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Eleventh session
Geneva, 23 and 24 October 2024

**Report of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport,
Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation on its eleventh session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 23 and 24 October 2024



Introduction

The eleventh session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 23 and 24 October 2024.

I. Chair's summary

A. Opening plenary

1. The Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics of UNCTAD opened the session. The following speakers made opening statements: the representative of Cambodia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Bangladesh, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the representative of the Dominican Republic, on behalf of small island developing States; the representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the Caribbean Community; the representative of Angola, on behalf of the least developed countries; and the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

2. In her opening remarks, the Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, highlighted the importance of the meeting in advance of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XVI). The Director stated that maritime chokepoints served as vital trade routes, and disruptions could significantly strain supply chains; such disruptions were the focus of *Review of Maritime Transport 2024: Navigating Maritime Chokepoints*. She stated that small island developing States and the least developed countries were affected by increasing prices for essential goods since the economies relied heavily on maritime transport. Challenges arising from climate change and rapid technological advancements could lead to oligopolies that exacerbated these impacts. Finally, the Director noted the need for continued discussions on these issues, including in the lead up to UNCTAD XVI, as well as the need for enhanced support for UNCTAD in efforts to foster inclusive supply chains.

3. The Chair, in his opening remarks, emphasized the significance of the meeting in advancing on low-carbon, resilient maritime transport amid multiple interconnected crises. He stressed that the discussions would build on key policy processes, including the Global Supply Chain Forum held in Barbados in May 2024. Finally, he highlighted that experts at the meeting would share experiences and good practices and discuss strengthening the capacity of the sector to navigate disruptions and drive sustainable transformation, particularly in developing countries, including small island developing States and the least developed countries.

4. The Chief, Transport Section, Trade Logistics Branch, introduced the note titled "Maritime transport in times of polycrisis" (TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/32). She highlighted the critical role of maritime transport in supporting economic resilience and sustainability and the challenges faced in the sector, including with regard to the pandemic, geopolitical tensions and disruptions such as that in the Suez Canal, all of which had strained global supply chains, increased freight rates and caused port inefficiencies. In addition, longer travel distances and higher levels of fuel consumption had increased carbon dioxide emissions. Finally, the Chief emphasized the importance of ensuring food and energy security and the role of ports in supporting the energy transition in maritime transport.

5. The representative of one regional group and some delegates emphasized the essential role of maritime transport in global trade and the vulnerability of the sector to crises; noted that developing countries, particularly small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries, faced disproportionate impacts and high transition costs; and stated that substantial financial and technical support, including through public-private partnerships and official development assistance, was crucial in developing resilient systems. The representative of one regional group noted the need for a fair low-carbon transition, to mitigate maritime transport greenhouse gas emissions, and for a global regulatory framework under the International Maritime

Organization; underscored the role of ports as clean energy hubs; and emphasized the need to support seafarers through training and capacity-building. The representative of another regional group noted that high air transport costs and limited affordable maritime options hindered market development and integration; regional solutions were also pursued in order to bolster regional trade and connectivity and reduce the food import bill, for example in the Caribbean Community.

B. Maritime transport in times of polycrisis

(Agenda item 3)

6. Under the agenda item, the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation held seven informal discussions.

1. Understanding the challenges: Presentation of *Review of Maritime Transport 2024: Navigating Maritime Chokepoints*

7. The Head, Trade Logistics Branch, presented the findings in *Review of Maritime Transport 2024*, focused on challenges and prospects for global maritime logistics, including the significant impact of chokepoint disruptions. In this regard, in the Panama Canal, traffic was recovering due to improved water management and, in the Suez Canal, low transit levels continued, exacerbating global trade disruptions. Ship rerouting increased shipping costs, thereby increasing consumer prices, particularly in small island developing States and the least developed countries. In addition, there were challenges related to the growing urgency to decarbonize shipping amid continued regulatory uncertainty, the ageing global fleet and the need for alternative-fuel ships, as well as fraudulent ship registration, with far-reaching implications for maritime safety, pollution and global ocean governance. Panellists for the first informal discussion comprised the following: Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Egypt; Professor, University of Brussels; and Global Head, Legal, Fyffes International.

