



DTL/TLB/MISC/2018/2  
(18/160ams)

## NOTIFICATION

### Ad hoc expert meeting

### **Maritime Transport in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and an Agenda for Future Research**

**PrideInn Paradise Beach Resort and Convention Centre  
Mombasa, Kenya, 11 September 2018**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is convening an ad hoc expert meeting entitled **Maritime Transport in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and an Agenda for Future Research**. Organized in collaboration with the Korea Maritime Institute (Republic of Korea) and Trademark East Africa, the meeting will be held on 11 September 2018, at the PrideInn Paradise Beach Resort and Convention Centre, Mombasa, Kenya, from 2 to 5.30 p.m.

### **Background and purpose of the meeting**

With over 80 per cent of world merchandise trade by volume carried by sea, the strategic importance of maritime transport for trade and development cannot be overemphasized. In 2017, world seaborne trade reached an estimated 10.7 billion tons, following an annual growth rate of 4 per cent. Looking ahead, UNCTAD projects global maritime trade to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 3.8 per cent between 2018 and 2023.

Over 90 per cent of Africa's international trade is maritime. The continent's contribution to global seaborne trade is, however, small, at less than 10 per cent and 5 per cent of exports and imports, respectively. Reflecting Africa's trade structure, 40 per cent of goods exported in 2017 were made of crude oil, and dry cargoes (e.g. dry bulks and containerized goods) accounted for over two thirds of imports in addition to refined petroleum products and gas (20 per cent). Meanwhile, Africa's ownership of the world fleet is limited, with no African country included in the top 35 shipowning countries. With regard to ship registration, Liberia ranks third globally, after Panama and the Marshall Islands in terms of nationally flagged tonnage. With 3,321 registered vessels and a capacity of about 223.7 million dead-weight tons, the Liberian ship register accounted for about 11.6 per cent of world fleet tonnage in January 2018.

Africa's shipping and ports are lagging behind global trends and standards. Apart from four container terminals from Egypt, Morocco and South Africa, no other African port was featured in the 2016 list of top 100 global container ports. African ports are characterized by heavy involvement of the public sector in port operations compared to other regions. Port capacity limitations, lack of institutional reforms and inefficient operations remain major challenges. Port equipment is often inadequate and poorly maintained putting pressure on productivity levels. On average, crane productivity is around 20 moves per crane per hour in West Africa, 25 to 30 in South Africa and 35 to 40 in Asia. Recent data indicate, however, some improvements such as in Mombasa port where import container dwell times fell from 12 days in 2008, to 4.8 days in 2015.

These challenges are further amplified by trade imbalances and empty return incidence which exacerbate operational challenges. Together, these factors are raising cargo dwell time and undermine efficiency, reduce productivity, cause delays, heighten congestion and raise transport and trade costs.

More recently, the rise of megaships, the cascading effect into secondary routes, such as in Africa, and growing sustainability requirements are creating more stringent demands on the continent's shipping services and port infrastructure. In this context and bearing in mind expected growth in Africa's maritime trade, owing to the demographic and economic factors shaping the continent, unlocking the potential of a maritime transport sector that relies on adequate shipping, ports and hinterland access becomes an overriding imperative.

Against this background and seizing the momentum generated by the first annual meeting of the International Association of Maritime Economists to be held in Africa, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Korea Maritime Institute (Republic of Korea) and Trademark East Africa, is organizing an ad hoc expert meeting on the theme of maritime transport in Africa, focused on challenges, opportunities and an agenda for future research.

### **Logistics**

The meeting will take at the PrideInn Paradise Beach Resort and Convention Centre, in Mombasa, Kenya, on 11 September 2018, from 2 to 5.30 p.m.

### **Participation**

The meeting is open to all member States of UNCTAD. It may be of interest to government officials, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and representatives of the private sector dealing with issues related to transport and trade generally, and maritime transport in Africa, in particular. Experts from international and regional organizations, including development banks dealing with transport and trade, will also be invited.

To register to participate in the meeting, participants should contact Ms. Hassiba Benamara, Economic Affairs Officer by **10 September 2018**: tel., 41 22 917 2038; email, [hassiba.benamara@un.org](mailto:hassiba.benamara@un.org).

### **Documents and contributed papers**

All experts are encouraged to prepare and submit relevant papers and contributions. These will be made available on UNCTAD website in the form and language in which they are received. Contributed papers should be submitted to [hassiba.benamara@un.org](mailto:hassiba.benamara@un.org).

(p.p. signed)

Mukhisa Kituyi  
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

22 August 2018