

Trade wars and protectionism threaten global shipping, warns UN agency

Maritime trade is stronger than it's been for five years, but "tit-for-tat" tariff battles and restructuring by shipping companies threaten to disrupt its role as a key player in global commerce, the UN said on Wednesday.

The warning from [UNCTAD](#), the [UN Conference on Trade and Development](#), follows a "healthy" four per cent increase in global seaborne commerce in 2017.

"While the prospects for seaborne trade are positive, these are threatened by the outbreak of trade wars and increased inward-looking policies," UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi said. "Escalating protectionism and tit-for-tat tariff battles will potentially disrupt the global trading system which underpins demand for maritime transport."

According to the [Review of Maritime Transport 2018](#), 10.7 billion tonnes of goods were transported last year and nearly half were dry bulk commodities. These include iron ore bound for China, which is described as the "main factor" in recent global shipping growth.

This positive trend is forecast to continue at a rate of 3.8 per cent by volume, until 2023, the UNCTAD report says.

Escalating trade frictions may lead to a trade war that could derail recovery – *UNCTAD*

This is above the 3.5 per cent average recorded between 2005 and 2017 and it is likely to be driven by the transport of dry bulk commodities at the expense of tanker transportation. The share of overall volumes being carried by tankers (oil and other fluids) has dropped from more than 50 per cent in 1970, to less than 33 per cent in 2017.

Overshadowing this positive outlook are concerns about trade tensions between China and the United States – the world's two largest economies – and to a lesser extent, uncertainty in commercial relations between Canada, Mexico, the US and the European Union.

"Escalating trade frictions may lead to a trade war that could derail recovery, reshape global maritime trade patterns and dampen the outlook," the report's authors say.

Other factors driving uncertainty include the global energy transition, highlighted by slowing crude oil shipments from Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

This has been partly offset by near double-digit growth in shipments of natural liquefied gas – to nearly 300 million tonnes – in 2017 – with Asia

driving demand.



UNCTAD/Jan Hoffmann

Freight ship off the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Among the report's other findings, is the confirmation that developing countries – which supply most workers in the sector – continue to account for most seaborne trade, both in terms of imports and exports.

In total, they accounted for around 60 per cent of total trade last year.

By contrast, developed countries saw their share of goods unloaded and loaded, go down, with both representing around one-third of the total.

One of the key drivers of change in seaborne trade has been restructuring by major shipping companies, which have seen “unabated” mergers and acquisitions.

According to the report, by June this year, the top 10 shipping lines accounted for more than 70 per cent of all seaborne trade, while just three alliances control 93 per cent of capacity, on the three major East-West container routes.

“Growing consolidation can reinforce market power, potentially leading to decreased supply and service quality, and higher prices,” the report notes.

Some of these negative outcomes may already be in effect, it says, citing a decrease in the number of operators in several Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and structurally-weak developing countries.

[UN agencies inject youthful energy into sustainable development for urban Africa](#)

Underscoring the importance of fully involving the young in decisions affecting their lives, three United Nations agencies announced an innovative partnership on Tuesday with African local governments, designed to inject youthful ideas and energy into urban planning policies.

Speaking at a press briefing, where the collaboration was announced, Christopher Williams, a Director at the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) highlighted the fresh “wisdom and insight” young people bring to planning initiatives.

“It is essential they are involved in [local government] initiatives systematically,” he said.

Under the partnership, UN-Habitat, the [UN Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) and the [UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO) will join the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), in organizing the inaugural youth forum at the Africities Summit, to be held from 20-24 November, in Marrakech, Morocco.

The initiative is all the more crucial for Africa as nearly three-quarters of the continent is under-35, noted Daniel Schatz, Programme Officer with the UNODC in New York.

“The majority of young Africans have high hopes and ambitions. However, a mismatch exists between the aspirations of young people and opportunities available to them,” he said.

“As such it is critical that partners’ programming aligns with the vision African youth have for their future and understand their true needs and desires and taps into their energy and dynamism,” he added, outlining the immense benefits young people can bring.

Dubbed the Africities Youth Forum, specific activities to be held under the partnership include the Creative Lab – a competition for 15 to 35-year olds from Africa and the diaspora, to promote entrepreneurship, and boost the realisation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the African Union’s Agenda 2063. The Forum will also include interactive workshops and consultative sessions on building safer and more secure cities for young people, especially young women and girls.

Wambui Kahara, a UCLGA Youth Champion, said that youth were Africa’s greatest

resource:

“Young people are dynamic, energetic, resourceful, creative, innovative and adventurous”, she said, adding that they were “vital for Africa’s growth and development.”

Young people should be at the heart of implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ms. Kahara continued, in particular SDG 11 which calls for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable towns and cities by 2030.

[Afghanistan: UN ‘outraged’ by new elections-related suicide attack; calls for end to violence before October poll](#)

Denouncing attacks and intimidation in the week since formal campaigning began for Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections next month, the United Nations voiced outrage on Tuesday at the death of 14 civilians, killed by a suicide bomber at a campaign rally. A further 42 were wounded.

“I am outraged by attacks deliberately targeting civilians seeking to exercise their basic right to participate in elections,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Special Representative for Afghanistan, [in a statement](#) that called for an immediate end to election-related violence.

“This violence, including today’s reprehensible attack in Nangarhar, is an assault on the constitutional rights of the people of Afghanistan.”

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) expressed concern around the level of violence early in the campaigning period for the 20 October elections, including intimidation and attacks against candidates, their agents and supporters.

