

Contribution by the UNCTAD secretariat to Part I of the 2017 report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea: “The effects of climate change on oceans” (short version)

- *Effects of climate change on the oceans – environmental, social and economic*

Seaports and other coastal transport infrastructure are likely to be affected directly and indirectly by climatic changes, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and temperature and precipitation changes with broader implications for international trade and development prospects of the most vulnerable nations, in particular LDCs and SIDS. Considering the strategic economic importance of reducing climate-related damage, delay and disruption to transport networks and nodes across closely interconnected global supply chains, enhancing the climate resilience of seaports and other critical transport infrastructure, is crucial, including for achieving progress on many of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. For SIDS, often highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate variability and change, with limited adaptive capacity, addressing such impacts, on seaports, airports and coastal access roads, as critical lifelines for trade, food, energy and tourism, is of particular importance.

- *Action undertaken to address the effects of climate change on the oceans and to foster climate resilient sustainable development of oceans and seas*

UNCTAD has been working, 'ahead of the curve', on the implications of climate change for maritime transportation, since 2008.¹ The ***particular focus of this work is on impacts and adaptation needs of seaports and other coastal transport infrastructure***. 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. Research and academic publications include an UNCTAD edited book on "*Maritime Transport and the Climate Change challenge*", co-published in 2012, as well as a multidisciplinary academic paper, published in 2013. Other relevant initiatives by the UNCTAD secretariat include a number of intergovernmental meetings, since 2009, which have focused on the implications of climate change for maritime transport, highlighting in particular the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Ongoing work with a particular focus on SIDS includes a technical assistance project on "*Climate change impacts on coastal transport infrastructure in the Caribbean: enhancing the adaptive capacity of SIDS*".

- *Further action necessary to address the effects of climate change on the oceans*

Assessing the risks of climate change impacts on maritime transport sector is both complex and important. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation can enhance the resilience of coastal transport infrastructure against disaster risks by reducing local pressures resulting from unsustainable practices in

¹ See <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/TTL/Legal/Climate-Change-and-Maritime-Transport.aspx> for further information and documentation.

fishing, tourism and other natural resource exploitation. In addition, legal regulatory approaches aimed at ensuring the climate resilience of infrastructure, including transport infrastructure, will also be important in the longer run.