8. The first panellist emphasized the need to decarbonize the maritime transport sector, with the International Maritime Organization targeting a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and full decarbonization by 2050. The panellist noted that Egypt, through the Suez Canal, played a crucial role in global maritime trade and decarbonization efforts, and aimed to act as a leader in green fuel production, focusing on methanol and hydrogen, aligned with the Green Canal initiative. Finally, the panellist stated that, despite geopolitical tensions affecting shipping in the Red Sea, the Suez Canal remained the most vital and efficient global trade route.

9. The second panellist highlighted the value for researchers of the insights in editions of the *Review of Maritime Transport*. She noted that different chokepoints in maritime shipping required tailored risk analyses, as impacts varied significantly, and that the challenges posed by longer shipping distances complicated efforts to reduce emissions amid limited new fleet orders. Concerns about the efficiency of alternative fuels hindered investments in necessary infrastructure and, in this regard, sustainable business models and global legislation to support fleet renewal and retrofitting were necessary. The panellist stated that certified scrapping facilities should be established, that effective data-sharing was important in fostering responsibility and advancing solutions in maritime transport and that future editions of *Review of Maritime Transport* could monitor trade in secondary and recycled materials.

10. The third panellist emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion in the maritime industry. The significant imbalance was highlighted by the fact that while society was nearly 50-50, the workforce in ports comprised only 18 per cent women. In addition, training programmes had a majority of women participants, yet only 2 per cent of seafarers were women. To improve gender representation, the panellist, referring to ongoing efforts by the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association, proposed the use of gender-neutral job descriptions and targeted recruitment initiatives. Finally, she raised concerns about fraud, cargo contamination by narcotics and the costs of shipping decarbonization and who would bear the financial burden.

11. During the ensuing discussion, one delegate highlighted the commitment of Panama to addressing the challenges facing the Panama Canal and underscored proactive measures taken to address fraudulent vessel registration, reinforcing the dedication of Panama to ocean governance and sustainable maritime practices. Another delegate emphasized the need for equitable solutions, particularly in developing countries facing challenges; key priorities included technology transfer, financing and capacity-building, under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and access to affordable digital solutions and an inclusive and just transition to sustainable and resilient maritime transport. A representative of the secretariat noted that consumers and other actors along value chains were impacted by increasing shipping costs. One panellist stated that since producers from developing countries faced competition from higher-value products, achieving sustainability could limit access to international markets, complicating the balance between environmental goals and economic viability. Another panellist stressed the need for global legislation and financing, to support smaller ports and ensure that solutions were not exclusive to larger ports capable of investing in green technologies.

2. Futureproofing maritime transport and logistics: Navigating disruptions and enhancing resilience – focus on maritime chokepoints and shipping networks

12. Panellists for the second informal discussion comprised the following: Founder, Chief Executive Officer, Transport Intelligence; Global Head, Business Resilience Consulting, Maersk; Director, Global Shippers Forum; Senior Economic Researcher, Maritime Analyst, Suez Canal Authority; Deputy Director, Economist, Suez Canal Authority; and Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Section, Trade Logistics Branch.

13. The first three panellists emphasized the complexity of supply chain networks and the interconnected nature of disruption sources, as well as unexpected trade restrictions. The impacts of logistical disruptions included declining schedule reliability and supply and demand imbalances in the shipping sector, missed delivery deadlines and loss of inventory value, cash flow pressures, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, and additional costs for shippers in liaising with downstream supply chain partners. The panellists highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to proactive risk management; contingency plans, such as alternative sourcing and transport options; workforce efficiency; digitalization, for effective cargo-tracking and demand-forecasting; well-maintained transport infrastructure and equipment; and closer collaboration with logistics providers and other supply chain partners. They noted the need for government support and coordination, such as by maintaining port cargo-handling capacity; prioritizing access by logistics workers to workplaces during disruptions; providing relief from taxes and duties, to ease cash flow pressures on businesses; promoting trade facilitation and investment in digitalization and transport infrastructure; enhancing trade finance and encouraging foreign direct investment, to develop manufacturing ecosystems; and promoting gender diversity and capacity-building. Finally, one panellist stated that rule-setting countries in international trade should ensure fair and equitable policies and potentially invest in emerging markets.

14. The following two panellists stressed the impact of disruptions in the Red Sea on global shipping, including the decrease in ship crossings in the Suez Canal, which had led to longer maritime travel times and distances and increased fuel usage and higher carbon emissions. To mitigate the crisis, the Suez Canal Authority had implemented flexible pricing policies, provided emergency services such as ship maintenance and waste management and continued to communicate with stakeholders. Finally, the panellists noted that the Authority was considering widening and deepening the canal in order to support global supply chains amid ongoing challenges.

