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Promoting and strengthening synergies among the three pillars

**Progress report on the implementation of the
provisions of the Accra Accord related to
transport and trade facilitation**

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

Executive summary

This report has been prepared by the Trade Logistics Branch of UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics to provide a succinct narrative of activities implemented in relation to transport and trade facilitation matters in compliance with relevant paragraphs from the Accra Accord.

The report highlights the work carried out during the period between the third and fourth sessions of the Trade and Development Commission, in 2011 and the first half of 2012, on the three main pillars of UNCTAD: (a) technical assistance and capacity-building activities; (b) research and analysis on transport and trade facilitation; and (c) intergovernmental and consensus-building activities.

Introduction

1. The work undertaken by UNCTAD in the field of transport and trade facilitation since the third session of the Commission reflects the mandate on transport and trade facilitation, as set out in the Accra Accord. The activities reported below are presented to correspond to the order of the Accra Accord paragraphs, factually reflecting the work carried out by the Trade Logistics Branch of the Division on Technology and Logistics during the period between the third and fourth sessions of the Trade and Development Commission, in 2011 and the first half of 2012.

Box 1. Accra Accord paragraphs on technical assistance related to Transport and Trade Facilitation

107. UNCTAD should provide technical assistance to landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries to help them ensure that adequate and efficient infrastructure and services, as well as effective transit transport arrangements, are in place to support trade.

166. UNCTAD should continue to provide capacity-building and technical assistance to policymakers and other stakeholders in developing countries on such issues as reducing transport costs and improving transport connectivity and competitiveness, developing and implementing appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, and devising and implementing national and international actions to promote transport and trade facilitation, including in transit corridors. It should coordinate this work with other relevant organizations where appropriate. It should continue to assist developing countries in transport and trade facilitation negotiations, including in the context of the Doha Round, and in ensuring the effective implementation of agreed rules and standards.

167. UNCTAD should continue to provide assistance to developing countries to design and implement policies and actions aimed at improving the efficiency of trade transactions as well as the management of transport operations. It should also continue to cooperate with member States in implementing Asycuda, the automated system for customs data.

I. Technical assistance and capacity-building activities

2. During the reporting period, approximately 45 workshops, seminars and lectures were delivered in 40 countries and attended by around 2,000 participants, including 500 women.

3. UNCTAD continued to provide advice and policy guidance in response to requests received from various governmental and intergovernmental entities as well as non-governmental organizations. Areas of focus included substantive legal issues and international legal instruments, such as (a) the Rotterdam Rules, 2008; (b) the International Convention on Arrest of Ships, 1999; (c) bills of lading; (d) charter parties; (e) International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004; (f) International Maritime Organization codes for the safe carriage of goods by sea; and (g) the status of United Nations conventions. Policy-related information and input were also provided upon request to other United Nations bodies, research consultancies, and firms and industry associations, including in relation to (a) international seaborne trade data and supporting documentation and information; (b) sustainable marine eco-tourism; and (c) sustainability in shipping and transport, and challenges and opportunities and the role of the

Danish maritime industry. UNCTAD work is generally well received and deemed helpful in improving the understanding of issues raised. This is illustrated by positive feedback received from the various beneficiaries, including during lectures delivered, as well as by specific actions taken at the country level. For example, on 14 March 2011 Albania acceded to the International Convention on Arrest of Ships 1999, triggering the entry into force of the Convention.

4. UNCTAD organized and participated in several consensus and capacity-building events in which issues of particular interest especially to least developed and geographically-disadvantaged landlocked countries were addressed. To this end, an UNCTAD project entitled “Strengthening capacities of developing countries in Africa and Asia to support their effective participation in negotiating bilateral, regional and multilateral trade facilitation arrangements” was initiated. This project will run for 32 months and focus initially in greater depth on six countries: Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania in East Africa, and Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal in South Asia – that is, one transit and two landlocked countries in each region. In addition, Burundi and Kenya in East Africa and India in South Asia will be included in regional and interregional activities. From January 2012 to the present, the project has been effectively launched in all countries. Eight missions have taken place and seven national consultants have been recruited to undertake the field research needed.

