
50 years of UNCTAD and 47 issues of the Review of Maritime Transport

First published in 1968, the Review of Maritime Transport has since been a reference for researchers, academics, consultants, government agencies, port authorities and shipping lines but also for all those interested in understanding the networks of infrastructure, services and operators that underpin international trade flows.

The Review of Maritime Transport (RMT) was established with the view to support “policy makers and was intended to consist mainly of the presentation of a series of important statistics, together with comments on their relevance and meaning”. As a result, in 1967 UNCTAD produced the Review of Developments in World Shipping before adopting the title Review of Maritime Transport in 1968. The RMT has since become one of UNCTAD’s longest lasting flagship reports and a widely used authoritative source of maritime information and statistics.

Since inception, the RMT has reflected the growing importance of maritime transport as an engine of growth and development and focused on international shipping in all its dimensions. That said, the Review is a living document that has over the years not only maintained a systematic coverage of developments affecting demand for and supply of shipping services, freight markets and ports, but has also evolved to cover developments in the transport-related legal and regulatory framework, multimodal transport, and trade facilitation. Special chapters and sections are dedicated to addressing the needs of special groupings like the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States or covering topical issues such as sustainable freight transport, climate resilience, energy efficiency and transport infrastructure financing.

While historical data on seaborne trade, world fleet and port developments are essential for mapping out of the past and for an improved understanding of current and projected trends New instruments and tools are also presented in the RMT to support policy making and transport planning decisions, these include, for example, the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI), computed by UNCTAD since 2004. The LSCI measures the ability of countries to participate in the global liner shipping networks and determines the competitiveness of their trade.

Work carried out, in the past 50 years, by UNCTAD in the field of maritime transport is extensive and widely acknowledged. It includes the RMT as well as other publications such as the port management monographs, that cover a wide range of issues such as port operations planning and container terminal development and management. Moreover, the legacy of UNCTAD's work in the area of transport law is significant and includes the negotiation and the adoption of a number of international conventions in the field of commercial maritime law and various sets of non-mandatory rules. These include the United Nations Convention on a Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences, 1974; the United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea (Hamburg Rules), 1978; the United Nations Convention on Conditions for Registration of Ships, 1986; the UNCTAD Minimum Standards for Shipping Agents, 1988; the UNCTAD Model Clauses on Marine Hull and Cargo Insurance, 1989; the UNCTAD/International Chamber of Commerce Rules for Multimodal Transport Documents, 1992; the International Convention on Maritime Liens and Mortgages, 1993 and the International Convention on Arrest of Ships, 1999.

Bearing in mind this history this 47th issue of the RMT reinforces UNCTAD's long-lasting experience and expertise in the field of maritime transport.