15. The sixth panellist detailed UNCTAD capacity-building resources for resilient maritime logistics, including a dedicated course and training modules, a guidebook for ports and related tools available online. She highlighted the stepwise approach advocated by UNCTAD, to enable resilience-building in ports and maritime supply chains, and emphasized the need for a proactive approach to resilience in the sector, which promoted resilience by design, whereby resilience and risk management criteria were mainstreamed by default into relevant plans and strategies.

16. During the ensuing discussion, several delegates highlighted national maritime transport challenges, particularly the impacts of logistical disruptions, and the role of digitalization in ensuring efficiency and resilience. One expert shared the experience of proactive governance such as with regard to the standardization of crisis management protocols, requested examples of good practices in addressing challenges and commended UNCTAD efforts in strengthening the capacity of the global maritime transport sector. Another expert detailed efforts in the Dominican Republic with regard to sustainable development and environmental protection in maritime transport, including investment in renewable energy. A few experts detailed national aims to become regional transport and logistics hubs. One expert discussed autonomous shipping technology and related legislation in the Russian Federation and highlighted potential benefits, including cost reduction. Finally, one panellist commended UNCTAD guidance materials as useful tools not only for ports but also for other maritime transport stakeholders.

3. Harnessing sustainable and resilient transportation systems and logistics for food security

17. Panellists for the third informal discussion comprised the following: Chief, Transport Section, Trade Logistics Branch; Counsellor, Agriculture and Commodities Division, World Trade Organization; Global Head, Business Resilience Consulting, Maersk; and Executive Administrator, Cargo and Logistics Certification Regulatory Agency, Angola.

18. The first panellist outlined an interdivisional UNCTAD project aimed at enhancing food security by harnessing trade policies, transport and logistics, targeting Barbados, Lebanon, Morocco and Trinidad and Tobago. The project was being jointly implemented with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

19. The second panellist highlighted past global logistical and economic disruptions that had impacted agricultural trade flows, global food prices and food security, noting that global trade had cushioned the impacts, particularly in countries reliant on imports. The panellist noted that climate change factors posed a risk for food security in the future and that, in this regard, continued global trade flows, well-functioning food and agricultural markets and international cooperation were key in ensuring food availability and stability and food market transparency.

20. The third panellist stressed the importance of proactive risk management in order to build resilience in global food supply chains, including by identifying key sourcing countries and chokepoints and through seasonal planning for high demand periods and robust contingency planning such as by identifying alternative routes and long-term strategies for diversifying sources. Finally, the panellist noted the need for partnerships with logistics providers in order to leverage their expertise.

21. The fourth panellist outlined logistics infrastructure projects in Angola, emphasizing that such infrastructure, including logistics platforms and cold storage supported through public-private partnerships was critical in reducing post-harvest food losses and integrating local farmers into global trade networks.

22. During the ensuing discussion, two experts commended the project on food security. One delegate stressed the commitment of Morocco to continued cooperation with UNCTAD, to build a resilient food supply chain and promote partnerships, particularly through South-South cooperation, for sustainable development. One expert stressed the importance of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea with regard to food security, noting that future studies could focus on concentration in transport and logistics and the need for diversification, particularly through African shipbuilding. In this regard, a representative of the secretariat presented a forthcoming study on maritime transport and logistics in Africa.

4. Maritime decarbonization, energy transition and ports: Decarbonization of the shipping sector as an imperative and the criticality of a just and equitable transition to a low or zero-carbon shipping paradigm

23. Panellists for the fourth informal discussion comprised the following: Technical Officer, Subdivision for Protective Measures, Marine Environment Division, International Maritime Organization; Head, Trade Logistics Branch; Senior Policy Adviser, Shipping Decarbonization, Global Maritime Forum; and Adviser, Micronesian Centre for Sustainable Transport, London.

24. The first panellist discussed the 2023 International Maritime Organization Strategy on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships, including reduction targets, the reference to a just and equitable energy transition and the candidate midterm measures under negotiation. The panellist noted a comprehensive impact assessment of the measures on the world fleet and on States, particularly developing countries, small island developing States and the least developed countries, which had been conducted in collaboration with UNCTAD and other experts.