5. During the missions, UNCTAD presents the project in detail to train trade facilitation stakeholders from the private and public sectors on the different trade facilitation measures that are currently being negotiated within the World Trade Organization (WTO). To date, approximately 180 national stakeholders have been approached and it is estimated that up to 400 will be actively involved in the project before the end of the year. This helps to raise awareness on the importance of trade facilitation. Moreover, one of the main challenges of trade facilitation is enabling coordination and communication among actors from very different organizations related to trade facilitation. The project contributes to creating and strengthening a mechanism for coordination and communication. For instance, in the United Republic of Tanzania, motivated by the UNCTAD project, the national trade facilitation committee met again after several years of no formal activity. The establishment of a formal mandate for the committee has since been relaunched in the country.

6. A project entitled “Implementation Plans for WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in Developing Members”, financed by the European Union and Norway, was initiated in November 2011. This project covers 17 countries and, in less than 8 months, has been launched in Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Dominican Republic, Gabon, Guatemala, Nepal, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Paraguay. The validation conferences in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic have successfully taken place and more than 240 stakeholders were reached. Thus far, two implementation plans have been finalized and are serving the national authorities as a useful tool to set trade facilitation in their national agendas. From a communications point of view, the launch of the project in OECS had strong media coverage in online press and television. The relevance of the UNCTAD project and trade facilitation was conveyed not only to the stakeholders involved but also to the broad public.

7. With the support from individual country donors, UNCTAD also continued the activities under its multi-donor trust fund for Capacity-building in developing countries and least developed countries to support their effective participation in the WTO negotiations process on trade facilitation. In 2012, UNCTAD supported the participation of representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Mali.

8. At the regional level, UNCTAD organized or contributed to several policy workshops on the national and regional trade facilitation reforms which helped in training

up to 400 stakeholders from Africa and Latin America: (a) UNCTAD/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Forum on WTO, Trade Facilitation and the Private Sector in Latin America (Chile); (b) trade facilitation workshop of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Burkina Faso); (c) UNCTAD Regional Forum on WTO, Trade Facilitation and the Private Sector in Central America, for representatives from the private and public sectors of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama; and (d) UNCTAD Regional Forum on WTO, Trade Facilitation and Implementation Plans in Latin America, for the representatives from customs authorities and Ministries of Commerce of members of WTO in Central America (Dominican Republic).

9. UNCTAD sustained its activities to support developing countries during the on-going trade facilitation negotiations within the framework of the WTO Doha Development Agenda. During the year, UNCTAD worked closely with various agencies such as the United Nations regional commissions – Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; regional organizations – Latin American Association for Integration, Economic Cooperation Organization, OECS, Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project, Central American Economic Integration Secretariat, West African Economic and Monetary Union; and regional development banks – the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank – in order to find regional solutions to trade and transport facilitation challenges. It is also worth noting that UNCTAD has brought together key regional trade facilitation stakeholders in all regional groups of the Group of 77.

10. In 2011, UNCTAD initiated a three-year project to strengthen the Palestinian Shippers' Council which was launched in May 2011 by UNCTAD and the Council. The project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, aims to strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Shippers' Council to serve as focal point for the promotion of shippers' interests and facilitation of their trade-related activities. One output of the project is a client-orientated service portfolio for the Palestinian Shippers' Council, developed with input from the shipping community. Interviews, workshops and questionnaire-based needs assessments have been carried out by the project team to identify the most critical services required by Palestinian shippers. These include research, policy advocacy, training, networking and strategic partnerships, as well as legal advice.

11. As part of capacity-building, lectures and presentations were provided at various forums on (a) modern port management as part of the UNCTAD Port Training Programme in Ghana, Indonesia, Maldives and the United Republic of Tanzania; (b) a module on transport and trade facilitation for the twenty-second regional course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda (EAFIT University, Medellín, Colombia); (c) a fact-finding mission to assess transport and logistics needs was also provided to the Government of Mozambique, with a strong focus on port development; (d) dissemination of the latest developments in international trade and transport was also provided to various training institutes in Hong Kong, China (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Sweden (World Maritime University) and Switzerland (International Institute for the Management of Logistics); (e) a study of trade facilitation measures in Pakistan; (f) a study tour on trade and maritime transport undertaken in the United Republic of Tanzania; (g) Trade Facilitation Forum and Conference on Maritime Economics in Chile; and (h) the UNCTAD/Confacil Trade Facilitation in Guatemala.