Since campaigning formally commenced on 28 September, there have been several attacks resulting in the killing of a candidate and three security guards of another candidate, as well as the shooting of a further candidate’s agent and son. “UNAMA urges all actors to halt all violence and intimidation against candidates and voters”, said the statement from the Mission.

Tuesday’s suicide attack appears to have deliberately targeted a crowd gathered for a campaign event, the agency said, stressing that Afghan civilians have borne the brunt of election-related violence in 2018.

It recalled the “disturbing pattern of attacks” at election-related facilities following the start of voter registration earlier this year, with the greatest loss of civilian life in a single incident, occurring on 22 April when a suicide attacker targeted a crowd gathered outside a national identity card distribution centre, in the capital Kabul, resulting in 198 civilian casualties.

[UN chief commends India’s progress towards Sustainable Development Goals](#)

UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Tuesday praised India’s progress on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), in particular the pursuit of [Sanitation for All](#) and [Affordable and Clean Energy](#), which featured heavily during day-two of his official visit to the country.

[Speaking](#) at the closing session of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention in New Delhi, Mr. Guterres noted Gandhi’s long record of advocacy and action on the issue, adding that the decision to begin marking the 150th anniversary of Gandhi’s birth – which takes place on 2 October next year – with the Convention, was a “fitting tribute to this great human being and example to us all.”

An estimated 2.3 billion people, said Mr. Guterres, still do not have basic sanitation facilities. Almost 1 billion defecate in the open, a practice that “poses a serious threat to children, contributing to diarrhoea and to malnutrition and stunting that has a lifelong impact.”

The UN chief outlined some of the many consequences and risks of poor sanitation, including disease, stunting and indignity, and pointed out that it “exacerbates inequalities between men and women, rich and poor, city and countryside. And it has major implications for human rights and human dignity.”



UN India/Vishal Singh

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres (c) at the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention on 2 October 2018. New Delhi, India.

He said that women and girls are disproportionately impacted, as they may face an increased risk of harassment and abuse, and higher health risks due to a lack of access to sanitation facilities.

Mr. Guterres went on to praise the Indian Government's Clean India Mission, which seeks to achieve universal sanitation coverage, as the largest investment and largest mobilization campaign in the world.

He added that "All people have the right to safe water and sanitation. If we are to build resilient societies on a healthy planet and achieve the overarching ambition of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, we must tackle this issue urgently, as is being done in India."

The country, said Mr. Guterres, is well on target to reach the SDG of Sanitation for All – including for women, children, young people, people with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous peoples, the homeless, refugees and migrants – before 2030.

On Tuesday evening, the Secretary-General addressed the first general assembly of the International Solar Alliance, an organization initiated several years ago by the Governments of India and France in the build up to the [2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference](#), which describes itself as a coalition of solar resource-rich countries.

The UN chief lamented the lack of political commitments to make the transformative decisions that will help to meet the goals set in the [Paris Agreement](#): current commitments are falling far short of meeting the target of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and striving for 1.5 degrees.

At the same time, he said, the world is witnessing a “global renewable energy revolution,” with solar energy; now competitive with – and often cheaper than – fossil fuels, at the centre.

Renewables accounted for some 70 per cent of net additions to global power in 2017, and India has set a goal to mobilize \$1 trillion towards the deployment of 1,000 gigawatts of solar energy by 2030.

Despite these positive developments, Mr. Guterres said that if we do not change course by 2002, we risk missing the opportunity to avoid “runaway climate change.”

This, he said, is why he is convening next September’s [UN Climate Summit](#), with the aim of bringing climate action to the top of the international agenda, providing leaders and stakeholders with the opportunity to showcase their ambition.



UN in India/Ishan Tankha

Secretary-General António Guterres delivers a public lecture on the topic ‘Global Challenges and Global Solutions’ to young people at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, India. 2 October 2018.

Also on Tuesday, Mr. Guterres held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during which he thanked Mr. Modi for the strong cooperation between India and the UN, especially in support of the UN chief’s organizational reform effort. The Secretary-General also underscored the leadership role that India plays in [South-South Cooperation](#).

The Secretary-General also addressed a group of young people at the India Habitat Centre, where he spoke to them about global challenges and answered questions on challenges facing the international community, including the trust-deficit, growing attacks on multilateralism and climate change.

Yemen: as cholera surges again, UN and partners double down on vaccination efforts

Following an “important increase” in the number of suspected cholera cases recently in Yemen, a new vaccination campaign is underway in coordination with the government to prevent a third major outbreak, said the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) on Tuesday.

About 540,000 women, children and men who received a first dose of the vaccine in August, in Hudaydah and Ibb governorates, are targeted in this new four-day campaign. More than 3,000 health workers have been trained and mobilized for this effort.

During the latest campaign, close to 387,400 people were vaccinated, covering 72 per cent of those in need of inoculation.

Yemen, considered today by the UN to be facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, has already suffered from the largest cholera outbreaks in recent history, against the backdrop of heavy civil conflict.

According to WHO, since April 2017, there have been more than 1.2 million cases of suspected or confirmed cholera in Yemen, including over 154,500 cases in 2018 alone. More than 2,500 people are reported to have died from the preventable disease. Around 30 per cent of cases involve children under the age of five and all but one of the country’s 23 governorates have been affected.

Conflict in Yemen – already one of the poorest countries in the world before the crisis – escalated in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily at the request of the Yemeni presidency, against a widespread Houthi rebel insurgency. Airstrikes and ground-fighting have become a daily occurrence for millions of civilians. More than 16 million people lack access to basic healthcare and only half of the country’s health facilities are operational.