25. The second panellist shared key findings from the impact assessment, which showed that costs related to shipping and travel time might rise by 2050, with scenarios with a levy on carbon found to have a lesser negative impact. Small island developing States and the least developed countries would be more negatively affected. Finally, the panellist stated that delayed investment in low-carbon fuels and fleets could potentially constrain ship capacity and cause freight rates to increase.

26. The third panellist underscored the complexities of transitioning to a zero-emission maritime sector. Current alternative fuels were more costly and not scalable. Collaborative efforts, equitable policy measures and support for vulnerable economies were key in ensuring an effective and just transition. The panellist noted concerns about the distribution of revenues to be generated by a potential carbon price mechanism and stated that support beyond revenue deployment was necessary, such as through capacity-building and training.

27. The fourth panellist detailed the concept of a just and equitable transition, which required a clear definition. Some countries had proposed a framework to clarify that such a transition should promote equity, social justice, technological inclusivity, environmental effectiveness and alignment with a 1.5°C threshold. The panellist stated that transition costs were high; that sustainable financing, inclusivity, investment and seafarer training were crucial; and that funds from a potential carbon pricing mechanism required a fair disbursement framework, to ensure that no one was left behind.

28. During the ensuing discussion, the experts underscored the importance of collaborative efforts and strategic financing in a just and equitable transition and emphasized that Governments had a role in positioning the maritime sector as a key priority in relevant national plans, to facilitate access to financing, including climate finance. In addition, devising and implementing national action plans under the International Maritime Organization could also facilitate access to financial assistance from other organizations. The representative of one regional group emphasized that equity, justice and inclusiveness were critical and that capacity-building, infrastructure development, investment, access to affordable finance, technology transfer and climate adaptation should be at the forefront. With regard to mobilizing finance for a transition that did not undermine maritime transport competitiveness in developing countries, one panellist suggested that revenues from a potential carbon pricing mechanism could be rapidly tapped with support from the International Maritime Organization. Finally, the experts noted that opportunities associated with the maritime transport energy transition and returns on investment could be significant and that additional financing, investment in trade facilitation, climate adaptation and digitalization each played a role in mitigating related costs and preventing potentially disproportionate impacts.

5. Unlocking the potential of ports to support the energy transition and decarbonize shipping

29. Panellists for the fifth informal discussion comprised the following: Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Section, Trade Logistics Branch; Director, Strategy and Communications, International Association of Ports and Harbours; Senior Sustainability Manager, Maritime and Port Authority, Singapore; Director, Renewable and Sustainable Energy, Alternative Technology Consult, Accra; and Port Call Optimization Manager, Tanger Med Port Authority.

30. The first panellist stressed the importance of ports in the maritime transport energy transition, noting that countries with renewable energy sources could benefit from associated opportunities. The panellist highlighted the sustainable smart port project, under which UNCTAD was working with Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco to leverage energy transition opportunities. Finally, the panellist noted that collaboration and experience-sharing, including on financing and technical challenges, was key.

31. The second panellist detailed initiatives by the International Association of Ports and Harbours and collaboration with the International Maritime Organization in promoting decarbonization. In 2022, a resolution of the Organization had invited member States to encourage voluntary cooperation between the port and shipping sectors to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships. The panellist stated that areas of focus included onshore power supplies, knowledge-sharing, incentives, just-in-time arrival solutions, new fuels, a port readiness-level tool and a world port sustainability programme.

32. The third panellist described maritime decarbonization efforts in Singapore, including electrifying port terminals and pioneering methanol and ammonia bunkering. The panellist stressed the commitment of the Maritime and Port Authority to sustainability, innovative technologies, training, safety for new fuels, partnerships and helping address financial barriers faced by small enterprises.

33. The fourth panellist discussed initiatives aimed at promoting electrification and the energy transition in Ghana, where the level of deployment of renewable energy remained low. Ports in Ghana were exploring alternative fuels and other initiatives, but challenges remained, including, for example, with regard to the intermittent nature of some renewables. The panellist stated that an economic valuation of alternative energy options was necessary prior to their adoption and that the UNCTAD sustainable smart port project could help address challenges and seize opportunities.

34. The fifth panellist detailed the ambition of the port of Tanger Med to achieve a zero-carbon target by 2030 through low-carbon energy consumption and renewable energy initiatives, energy efficiency measures, just-in-time arrival solutions, green certification and international collaboration for funding and expertise. The panellist detailed analyses, such as SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats] plus, applied to assessing the positioning and progress of the port towards such sustainability and energy transition goals.