12. Lectures and presentations covering issues related to commercial transport law, as well as climate change impacts and adaptation for ports and ship-source oil pollution included those delivered at the international postgraduate course on Research in Marine

Environment and Resources, held in February 2011 in San Sebastian, Spain and at the International Conference on Logistics and Multimodal Transport, convened by the International Multimodal Transport Association in October 2011 in Gran Canaria, Spain. The lectures offered an excellent opportunity to disseminate information about UNCTAD work. Based on both oral and written feedback from participants and organizers, the lectures were well received and allowed for contacts to be established and/or renewed with academia and industry, as well as with a range of other delegates for future cooperation.

13. In 2011, UNCTAD continued to provide advisory services to the Government of Pakistan, under the World Bank financed Trade and Transport Facilitation Project II. An ongoing activity under the project is to provide ad-hoc support to the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations in Geneva on WTO trade facilitation negotiations. UNCTAD has organized broader capacity-building activities; provided technical assistance in the alignment of trade documents to the United Nations Layout Key; and support for implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. A study has been carried out to strengthen the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee in line with international best practices, and another on the disposal of abandoned cargo. A study on the preparedness of Pakistan to achieve compliance with the future WTO trade facilitation agreement has been undertaken and is to feed into the review and updating of the national trade facilitation strategy. The project has resulted in Pakistan being able to make more meaningful and targeted contributions to WTO trade facilitation agreement negotiations. This can be demonstrated by an increased number of country-specific proposals submitted to the Chair of the WTO Negotiating Group of Trade Facilitation by the Pakistani delegates and increased levels of interaction between the Pakistani delegation and other delegations and working groups. International trade policy has also become more important in domestic politics with regional issues now high on the national agenda. The Prime Minister of Pakistan declared 2012 to be the year of regional cooperation and integration.

14. UNCTAD, in collaboration with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA), the Tanzania Freight Forwarders Association (TAFFA) and the Tanzania Revenue Authority, delivered a Training of Trainers course on freight forwarding to 28 local trainers. In addition to freight forwarders, trainers from the Government including the Tanzania Revenue Authority and the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority were assisted. The Training of Trainers programme helps freight forwarding associations to design their own national freight forwarding course according to the FIATA syllabus. Local trainers from within the community are first identified and trained, then examined. Successful trainers go on to teach individual students, providing a minimum of 240 hours of classroom time to students to enable them to sit for the acclaimed FIATA diploma. Once designed, each national programme is submitted to FIATA for validation and then periodically for revalidation to ensure quality is maintained. The Training of Trainers course helped increase TAFFA capacity to provide training to its membership by developing the capacities of local resource persons. The programme also highlighted the need for transport insurance. Ways to offer this as part of a membership package are being explored by TAFFA. The development of a national sustainable training programme will increase the understanding of the United Republic of Tanzania of international trade and help the country integrate further into the global marketplace. This will also positively impact on the quality of transit services provided to goods destined to or originating from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda that transit through the United Republic of Tanzania. Previous Training of Trainers courses have resulted in sustainable national freight forwarding courses being developed in Ghana, Kenya and Pakistan.

15. UNCTAD competency in the complex area of customs automation is well recognized internationally. The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) is implemented in the beneficiary countries in the framework of a technical assistance project

that provides delivery of a comprehensive package including software, documentation, technical and functional expertise and capacity-building. In the course of implementing this technical assistance project, training activities are of paramount importance to ensure the full transfer of ASYCUDA know-how to national staff, in order to allow the national team to administrate and maintain an ASYCUDA system, in the long term, without external technical assistance and support.

16. Regarding capacity-building and the transfer of know-how, multiple ASYCUDA training sessions were held worldwide at the national and regional levels on customs and information technology matters. The functional courses covered mainly selectivity and risk-management, Customs valuation and implementation of transit. The information and communication technology courses focused on database structure and administration, information exchange and telecommunications, web technology and ASYCUDA maintenance and development.

