

2020 UN Conference to Support Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14  
UNCTAD contribution to UN SG background note

II. Activities, challenges and opportunities for the implementation of SDG 14

1. *Status and trends*

The role of the ocean as a key factor in stabilizing climate and supporting life and human well-being, and as a resource that needs to be protected and supported, cannot be overemphasized. Sustainable Development Goal 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, is particularly relevant in the context of sustainable maritime transport, ship-source pollution control and coastal zone management, as well as fisheries. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, action for the implementation of this goal has been taken in various areas of ocean governance, although much remains to be done. In addition to sustainable fisheries management, some relevant areas where action has recently been taken or is under way are as follows: the reduction of ship-

for 11 to 26 million tons of fish every year with a value of \$ 26 to 35 billion annually. IUU fishing can lead to the collapse of valuable fisheries, exploits the resources of developing countries, prevents assessment of existing stock and the development of science-based quotas for sustainable exploitation, and leads to criminal activities conducted by highly organized and international networks.

There is strong evidence that subsidies that reduce the cost of fisheries operations and those that enhance revenues can contribute to the build-up of excessive fishing capacity and unsustainable levels of fishing, with significant consequences for poverty reduction, employment and nutrition security in developing countries. By recent estimates, subsidies to the fishing industry amounted to around \$35.4 billion per year, of which around \$22.2 billion were given in forms that tend to enhance fishing capacity

*for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want*". Worth noting is the broad and inclusive wording of this target, which directs the

UNCTAD's work in the field of transportation – a key sector underpinning globalised trade and linking global supply chains – is being aligned with several SDG targets by emphasising the need to balance the economic, social and environmental sustainability. Relevant research and analysis as well as technical

almost two decades ago, still face significant divergences in views on issues such as the geographical scope, the scope of prohibitions, the policy flexibility, Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) (that should incorporate capacity building support), and the disciplines subject to Dispute Settlement procedures.

Negotiations on a WTO Agreement on fisheries subsidies should continue to the greatest extent possible in all areas and particularly on cross-cutting issues such as overfishing, overcapacity including consideration to adopt a hybrid prohibition plus cap-based approach, IUU fishing, and harmful fisheries subsidies. Additionally, while the negotiations should remain ambitious, alternative arrangements for developing countries, especially LDCs and SIDS, should be considered, as well as support mechanisms for fishers during transition periods and cross-country assistance and capacity-building. Any agreement and commitments negotiated should also be subject to a review mechanism, to ensure that they are fit for purpose and fulfil their intended effect.

Although there is currently a political momentum as SDG targets 14.4 and 14.6 deadlines and the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) are approaching, there is need to accelerate the pace of the negotiations to reach an ambitious WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies with WTO disciplines that are transparent, practical, flexible and enforceable. The outcome of these negotiations will also have important implications on the future of the WTO and the multilateral trade system. More detailed information on proposals on how to move forward can be found in the Chair Summary of the 3rd Oceans Forum - Annex I.

*(b) Climate change adaptation for coastal transport infrastructure*

As part of its work, UNCTAD has been analysing interlinkages between ocean issues, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development. For people living on the coasts, the link between climate change and the ocean is clearly present, including in terms of sea-level rise and extreme weather events, changing weather patterns, rising ocean temperatures and related impacts on fisheries, tourism and coastal infrastructure. An important part of UNCTAD's related work focuses on the implications of climate change for maritime transport, with special emphasis on climate change impacts and adaptation for ports and other key coastal transport infrastructure.

With an estimated 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 to enable all countries, including those that clu

information and full documentation, see <https://SIDSport-ClimateAdapt.unctad.org>). Key project outcomes include the assessment of potential operational disruptions and marine inundation risk to eight coastal international airports and seaports of Jamaica and Saint Lucia under different climate scenarios, as well as a transferable methodology to assist in adaptation planning for small island developing States in the Caribbean and beyond. Some of the main substantive findings and technical details of the methodology developed under the project have undergone scientific peer-review and have resulted in the publication of an [original research paper](#) (Monioudi et. al, Regional Environmental Change 2018) which has informed the IPCC report on 1.5 degrees (“[Impacts of 1.5 °C global warming on natural and human systems](#)”), as well as the [IPCC 2019 Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere](#) (Ch. 4 and 5), highlighting substantial increases in risk to critical coastal transportation infrastructure in Saint Lucia and Jamaica from climate change-induced marine inundation as early as in the 2030s, unless further climate change adaptation is undertaken. Relevant substantive findings are also reflected as part of the UN report [World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019](#) (Ch. 2). In the absence of timely planning and implementation of requisite adaptation measures, the projected impacts on critical transport infrastructure may have broad economic and trade-related repercussions, which may severely compromise the sustainable development prospects of these vulnerable nations. Against this background, better and more targeted data, further research, including detailed technical studies, human capacity building, as well as collaborative concerted action at all levels are urgently required to meet the challenge, as is a major scaling up of technical and financial assistance for SIDS. In this context, UNCTAD and UN Environment, with the financial support of the Government of Germany, are currently implementing a project on climate resilient transport infrastructure for sustainable trade, tourism and development in SIDS.

UNCTAD has also published the findings of a [port industry survey on climate change impacts and adaptation](#), designed in collaboration with global port industry associations and other experts. The survey aimed to improve the understanding of weather- and climate-related impacts on ports, identify data availability and information needs, and determine current levels of resilience and preparedness among ports. Although the majority of respondents had been affected by weather - or climate-related events, including by extremes, the study revealed important gaps in terms of relevant information available to seaports of all sizes and across regions, with implications for effective climate risk assessment and adaptation planning.

The important trade-related implications of weather- and climate-related extreme events were also highlighted by UNCTAD at COP 24, in an [online article](#) and as part of an [interactive discussion](#) that was co-organized with the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction as part of the International Day for Disaster Reduction 2018, focusing on the need to reduce economic



#### IV. Development Partnerships

UNCTAD, FAO and UN Environment have presented at the 3rd Oceans Forum a common response to SDG 14 challenges, including through the proposed Inter Agency Plan of Action (IAPoA) on Trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The IAPoA seeks to improve Member States' capacity to shift towards a bluer, integrated, resource efficient and sustainable pathway, and implement new fisheries subsidies rules. Achieving SDG 14 targets requires a multi stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach, including through new partnerships with the private sector and the civil society to design, implement and streamline policies, mobilize finance, and apply innovations that integrate best practices. As SDG 14 targets 4 and 6 are due to be achieved by 2020, there is an urgent need for consensus between Members States on SDG 14 to improve fish management systems under an ecosystem approach and to reach a multilateral agreement on fish subsidies. The 3rd Oceans Forum invited donors to support UNCTAD, FAO and UN Environment IAPoA. More detailed information on the IAPoA and other trade-related partnerships can be found in the Chair Summary of the 3rd Oceans Forum found in Annex I.

UNCTAD's work on sustainable shipping and ports builds heavily on synergies with activities carried out by key stakeholders, including governments and industry, and collaboration and partnerships with varied partners such as the International Maritime Organization; UN regional Commissions, UNEP; World Bank, including through the SuM4All Initiative, Global Maritime Forum, SLOCAT, Getting to Zero Coalition, Port Management Association of the Caribbean (P



ANNEX I: # o Third Oceans Forum on Trade-related Aspects of SDG 14, United Nations Trade Forum (UNCTAD, FAO, UN Environment, UNECE, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the ACP Group, and IOI), 10 September 2019