35. During the ensuing discussion, one expert stated that, despite regulatory, financial and technical challenges, Sri Lanka was pursuing various renewable energy initiatives and green port standards at the main port of Colombo, supported by public-private partnerships and international collaboration. Another expert noted plans in Albania for “greening” the port of Durrës, with a focus on energy efficiency and alternative fuels. One expert advised about plans in the Suez Canal to achieve the green transition by 2030. Another expert emphasized the importance of transit transport for trade and the impact of transport costs on competitiveness and, noting the challenges faced in oil-rich countries in transitioning to green energy, stressed the need for further discussion of clean energy sources and their economic viability, as well as for capacity-building, climate finance and technology transfer. A representative of the secretariat reiterated the importance of all modes of transport and clarified that the work of UNCTAD adopted a multimodal transport perspective. The representative of one regional group inquired about how unilateral renewable energy solutions were addressed by ports, since these might impact port competitiveness, and about the benefits of green port certification. In this regard, a few experts emphasized the need to assess alternative energy options before their adoption, to determine their economic viability and to clarify the energy sources used for electrification

in order to avoid displacing the problem from maritime transport to other sectors; and clarified that green port certification enhanced reputations and compliance with environmental standards.

6. The role of innovative finance in supporting sector transformation

36. Panellists for the sixth informal discussion comprised the following: Head, Investment Trends and Issues Branch, Division on Investment and Enterprise; Chief, Transport Section, Trade Logistics Branch; Co-Founder, Managing Partner, Capital 2050; Vice-President, Deputy Head, Maritime Policy and Government Affairs, MSC [Mediterranean Shipping Company] Group; and Co-Rapporteur, European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels.

37. The first panellist noted that international investment in port infrastructure had been trending downward for over a decade, particularly in international project finance, and was currently stagnating. In this regard, aligning port investment with green energy growth and the infrastructure services expansion driven by growth in the digital economy could help. The panellist stated that the high cost of capital could be challenging but that ensuring a mix of investor groups could help lower financing costs and that trends in sustainable financial instruments and Sustainable Development Goals-related investment in developing countries needed to be better connected.

38. The second panellist described innovative financing tools used in sustainable finance, particularly in the context of developing a resilient and sustainable transport sector. The effective use of such tools required strong regulatory frameworks, sustainability standards, capital markets and a collaborative approach among stakeholders.

39. The third panellist emphasized the issue of cost competitiveness, with smaller players facing high decarbonization costs. Investment from private funds and securitization was becoming more popular than traditional bank lending. The use of carbon credits could incentivize change by offsetting pollution costs and potentially raising financing through the selling of future credits. Finally, the panellist stated that international rules and standards for new fuels, carbon pricing and legal certainty for long-term investments were needed in order to ensure a level-playing field.

40. The fourth panellist underscored that the shipping industry was committed to the decarbonization goals of the International Maritime Organization; and the need for common international fuel standards and to avoid fragmented definitions that exacerbated uncertainty. The rapid adoption of a global regulatory framework, fuel certification, green financing, digitalization, sustainability criteria, support for ports as energy hubs and pricing mechanisms were all required in order to unlock the potential for decarbonization and the energy transition. Finally, the panellist stated that developing countries could benefit from tapping renewable energy production potential.

41. The fifth panellist highlighted key perspectives on maritime transport and sustainable finance and the importance of social criteria in public investments. Inclusive decision-making processes that integrated Governments, civil society and the private sector were essential, and sustainable finance also needed to mainstream social criteria. Finally, the panellist stated that social conditionality in public investments and compliance with worker rights were important and that those affected by the transition such as workers needed to be part of the dialogue.

42. During the ensuing discussion, with regard to a query from one expert on examples of public-private partnerships in developing countries, the climate finance commitments under the Paris Agreement and the testing of new green fuels in developing countries, a representative of the secretariat detailed examples of partnerships in ports and clarified that success depended largely on well-defined risk-sharing between public and private entities. A few panellists underscored that the implementation of climate finance commitments had lagged due to competing political priorities or changes in Government and that continuous pressure and advocacy at forums such as the International Maritime Organization were needed. With regard to the testing of fuels, they noted concerns about returns on investment in developing countries and that fuel safety was critical; developing standards for fuels

required research, testing and cooperation before investments could be made and it was also crucial to enhance investment through policies and measures that reduced risks.