17. The latest countries using ASYCUDA version 2 have now migrated to ASYCUDA++, or directly to the latest version of the ASYCUDA system, bringing to a close the first long era of ASYCUDA version 2 projects that have lasted for thirty years. Activities for the implementation of the migration to the latest version of the ASYCUDA system continued in Afghanistan, Botswana, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

18. The latest version of the ASYCUDA system is operational in Albania, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Curaçao, Dominica, Georgia, Haiti, Jordan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Zimbabwe, covering the full customs clearance process. Implementation activities (such as prototype building, roll-out, system consolidation, system extension) started or continued in Anguilla, Bangladesh, Belize, BES islands (the Netherlands), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Djibouti, El Salvador, Gibraltar, Grenada, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kosovo (in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Montserrat, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tunisia and Turks and Caicos Islands.

19. In the Asia and Pacific region, activities focused on the live deployment of the latest version of the ASYCUDA system in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Sri Lanka. Concurrently the Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur continued to provide technical support to other ASYCUDA systems and to maintain its online presence. Backstopping to the Pacific subregion was delivered through the ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Pacific based in Fiji where the system has now been operational for 10 years.

20. Multiple institutional and trade facilitation benchmarks may be used for assessing the impact of ASYCUDA projects. The more significant include the increase of revenue collected by customs, the improvement of trade facilitation, the reduction of delays for the clearance of goods and the timely provision of reliable statistical data for international trade. The consistent enforcement of customs and related legislation nationwide and the automatic calculation of duties and taxes result in the increase of state budget revenue, while reliable and timely trade and fiscal statistics assist governments in planning their economic policy.

21. The latest release of the ASYCUDA system provides a sound technical base and is an essential tool for building single-window systems. Several countries have already built such systems integrating trade operators and other government agencies with customs, thus paving the way for e-business and e-government, making international trade simpler and cheaper, while opening international markets to enterprises from developing countries. A

willingness to change and commitment and full support from the highest governmental authorities are essential factors for the success of customs modernization projects.

II. Research and analysis on transport and trade facilitation

Box 2. Accra Accord paragraphs on research and analysis related to Transport and Trade Facilitation

164. In the area of trade facilitation, transport and related services of interest to developing countries, UNCTAD should continue to analyze issues that affect the trade and transport of developing countries and international supply-chain security. It should also disseminate its analyses and relevant information, and promote the exchange of experiences.

165. UNCTAD should undertake research to develop policy recommendations that will enable developing countries to cut transport costs and improve transport efficiency and connectivity. The research should pay special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable economies, and in particular to the development and implementation of coherent transit systems that will benefit landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries, taking into account the Almaty Ministerial Declaration and Programme of Action. Attention should also be paid to the promotion of multimodal transport.

168. Through its research and policy analysis, UNCTAD should help developing countries make informed policy choices to address the environmental challenges in relation to transport strategies, and to help identify associated capacity-building needs and appropriate regulatory responses.

22. In accordance with the above-mentioned mandates (see box 2), UNCTAD carried out substantive research and analytical work on a wide range of economic, policy, legal and regulatory issues and related developments affecting the transport and trade of developing countries. In 2011, the results of the research and analytical work carried out and statistics compiled were broadly disseminated through the annual *Review of Maritime Transport*. The 2011 edition of the *Review of Maritime Transport* covered developments affecting, among other issues: (a) international seaborne trade; (b) world fleet, including registration and ownership; (c) freight rates and vessel prices; (d) ports and cargo throughput; and (e) regulatory and legal developments in the field of transport and trade. Of particular note in 2011, the *Review of Maritime Transport* elaborated on the participation of developing countries in maritime businesses in order to inform policymakers of potential areas of consideration when designing national transport policies and developing related strategies.

