UN Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026-2035)

Call for inputs from the United Nations system

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Responding organization: Un Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Questions

(Respond to all or to most relevant questions for your organization)

1. **How can the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport best boost sustainable transport around the world and increase its contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals? What kind of a shared vision of sustainable transport should the UN advocate for in the Implementation Plan?**

The upcoming UN decade provides a significant impetus for collaborative efforts aimed at addressing a broad range of persistent and emerging challenges affecting global supply chains and the transport and trade of developing countries. It also provides a welcome and timely opportunity to upscale UNCTAD's mandated work in the field of transport, which covers all modes, including the commercial and economic aspects of shipping which is of particular importance to global trade and development.

UNCTAD's vision for sustainable transport is anchored in efficiency, accessibility, affordability, resilience, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability, with a strong emphasis on addressing the particular needs of developing countries, LDCs, LLDCS, and SIDS, and on promoting regional and international cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Sustainable transport should lead **to sustainable and resilient supply chains with minimal environmental impact** and promote **social equity** and **economic development.**

A shared UN vision should emphasize the cross-cutting nature of transportation. Transport is as an economic sector in its own right, one that generates revenue, creates employment. It is also a key enabler of trade, food, energy, and tourism, among other sectors. Achieving sustainable and resilient transport is of cross-cutting relevance to achieving the 20230 Agenda, especially poverty reduction (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), climate action (SDG 13), sustainable use of the ocean and its resources (SDG 14), and global partnerships (SDG 17); as well as for implementation of the Paris Agreement (Arts. 7 and 8), Sendai Framework (all targets, especially (b)-(f)) and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

To support the SDGs, the UN Decade should advocate for and implement a holistic and coordinated approach that spans various areas of intervention and brings together wide-ranging stakeholders to leverage synergies and complementarity. In this context, **the UN Decade should prioritize the following themes**:

- **Advancing transport resilience.** This includes building preparedness, mainstreaming risk management principles, leveraging data and technology for improved visibility, forecasting and planning, promoting business and operational continuity, and planning for the unknown. This will require further support to countries to ensure that they can build and maintain infrastructure and services that can adapt to and recover from shocks and disruptions, irrespective of whether internal or external, including climate change, geopolitical tensions, conflicts, pandemics, accidents, labour strikes, cyber threats, and economic disruptors.
- **Climate change adaptation, resilience-building and DRR for critical transport infrastructure, networks and systems focusing on ensuring physical and operational integrity in the face of a broad range of climate change impacts deserves distinct attention.**[1] Apart from costly damage, climate change impacts can cause extensive **economic losses** arising from operational disruptions and delay across supply chains. These far outweigh the potential costs of timely action, especially for **vulnerable developing countries such as SIDS**, where a single extreme event can lead to losses equivalent to a multiple of GDP, but also for the smooth flow of goods across global supply chains. As highlighted in chapter 5 of UNCTAD's Review of Maritime Transport 2024, the implications of climate-related delay and disruption for the performance of commercial contracts, including **economic losses and costly litigation,** have so far not been adequately considered but need to also be factored into the cost of inaction.
- **Aligning transport activity with climate and energy transition objectives.** This includes supporting the shift to low/zero carbon transport systems, the use of alternative fuels including for shipping, ports, and logistics operations, promoting technology uptake and leveraging technology for more sustainability and resilience.
- **Promoting inclusive connectivity, equitable and fair access to markets.** All regions, particularly LLDCs and SIDS, need to be well integrated into regional and global markets through improved transport infrastructure and services. Applying a corridor-based approach, focusing on multimodal transport and trade corridors as platforms for integrated policy coordination, investment, enhanced connectivity, and trade facilitation, can pave the ways to enhanced and inclusive connectivity and access.
- **Strengthening innovation and digitalization** in transport systems to enhance operational efficiency, reduce emissions and pollution, and improve safety, security, and transparency. And as noted above, it also promotes sustainability and resilience.
- **Enabling sustainable and new sources of finance**, including green and blue bonds, climate funds, blended finance mechanisms, and public-private partnerships (PPPs).