**7. Conclusions, key messages, recommendations and priority areas for further work:
Building sustainable and resilient transport and logistics – the role of UNCTAD**

43. Panellists for the seventh informal discussion comprised the following from the Trade Logistics Branch, UNCTAD: Chief, Policy and Legislation Section; Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Facilitation Section; Knowledge Management Officer, Human Resources Development Section; Chief, Transport Section.

44. The first panellist detailed the work of UNCTAD in support of sustainable and resilient transport and logistics. Member States, in the Bridgetown Covenant, had stated that UNCTAD should enhance its support to the development and the implementation of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks that reduced trade transaction costs. The panellist highlighted initiatives and thematic areas of work that leveraged collaboration and synergies between the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD and noted efforts such as assessments of the implications of the pandemic, including for seafarers and for commercial contracts, and the delivery of related training; and assessments of the implications of climate change for ports and coastal transport infrastructure and the adaptive capacity of small island developing States, as well as the commercial implications of climate risks.

45. The second panellist discussed UNCTAD work aimed at enhancing resilience and sustainability in trade logistics. She stressed the importance of trade facilitation in enhancing preparedness and response capabilities in times of crisis and disruption, such as through the Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments initiative. Finally, the panellist underscored the importance of collaboration, such as under national trade facilitation committees, and noted other key tools and initiatives, related to digitalization, single windows, harmonization, climate smart trade facilitation and customs automation.

46. The third panellist provided an overview of the Train for Trade Programme and efforts to support sustainability and resilience in ports. The main initiatives included capacity-building and training activities under the port management programme, as well as training packages covering electronic commerce and trade and statistics, along with publications, port performance measurements and the port endeavour game, an innovative learning tool that promoted the Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, the panellist detailed upcoming courses and activities and stressed the importance of adaptability, training and innovation.

47. The fourth panellist highlighted some key contributions by UNCTAD in the field of sustainable and resilient freight transport and logistics, including a knowledge hub, featuring maritime transport statistics and over 200 country profiles and key performance indicators; and technical assistance programmes, such as those on sustainable freight transport, sustainable smart ports, resilient maritime logistics and corridor management. Finally, the panellist noted new research and analysis on maritime transport in Africa and a technical assistance project on harnessing sustainable and resilient food supply chains.

48. During the ensuing discussion, four main topics were addressed. With regard to understanding challenges and futureproofing supply chains by harnessing sustainable and resilient transport and logistics, experts emphasized that global maritime transport and logistics that linked supply chains faced complex and interconnected challenges, exacerbated by disruptions and volatility, including the latest disruptions to maritime chokepoints that compounded ongoing disruptive effects and complexity. In this context, enhancing resilience, particularly at chokepoints, was vital, along with sustainability, including in achieving food and energy security, and the sector needed to adopt a proactive approach to resilience-building and risk management, with the involvement of all stakeholders; international cooperation was instrumental in mitigating disruptions while focusing on the particular needs of small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries. With regard to the decarbonization of shipping and the role of ports in advancing the maritime transport energy transition, experts noted that the issue of environmental sustainability in maritime transport was increasingly significant, with negotiations on midterm reduction measures under way at the International

