOx and SOx for period 2007-2012. 3<sup>rd</sup> IMO GHG Study (2014).

## **2(e) Development of partnerships**

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.