[1] See also para. 19 (h) of the Beijing Declaration: Strengthen resilience of transport systems, including as part of climate change adaptation, and through the inclusion of climate and extreme weather event projections in the assessment, planning, engineering, and design process, especially in areas of high vulnerability.

- **Integrating gender equality and social inclusion** into transport policies, plans, and operations. Sustainable transport must address the specific transport challenges and needs of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and promote equal opportunities in employment and leadership across the sector.
- **Foster multi-stakeholder coordination and partnerships** by bringing together governments, regional and international organizations, private sector actors, financial institutions, and civil society, including enhanced coordination among UN entities and multilateral institutions. This is key to building synergies and foster complementarity, ensure policy coherence and deliver integrated solutions that support sustainable and resilient transport systems.
- **Keep under review and strengthen the international legal framework in support of sustainable and resilient transport and adapt commercial contracts as necessary**. This includes among others ensuring the availability of adequate compensation for pollution damage, including from bunker oil pollution and new alternative fuels; and the need to adjust commercial contracts to reflect a changing commercial risk-matrix arising from disruptions due to a number of causes.
- **Protecting global key workers and supply-chains at times of disruption.** Experiences during the pandemic underline the critical role of seafarers and the importance of ensuring seafarers rights and standards for the safety, security and sustainability of shipping, including at times of crisis. [2] Among others, COVID-19-related disruptions and delays have resulted in a humanitarian crew-change crisis and have had important implications for commercial contracts, leading to costly litigation and the need for improved contractual risk allocation[3]. Lessons learned are important, also in view of future risks of supply-chain disruptions, including from pandemics (with risks growing under climate change, [4] weather and climate-related disruptions and geopolitical tensions).

2. What are some of the key impediments to sustainable transport and how can the UN Decade strategically address these?

- **Capacity building deficit and lack of affordable funding for climate adaptation of infrastructure**

Limited capacity building for transport infrastructure adaptation, DRR, and resilience-building is a serious impediment to achieving sustainable transport. In the light of long infrastructure lifespans, climate projections, the need for effective response measures is

[2] In response to a request by UN General Assembly resolution 75/17, UNCTAD monitored and reported on relevant developments through a dedicated Chapter 5 of the Review of Maritime Transport 2021 and provided an update in Chapter 7 of the Review of Maritime Transport 2022. Relevant initiatives in 2022 include a Joint ILO-IMO-UNCTAD-WHO Statement, with 10 recommendations; as well as participation in the Ad hoc UN inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19.

[3] See related UNCTAD analytical reports and training courses/materials available at https://unttc.org/stream/key-international-commercial-law-implications

[4] See Carlson et al. (2022) available at https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-04788-w

becoming increasingly urgent. The lack of **appropriate policies, legislation and technical guidance** to facilitate **risk and vulnerability assessments,** as well as the absence **of necessary frameworks** to improve capacity-building, institutional synergies and cooperation at both regional and global levels, constitute a significant challenge.

Another key impediment to sustainable transport is the **unavailability and lack of access to infrastructure adaptation finance**, including in the form of grants rather than loans. This is an issue highlighted by UNCTAD in a recent policy brief (UNCTAD, 2022) with a focus on ports and other key transport infrastructure assets which are critical for global trade and sustainable development but are at high and growing risk of climate change impacts (see also Bridgetown Covenant at para. 87). With estimated adaptation costs in developing countries **10 to 18 times greater than current public adaptation finance flows** (UNEP, 2023), this will require a major collaborative effort by policymakers and development partners and a shift in focus. According to OECD, 2024, in 2022, total climate finance provided and mobilised by developed countries for developing countries amounted to US$ $115.9 billion. However, of this total, only US$ 32.4 billion, (28%) was for adaptation, and only a fraction of this amount will have been targeting climate change adaptation for ports and other critical coastal infrastructure[5].