23. Another channel used to provide information about work undertaken by the Branch and disseminate results of research and analytical work carried out is the quarterly *Transport Newsletter*. The *Transport Newsletter* features topical articles and provides a platform for UNCTAD and others interested in the field of transport and trade facilitation to share insight and views. It is published on the UNCTAD website and delivered to nearly 4,000 subscribers. Some of the topics covered in 2011 were (a) trends in liner shipping connectivity; (b) transporting refrigerated cargo; (c) international transport and climate change; (d) public-private partnerships in transportation and trade; (e) regional initiatives in trade facilitation; (f) port reforms; (g) transit transport; (h) challenges facing least developed countries; (i) maritime cargo container scanning; and (j) the UNCTAD Port Training Programme.

24. Two policy papers on trade facilitation were published by the UNCTAD secretariat in 2011. The first was a note by the secretariat, *Challenges and policy options for transport and trade facilitation* (TD/B/C.I/MEM.1/11), prepared for the fourth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation which discussed pressing challenges to be addressed. The note reviewed the challenges affecting international transport and trade, with a special emphasis on the problems faced by landlocked developing countries, as well as the challenges foreseen in implementing trade facilitation reforms and customs automation, including the share of the private sector in these endeavours. The second, a publication titled *Trade Facilitation in Regional Trade Agreements* (UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2011/1), drew attention to the growing importance of trade facilitation at the regional level, as more and more regional trade agreements include specific trade facilitation commitments.

25. UNCTAD also prepared a substantive analytical report entitled *Liability and Compensation for Ship-Source Oil Pollution: An Overview of the International Legal Framework for Oil Pollution Damage from Tankers* (UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2011/4), published in 2012. The report highlights important features of the international regulatory framework as well as issues of particular interest to coastal developing countries that may be vulnerable to ship-source oil pollution.

26. As background, it should be noted that around half of global crude oil production is carried by sea. Much of this navigation is taking place in relative proximity to the coasts of many countries, in some cases transiting through constrained areas or chokepoints, such as narrow straits and canals. At the same time, the steady growth in the size and carrying capacity of ships transporting cargo of any type means that significant quantities of heavy bunker fuel are carried across oceans and along coastal zones. With many coastal or small island developing States' economies heavily dependent on income from fisheries and tourism, exposure to damage arising from ship-source oil pollution incidents poses a potentially significant economic threat.

27. Regarding oil pollution from tankers, a robust international legal framework is in place to provide significant compensation to those affected. However, a number of coastal states, including developing countries that are potentially exposed to ship-source oil pollution incidents, are not yet contracting parties to the latest legal instruments in the field. The report provides an analytical overview of the relevant legal instruments and offers some considerations for national policymaking to assist policymakers in their understanding of the international legal framework and in assessing the merits of ratification. While the focus of the report is on tanker oil pollution, it also highlights the importance of two related international conventions, namely the 1996 International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS Convention) as amended by its Protocol of 2010 to the Convention – the 2010 HNS Convention – and the 2001 International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage.

28. UNCTAD continued research and analytical work on climate change implications for international transport and related adaptation needs. Insight gained from work carried out thus far has been reflected, for example, in relevant parliamentary documentation prepared in 2011 (UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2011/2 and TD/B/C.I/MEM.1/11).

29. Attention should also be drawn to a volume titled *Maritime Transport and the Climate Change Challenge*, edited by UNCTAD and published in May 2012, which provides detailed insight on a range of the potential implications of climate change from the perspective of maritime transport and trade. The volume, a United Nations co-publication with Earthscan/Routledge, includes contributions from experts from academia, international organizations – such as the International Maritime Organization, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development, International Energy Agency and the World Bank – as well as the shipping and port industries. Issues covered include the scientific background; greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping and potential approaches to mitigation; the state of play in the relevant regulatory and institutional framework; potential climate change impacts and approaches to adaptation in maritime transport; and relevant cross-cutting issues such as financing and investment, technology and energy.

30. UNCTAD also carried out research on developments in inland transportation and infrastructure (mainly in road, rail and inland waterways) and the role of public–private partnerships. This is reflected in chapter 4 of the *Review of Maritime Transport 2011* where a special section devoted to inland transport developments highlighted some recent key developments in global freight volume movement by main inland transport systems. It also underlined recent developments affecting the inland transport infrastructure of developing countries with a special focus on the public–private partnerships in financing inland transport infrastructure development. Research and analytical work in the field of sustainable freight transport and the role of public–private partnerships and climate finance in enabling green and low carbon freight transport systems are also reflected in the *Review* and parliamentary documents for the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation held in December 2011.

