

**22 January 2025**

3pm – 4:30pm (EAT) | 1pm - 2:30pm (CET)

Online: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/vOfXCQ9oQjKv29t91kPh0A#/registration>**REVIEW OF MARITIME TRANSPORT 2025**

Webinar on Disseminating the 2025 Review of Maritime Transport with Special Reference to Africa

Background

Maritime transport, the backbone of global trade, is navigating an era of heightened uncertainty and volatility. Following a growth of 2.2% in 2024, seaborne trade is projected to expand by only 0.5% in 2025, reflecting an increasingly complex outlook marked by policy volatility, geopolitical tensions and softer macroeconomic conditions that are weighing on confidence and demand. Rerouting of vessels around the Cape of Good Hope amid continued disruptions in the Red Sea has caused voyage distances to increase and freight rates to remain volatile. As of September 2025, the Suez Canal operated at around 70% below average tonnage transit levels in 2023. Developments around the Strait of Hormuz in June 2025, have raised concerns over more disruption as the maritime passage facilitates the passage for about 34% of global seaborne exports of oil and determines the stability of global energy markets. These developments, coupled with new trade tariffs and environmental compliance costs, are redefining the economics of global shipping and placing additional strain on ports and supply chains worldwide.

The Review of Maritime Transport 2025 underscored the multiple transitions that are simultaneously unfolding in the sector: the shift to low-carbon fuels, the adoption of digital systems, and the reconfiguration of trade routes. While these transitions offer opportunities for efficiency and sustainability, they also underscore the need for these transitions to be just and equitable. Developing countries, especially the most vulnerable economies such as small island developing states (SIDS), the least developed countries (LDCs) and the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) often lack the capacity to absorb the transition costs and generally are disproportionately affected by high transport costs. African economies are highly vulnerable to these costs, which erode trade competitiveness and increase import bills.

At the same time, for Africa, a shift to low carbon shipping represents an opportunity to position itself as a leader in sustainable maritime transport by participating in renewable energy production and supply for maritime transport. It is also an opportunity for the continent to leverage its role as a key player supporting global energy transition through





critical minerals trade. Africa is a key supplier of copper, cobalt, and lithium, essential for renewable energy and digital technologies. Ports and shipping systems must adapt to handle these flows efficiently and sustainably and promote a move up the value chain of critical minerals.

Africa's maritime sector is deeply affected by these global dynamics yet also stands at the forefront of emerging opportunities. Between 2024 and 2025, African ports recorded the fastest growth in liner shipping connectivity worldwide, reflecting trends in port development, as well as the effect of rerouting away from the Red Sea. This shift has elevated the strategic importance of ports in countries such as South Africa, Namibia, and Tanzania, while also creating new prospects port business and logistics.

Against this backdrop, the webinar will provide a platform to discuss the findings of the Review of Maritime Transport 2025 with a focus on Africa. It will highlight the continent's vulnerabilities and opportunities, explore strategies for resilience, and encourage collaboration among governments, industry leaders, and development partners to ensure that Africa's maritime transformation contributes to inclusive and sustainable growth.

Review of Maritime Transport 2025

The Review of Maritime Transport 2025 highlights the transitions ahead – to zero carbon, to digital systems, to new trade routes – and underscores that they must be just transitions. They must empower, not exclude. They must build resilience, not deepen vulnerability. Investing in resilience and sustainability is crucial. This includes advancing fleet renewal, port modernization and alternative fuel infrastructure; skilling up the workforce while protecting seafarers' rights, devising adequate safety protocols (e.g., for the handling of the new fuels) and fit-for-purpose regulatory frameworks; and, mainstreaming risk management, agility and resilience building in transport investment decisions and planning.

Africa is at a cross-road facing both challenges and opportunities. It faces rising freight costs and logistical inefficiencies such as port congestion which undermine trade competitiveness and inflate the import bill, especially for SIDS and LDCs. Yet, between June 2024 and June 2025, African ports recorded the fastest growth in connectivity, highlighting the potential for the continent to expand its port business. Meanwhile rapid growth in the continent's critical minerals trade and projected expansion offer new opportunities for improved transport and logistics in Africa. The report underscores collaboration to ensure Africa's maritime transformation supports sustainable and inclusive growth.

Objectives

This webinar will bring together key stakeholders in the maritime industry in Africa and beyond to discuss the findings of the Review of Maritime Transport 2025 and address the implications for African economies. The session will focus on strategies to enhance resilience, sustainability, and inclusiveness in maritime transport amid global disruptions and rapid transitions, with emphasis on:

1. Presenting global and Africa's key trends in maritime trade, fleet, port performance and liner shipping connectivity.
2. Examining the effects of longer shipping routes on freight rates and ports in Africa
3. Identifying potential benefits from shifting trade routes on Africa's ports and



connectivity.

4. Considering key legal developments and discussing the draft IMO Net-Zero Framework and its implications for African shipping, ports and energy transition.
5. Addressing seafarer welfare, inclusiveness, and upskilling to meet future industry demands.

Target participants

The webinar is aimed at stakeholders in the maritime industry from Africa and beyond, including policymakers, representatives of international organizations, shipping lines and maritime service providers, Industry associations, academic and research institutions, development partners, NGOs, and other participants.

Modalities

The webinar will be hosted virtually on zoom at this link below:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/vOfXCQ9oQjKv29t91kPh0A#/registration>

Contacts

Ms. Judith Ameso
Economic Affairs Officer
Regional Office for Africa
Division for Africa, LDCs &
Special Programmes
UNCTAD
ameso@un.org

Ms. Hassiba Benamara
Economic Affairs Officer
Transport Section
Trade Logistics Branch
Division on Technology and Logistics
UNCTAD
hassiba.benamara@unctad.org