- **Fragmented international legal framework for civil liability pollution incidents**

The current **international legal framework** surrounding civil liability for ship-sourced pollution as determined by the international conventions in force, namely the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (CLC) and the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage (BOPC) only covers **liability damage that has occurred by persistent oil either carried as cargo or used as fuel by vessels**. The International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS) **has still not entered into force** to cover other types of cargo, and therefore any alternative type of fuel transferred by sea would not be covered by any international liability regime. In addition, even the protection offered by the BOPC may be limited (Art. 6) in accordance with "any applicable national or international regime'. As a result**, the overall amount of liability and compensation available for bunker oil pollution damage is low, varies depending on the limitation regime in question, ship size, and competing claims, and is difficult to ascertain for claimants.**

Key impediments that can delay progress and undermine the objective of the UN decade of sustainable transport include challenging market structures, inadequate infrastructure and services, limited access to finance, insufficient institutional capacity, fragmented policy frameworks, lack of high-quality data, and slow adoption of innovative and low/zero carbon technologies, particularly in developing countries, including, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. There are also non-tariff barriers to transport including lack of uniformity in standards applied to equipment and vehicles, labour requirements including visas for truckers and seafarers' rights. Overall, impediments span infrastructure, services, regulatory framework,

[5] See also on the subject Buchner et al. 'Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2023' available at https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2023/

labour aspects, technology, market and economic drivers, as well as political will and priority given to transport compared to other national portfolios.

The UN Decade of Sustainable Transport provides an opportunity to strategically address some of these barriers by considering progress made since 2015 and identify key bottlenecks. This will require a multi-pronged, inclusive and coordinated strategy that prioritizes the need for adequate resources, targeted capacity-building, effective partnerships, finance mobilization, innovation, reliable data, research and analysis, coherent policy frameworks as well as strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration, including from the public and private sector, national/regional and international entities, UN system organizations, development partners and lending institutions.

3. **Please share up to five (5) main policy recommendations that should be included in the Implementation Plan? If applicable, indicate the level most aligned with the policy recommendation (global, regional, national, subnational and local, or other).**

- Strengthen the development and **implementation of national and regional integrated legal and institutional frameworks**, including those specifically targeting **adaptation and mitigation of critical coastal and inland infrastructure to climate change**. **(NATIONAL AND REGIONAL)**
- Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in **particular SIDS and LDCs** to **collect and analyse high quality disaggregated transport data** as well as data on climate change and its effect on maritime and inland transportation of goods and provide technical guidance to facilitate risk and vulnerability assessments. **(NATIONAL AND REGIONAL).**
- Support developing countries, and particularly SIDS and LDCs, through **targeted investments,** and international collaboration between private and public partnerships to ensure sustainable and climate-resilient transport infrastructure and services. **(GLOBAL).**
- Keep under review and as necessary, strengthen the international legal framework for **liability and compensation for ship-source pollution** to ensure the availability of adequate compensation for bunker oil pollution damage and address regulatory gaps in relation to the use and carriage of new fuels, as well as the carriage of hazardous substances. **(GLOBAL)**
- **Strengthen transport sustainability and resilience** by mainstreaming resilience building principles in particular risk management and accelerating the transition to low/zero carbon fuel sources**.** Transport systems will need to be designed, developed, operated and maintained in ways that ensures their ability to withstand disruptions caused by wide-ranging factors including climate change, extreme weather events, pandemics, geopolitical tensions, conflicts, labour strikes, accidents and economic shocks.
- **Enhanced cooperation and coordination, capacity-building, and finance** are essential to support the transport sector's resilience building and energy transition. Solutions that are tailored to the special needs of developing countries. **(NATIONAL,**

REGIONAL and GLOBAL), especially, SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs should feature prominently.

- **Promote integrated corridor-based sustainable and resilient transport systems**. UNCTAD recommends prioritizing the development of sustainable, resilient multimodal transport and trade corridors as key platforms for regional/subregional and global connectivity, market integration, trade facilitation, and trade competitiveness. Corridor-based approaches supported by clear institutional frameworks and coordination mechanisms, can effectively align policies, channel investments, and reduce logistics costs, particularly benefiting landlocked and geographically disadvantaged countries. (**REGIONAL AND NATIONAL).**

4. **How can the implementation of the plan be effectively monitored, and what methods can be used to track its progress across Member States? Please share most relevant existing monitoring frameworks and indicators?**

The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** outlines seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent new disaster risks and reduce existing disaster risks. The annual progress report on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience building (the latest one, issued in 2023, can be found here) provides a set of interagency initiatives and indicators on disaster risk reduction, including adaptation of critical transport infrastructure.