31. During the reporting period, the ASYCUDA programme continued to undertake research and analysis activities on the system’s functionality in order to embrace the concept of a single window for international trade. A single window will allow the connection of other government agencies to the customs system for the electronic exchange of data and the common processing of documents, thereby setting the basis for the implementation of e-customs and e-government. The single window will also be accessible to the trade community in order to create a paperless environment.

32. UNCTAD also provided substantive input to United Nations reports, including the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on oceans and the law of the sea and implementation of General Assembly resolution 65/155, Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations. Contributions on international shipping and seaborne trade were also provided for the 2012 edition of the joint UNCTAD–Department of Economic and Social Affairs report titled *World Economic Situation and Prospects*.

III. Intergovernmental and consensus-building activities

33. UNCTAD was represented at various international meetings and events relating to trade logistics. These events offered an excellent opportunity to disseminate information about UNCTAD’s work in the field and to establish and/or renew contact with a range of delegates and stakeholders for the purpose of future cooperation.

34. As of part of its cooperation with other international organizations, UNCTAD participated actively in three sessions of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Expert Group on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for International Transport Network. The Expert Group was established in March 2011, following a joint ECE–UNCTAD workshop on the subject that had been held in September 2010. UNCTAD also contributed substantively to other work under the auspices of the ECE Inland Transport Committee, in particular the Working Party on Intermodal Transport, where UNCTAD provided input on legal matters as part of an informal group of experts on the Rotterdam Rules.

35. UNCTAD actively participated in the work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, which held its eighteenth and nineteenth Forums in

Geneva in April and September respectively. UNCTAD also took part in the United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory ISO 7372 Joint Maintenance Agency meeting held in Geneva in September 2011. During the reporting period, UNCTAD continued to facilitate the participation of trade facilitation negotiators from developing countries in the meetings of the WTO Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation and to provide ad hoc advisory services to Geneva and capital-based delegates.

36. UNCTAD organized a second Ad Hoc Expert Meeting entitled “Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: A Challenge to Global Ports” which took place in Geneva from 29–30 September 2011. The main theme of this meeting focused on assisting developing countries in ensuring coherence between regional and multilateral trade facilitation commitments. To help advance the important debate on how best to move forward, the Ad Hoc Expert Meeting provided policymakers, key public and private sector stakeholders, international organizations and scientists and engineers with a platform for discussion and an opportunity to share best practices.

37. In December 2011, the UNCTAD secretariat convened the fourth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation which focused on the following two mandated topics: (a) measures and actions to optimize the contribution of investment, in particular private sector investment, in trade facilitation, namely information and communication technologies in logistics, trade facilitation and supply chain security; and (b) support to the implementation process of the Almaty Programme of Action, including the analysis of bottlenecks between landlocked and transit developing countries, and possible appropriate solutions to address them, including best practices in the development and use of transport infrastructure, as well as the adoption of common standards, in landlocked and transit developing countries.

38. In April 2012 at the thirteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII), a side event on sustainable freight transport was held in Doha. A panel discussion on “Paving the Way for Sustainable Freight Transport” was jointly organized with the Asian Development Bank. The interactive panel provided a high-level platform for discussions and the sharing of public and private sector experiences in promoting a paradigm shift towards sustainable freight transport. Expert panellists from governments, the Asian Development Bank, academia, and industry, including from maritime ports and shipping industries considered how developing economies may break the current unsustainable and fossil-fuel dependent freight transport patterns in light of climate change concerns. In this respect, particular focus was also placed on the financial and investment implications as well as the need for innovative funding mechanisms.

39. Participants reiterated the role of UNCTAD in promoting cooperation among all partners interested in promoting sustainable freight transport. They encouraged further work by UNCTAD including research and analysis, capacity-building and technical assistance. It was further suggested that UNCTAD, with likeminded partners, examine how new sources such as climate finance could be channelled to support sustainable freight transport. A concrete proposal was made for UNCTAD to act as a key partner in conducting a conference in April 2013 with a view to launching a global green freight forum.
