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Intervention by Regina Asariotis, Chief, Policy and Legislation Section, UNCTAD

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am here on behalf of UNCTAD, the focal point within the UN system for the integrated consideration of trade and development issues. Our membership is global and our focus in transportation is particularly on international maritime transport, which carries over 80% of the volume of world trade and provides access to global markets for all countries, including those that are landlocked. Developing countries, especially the most vulnerable among them, are very much at the heart of our mandate and of our work, including in the field of transport.

Much of the international debate and policy action in relation to climate change and international transport is with a focus on the issue of mitigation, i.e. on efforts to reduce carbon emissions. By comparison, much less emphasis has so far been placed on the other side of the “climate change coin”, that is to say the assessment of potential climate change impacts on transport infrastructure and operations and the development of adaptation measures.

At the same time, recent studies have shown that climate change–induced weather conditions may have very significant implications for transport, and, thus, for the sustainability of economies and livelihoods at the global, regional and national level. Ports for instance - key nodes in the global network of supply chains - 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 development.

Given the strategic role of seaports and of other key transport infrastructure as part of the global trading system, enhancing their climate resilience is an important issue and one in respect of which UNCTAD's research and analytical work, as well as the outcomes of a series of UNCTAD expert meetings, since 2008, have helped to raise awareness and advance the international debate. Ongoing work includes a technical assistance project, with a particular focus on climate change impacts and adaptation for transport infrastructure in Caribbean SIDS.

In view of the long service life of transport infrastructure, effective adaptation requires re-thinking established approaches and practices early. Moreover, a good understanding of risks and vulnerabilities is required for the

development of well-designed adaptation measures that minimize the adverse effects of climatic factors.

This, however, constitutes a major challenge. The potential adverse impacts of climate variability and change may be wide-ranging, but they vary considerably by physical setting, climate forcing and mode of transport, as well as other factors. Thus, for instance, ports in river deltas face different challenges from open-sea ports; and extreme events and flooding may affect transport infrastructure in some parts of the world, whereas melting permafrost could become a major problem in others.

For the purposes of risk-assessment and with a view to developing effective adaptation measures, dissemination of more tailored data and information is important, as are targeted case studies and effective multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Guidance, best practices, checklists, methodologies and other tools in support of adaptation are urgently required, and targeted capacity building is going to be critical, especially for the most vulnerable countries. This includes SIDS, which depend on their ports and airports for food and energy needs, external trade and – crucially – tourism, which typically accounts for a major share of GDP. It also includes LLDCs, and transport

infrastructure along international transport and transit corridors on which these countries depend for their external trade.

In this context it is important for to explore ways to generate the necessary financial resources, especially for developing countries.

Bearing in mind the potential for climate-related delays and disruptions across global supply-chains, enhancing the climate-resilience of transport infrastructure is going to be crucial for the implementation of many of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. This is also recognized implicitly in the Addis Ababa Action Plan for Financing for Development and in the very recent Marrakech Action Proclamation for our Climate and Sustainable Development.

There is much more to say, but I have reached the end of my time. Thank you very much for your attention.