

***UNCTAD contribution to the Report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (Executive summary)***

**Developments relating to international shipping activities**

As noted in UNCTAD's *Review of Maritime Transport 2012*<sup>1</sup>, in tandem with the world economy and global merchandise trade, world seaborne trade grew by 4.5 per cent in 2011, taking the total volume of goods loaded worldwide to 8.8 billion tons. The world fleet continued to expand during 2011, reaching an increase of over 37 per cent in just four years. Freight rates often remained at unprofitable levels, while world container port throughput increased. The UNCTAD Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI) showed a continuation in 2012 of the trend towards larger ships deployed by a smaller number of companies. In addition, developing countries continue to expand their market share in different maritime sectors.

**Protection and preservation of the marine environment and sustainable development.**

***Sustainable freight transport***

The importance of freight transport as a trade enabler, engine of growth and a driver of social development is widely recognized. However, the associated adverse impacts of freight transport activity on the environment, human health and the climate are also cause for concern. If left unchecked, unsustainable patterns may potentially result in global energy and environmental crises, and undermine any progress being made in world sustainable development and growth. Sustainability imperatives in freight transport sector require reduction of the sector's energy consumption and emissions including GHG and air pollutants. Issues related to sustainable freight transport are the focus of a special chapter in the *Review of Maritime Transport 2012*.

***Ship-source oil pollution***

Around half of the global crude oil production is carried by sea, with much navigation taking place in relative proximity to the coasts of many countries, in some cases transiting through constrained areas or chokepoints, such as narrow straits and/or canals. While the international legal framework governing oil-pollution damage from tankers is very robust and provides significant compensation, not all States that are potentially vulnerable to ship-source oil-pollution are Party to the latest international legal instruments in the field. Against this background, an UNCTAD report providing an overview of the international legal framework for tanker-oil pollution was published in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

**Climate Change: enhancing the climate-resilience of seaports**

With over 80 per cent of the volume of world trade carried by sea, international shipping and ports provide crucial linkages in global supply-chains and are essential

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unctad.org/rmt](http://www.unctad.org/rmt).

<sup>2</sup> *Liability and Compensation for Ship-Source Oil Pollution: An Overview of the International Legal Framework For Oil Pollution Damage from Tankers*, UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2011/4, [www.unctad.org/tli/legal](http://www.unctad.org/tli/legal).

for the ability of all countries, including those that are landlocked, to access global markets. Ports are likely to be affected directly and indirectly by climatic changes, with broader implications for international trade and for the development prospects of the most vulnerable nations, in particular least developed countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (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 is of considerable importance. Building on insights gained at a number of expert meetings, UNCTAD continues its work in the field,<sup>3</sup> including through collaboration with other international organizations, such as the UNECE.

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<sup>3</sup> Further information about these initiatives is available on the UNCTAD website at [www.unctad.org/ti/legal](http://www.unctad.org/ti/legal).