Maritime Organization; global emissions from international shipping continued to increase, underscoring the need for swift action supported by a development-centred approach to decarbonization and the maritime transport energy transition. A clear regulatory framework for a just transition, including an emphasis on social aspects, cooperation and long-term planning for the future of maritime workers, could help reduce uncertainty and incentivize timely investment decisions on cleaner fuels, bunkering infrastructure and fleets, and ensure that no country was left behind, particularly small island developing States and the least developed countries. In addition, shipping and ports both played a role in driving the energy transition, with ports, particularly in developing countries with renewable energy capabilities, potentially emerging as global energy hubs, and such a transformation offered significant economic opportunities, particularly in developing countries; and, in this regard, furthering collaboration, innovation and the sharing of best practices was vital in supporting ports in their roles as alternative energy suppliers, along with the conduct of readiness assessments. With regard to enabling factors, experts highlighted financial support, capacity-building, collaboration, partnerships and digital tools. Achieving greater resilience, enhancing sustainability, shifting to cleaner energy and ensuring decarbonization all entailed costs and developing countries were particularly vulnerable in this regard, given that outlays could be significant and require not only financial investments but also resources to enhance capabilities, skills and knowledge. Efforts in this regard could aim to mobilize the required financing, provide capacity-building, ensure knowledge transfer, enable technology-sharing and facilitate experience and good practice dissemination and collaboration. Funding and investment in the transport and logistics sector needed to focus on projects that promoted resilience, sustainability and inclusivity. Enhanced access to climate finance, trade facilitation initiatives, public–private partnerships, digitalization and international cooperation were key enablers in supporting countries in sustainability and resilience-building efforts; integrating maritime support into national development strategies was also important, to better align with climate finance mechanisms, and innovative financing instruments such as green and blue bonds could be further leveraged, to help bridge the gap between available sustainable finance instruments and the lagging infrastructure investment trends in developing countries, particularly in sectors such as ports and logistics, while noting the need to rebalance risk in public–private partnerships, to ensure successful deployment. Together, such efforts could help to better align financing arrangements with resilience and sustainability goals. Finally, with regard to the role of UNCTAD, experts stated that UNCTAD was a pioneer in recognizing the role of transport and logistics in delivering global trade and linking global supply chains and, in this context, the work of UNCTAD helped mainstream the interconnectedness of supply chains and transport and logistics and assist developing countries in building sustainable and resilient supply chains. In this regard, strengthening the work related to transport, trade facilitation and logistics was critical in the current context of proliferating challenges, including through the allocation of additional resources. The role of UNCTAD in supporting States remained fundamental, given the fast-evolving nature of the operating landscape for transport, logistics and supply chains and the challenges faced by vulnerable economies in integrating into global transport and trading networks, particularly in small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries that also dealt with disproportionately high transport costs. Through evidence-based research, data, policy recommendations and tailored capacity-building and technical assistance, UNCTAD would continue to support countries, particularly small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries, with the insights, knowledge, best practices, tools and strategies necessary to enhance efficiency, promote productivity, address disruptions, reduce vulnerability and support the transition towards greener, more sustainable and resilient transport and logistics. Such support was particularly crucial in the face of interconnected global challenges or polycrises and in line with the outcomes of the Global Supply Chain Forum. The holistic approach of UNCTAD and commitment to such efforts was vital and should be strengthened, to help ensure that all countries could participate equitably in the sustainability and resilience-building transformation of the maritime sector and benefit from a development-centred and inclusive growth path.

49. The Chair presented the key issues addressed during the discussions, noting the link with the outcomes of the Global Supply Chain Forum and highlighting that discussions had

emphasized the need for an integrated and door-to-door approach to building resilient and sustainable supply chains supported by efficient, low-carbon and reliable transportation networks and logistics. In addition, discussions had noted the importance among the international community, including Governments, industry, financiers and all relevant stakeholders, of collaboration and support in making freight transport systems sustainable and resilient across all modes but, in particular, the maritime sector. The Chair stated that the meeting had served to underscore the importance of futureproofing transport and logistics for the global supply chains and trade of the future.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

50. At its opening plenary meeting on 23 October 2024, the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation elected Mr. Sumbue Antas (Vanuatu) as its Chair and Ms. Soha Mohamed Tharwat Abdelaziz Mansour (Egypt) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

51. Also at its opening plenary meeting, the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation decided to adopt the provisional agenda for the session, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/31. The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Maritime transport in times of polycrisis.
4. Adoption of the report of the meeting.

C. Adoption of the report of the meeting

(Agenda item 4)

52. At its closing plenary meeting on 24 October 2024, the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report after the conclusion of the session.

Annex

Attendance*

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Conference attended the session:

Albania	Lebanon
Angola	Madagascar
Bangladesh	Morocco
Barbados	Pakistan
Brazil	Peru
Burkina Faso	Philippines
China	Russian Federation
Colombia	Samoa
Comoros	Singapore
Congo	Spain
Dominican Republic	Sri Lanka
Egypt	Togo
Ethiopia	Trinidad and Tobago
Gambia	Türkiye
Guyana	United Arab Emirates
Honduras	Vanuatu
Iraq	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Jamaica	Yemen
	Zimbabwe

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

European Union
Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping

3. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Maritime Organization
United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Universal Postal Union
World Bank Group
World Trade Organization

4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General category

International Chamber of Commerce
International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees
Organisation Camerounaise de Promotion de la Coopération Économique
Internationale
Village Suisse ONG

Special category

International Association of Ports and Harbours
International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations
Women's International Shipping and Trading Association

* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/INF.11.