Under the **Paris Agreement**, contracting States should submit national climate action plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to outline their plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change impacts. The inclusion of adaptation action to safeguard the resilience of coastal and inland transport infrastructure should be specifically referenced in an NDC.

Effective monitoring requires clear, measurable indicators and robust data collection frameworks, building on established global standards. UNCTAD recommends:

Integrating sustainable transport explicitly into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), enabling alignment with climate and development commitments, and promoting coherence and accountability at national and global levels.

UNCTAD recommends integrating transport-specific indicators aligned with the SDG global indicator framework, especially indicators linked to SDG 9 (infrastructure and connectivity), SDG 13 (emissions reduction), and SDG 17 (partnerships and finance).

Supporting Member States, especially SIDS and LDCs, with capacity-building initiatives to strengthen data collection, analysis, and reporting capabilities.

Leveraging technology such as satellite data (Automated Identification System and geo-localisation) to generate requisite indicators when official sources are limited.

5. **Please share up to three (3) examples of concrete initiatives, projects or programmes that your entity is engaged in that can contribute to the success of the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport? Please, make sure to include relevant links.**

- UNCTAD has convened **the** 1st UN Global Supply Chain Forum (GSCF) in collaboration with the Government of Barbados in May 2024 and is currently organising the **2nd UN Global Supply Chain Forum** in collaboration with the Saudi Arabian Government, planned to take place in 2026. The Global Supply Forum aimed to tackle ongoing and future supply chain challenges, covering issues such as financing, sustainable and resilient transport and logistics, trade facilitation, transport connectivity, digitalization, food security, transport costs, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and helping developing countries to prepare for the energy transition in international transport.
- UNCTAD has been effectively cooperating with a wide range of partners to **produce multidisciplinary peer-reviewed research** publications (Becker, et. al (2013). Monioudi, et al (2018)) , Asariotis et al. (2024) and includes active contributions to related work by **UNFCCC, MPGCA, UN-DRR, ESCAP, and the ECE EG on Climate change adaptation for inland transport**. Under the auspices of the latter, recent work includes preparation of a draft chapter (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.3/2025/12) on '**Policies and legislation for acting on adaptation of climate change in transport**' for inclusion in the final report.
- UNCTAD has **disseminated information about its work and has highlighted the urgent need for acceleration of action on resilience-building, adaptation and DRR for ports and other critical transport infrastructure assets** in a broad range of fora. This includes side events at the **COP 29** in November 2024, the UNCTAD-led **UN Ocean Forum** in March 2025 as well as the **3rd UN Ocean Conference** held in Nice in June 2025.
- UNCTAD supports countries, in particular developing economies, LDCs, SIDS, and LLDCs, in promoting sustainable, resilient, and inclusive transport systems through a

range of analytical, technical cooperation, and capacity-building activities and tools. Key initiatives that can contribute to the objectives of the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport include:

- **Maritime Logistics and Supply Chain Resilience**. In response to recent global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical crises and climate shocks, UNCTAD has developed tools to provide policy guidance, data and case studies, as well as capacity building, with the aim of improving resilience in maritime logistics. These include a **guidebook and an online platform** providing guidance to stakeholders across the maritime supply chain on how to better manage risks, prepare for disruptions and ensure an effective response and rapid recovery, as well as a **comprehensive training course** consisting of six modules focused on port and maritime supply chain resilience: https://resilientmaritimelogistics.unctad.org/
- In the field of **Sustainable Freight Transport (SFT)**, UNCTAD has developed a structured **framework** offering step-by-step guidance to formulate and implement tailored SFT strategies (at national or corridor level). These strategies promote freight transport systems that are economically efficient, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. The SFT framework is supported by practical tools for the assessment, planning, and implementation of sustainable freight transport strategies. These include an **SFT methodology and assessment reports** to help analyze, identify priorities and actions, **SFT tools** to facilitate the implementation of SFT framework, including key performance indicators (KPIs) and SFT measures catalogue, and an **SFT Index** that enables measurement and visualization of performance in a globally comparable manner. In addition, UNCTAD's **Land Freight Emission Model** helps calculate air pollutants and carbon emissions from land-based freight transport, supporting countries in aligning transport strategies with environmental and climate goals. https://unctadsftportal.org/
- In parallel, UNCTAD supports governments through its **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** training module, which provides step-by-step guidance on the implementation and lifecycle of PPPs for transport infrastructure and services. This includes training on project identification, appraisal, finance, procurement, sustainability, and governance. These tools help build institutional capacity and strengthen policy implementation in support of sustainable transport development. https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/infrastructure-and-services/
- As part of its **Sustainable and Smart Ports (SSP) technical assistance,** UNCTAD has developed an SSP **methodology and assessment framework** to help ports evaluate their performance and identify challenges and opportunities related to the adoption of renewable energy for their own operations and facilities, as well as for the distribution and servicing of shipping. The assessment provides a matrix of recommendations supported by an online **SSP assessment methodology and a matrix of recommendations, as well as tailored capacity-building, and training** (https://unctad.org/project/sustainable-smart-ports-african-countries-including-small-island-developing-states-recover/)
- **UNCTAD maritime transport statistics and indicators.** UNCTAD maintains and publishes key maritime transport data and indicators, including on liner shipping connectivity, maritime trade, port performance , global shipping fleet, transport costs,

and environmental performance in shipping (e.g., carbon emissions). These tools support evidence-based policymaking, monitoring, and planning for sustainable and efficient transport systems. (https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/ ; https://unctad.org/news/shipping-data-unctad-releases-new-seaborne-trade-statistics).

- **UNCTAD Ministerial Declaration** (adopted at the SIDS Global Supply Chain Forum/GSCF, Barbados, 2024). As a key outcome of the GSCF, co-hosted by UNCTAD and the Government of Barbados, the Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed the urgent need to enhance the resilience, sustainability, and connectivity of supply chains in SIDS. It emphasized the strategic importance of food security and energy security, and called for strengthened international cooperation, greater investment in trade and transport infrastructure, and support for SIDS-led strategies. (https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/gscf2024-SIDS-ministerial-statement_en.pdf)

6. **Please provide up to five (5) main reports or other publications that the Implementation Plan of the UN Decade should draw upon. Please, make sure to include relevant links**

- UNCTAD annual Review of Maritime Transport (flagship report) (https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/review-of-maritime-transport) , including latest edition UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2024: Navigating maritime chokepoints (UNCTAD/RMT/2024)
- Climate-resilience of seaports: Adequate finance is critical for developing countries but remains a major challenge - UNCTAD Policy Brief No. 103 (UNCTAD/PRESS/PB/2022/11).
- Climate change adaptation for seaports in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Background Note.TD/B/C.I/MEM.7/23.
- Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Coastal Transport Infrastructure: A Compilation of Policies and Practices Transport and Trade Facilitation Series, No 12. Publication. UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2019/1.
- Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Framework for Caribbean Coastal Transport Infrastructure. UNCTAD/DTL/TLB/2018/1.
- Port Industry Survey on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation. UNCTAD Research Paper No. 18. UNCTAD/SER.RP/2017/18/Rev.1.

For further information on UNCTAD's related research, expert meetings and technical cooperation, since 2008, see: Climate change adaptation and maritime transport; and. SIDSport-ClimateAdapt.unctad.org.

- UNCTAD framework for sustainable freight transport (UNCTAD SFT Framework) - https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtltlb2017d5_en.pdf.
- Sustainable Freight Transport Assessment for Angola (https://unctad.org/meeting/sustainable-freight-transport-assessment-angola).
- Building Capacity to Manage Risks and Enhance Resilience: A Guidebook for Ports (https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsdtlinf2022d3_en.pdf).
- Navigating Troubled Waters (https://unctad.org/publication/navigating-troubled-waters-impact-global-trade-disruption-shipping-routes-red-sea-black).
- Analysis of maritime connectivity in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and small island developing States in the Pacific (https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtltlb2022d1_en.pdf).

All inputs will be made available on the dedicated website of the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport 2026 – 2035.