



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
25 May 2012

Original: English

Thirteenth session

Doha, Qatar
21–26 April 2012

Paving the way for sustainable freight transport

UNCTAD XIII special event

Held at the Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha, on 25 April 2012

Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. A panel discussion entitled “Paving the way for sustainable freight transport” was held jointly by UNCTAD and the Asian Development Bank in Doha, Qatar, on 25 April 2012. 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 panelists from government, the Asian Development Bank, academia, and industry, including from the maritime ports and shipping industries, considered how developing economies could break the current unsustainable and fossil-fuel-dependent freight transport patterns in the light of climate change concerns. In this respect, participants focused in particular on the financial and investment implications as well as on the need for innovative funding mechanisms.
2. Noting some of the issues that were key to the debate on sustainable freight transport, Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, and Anne Miroux, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, highlighted the timeliness and relevance of the event in view of the current renewed international commitment to achieve sustainable development goals, including at the Rio+20 Conference.
3. The first segment of the event addressed the policy perspective. Bambang Susantono, Vice-Minister for Transport of Indonesia, described the daunting challenge associated with formulating and implementing sustainable freight transport policies. Achieving efficient transport systems involved reducing the use of road transport and a shift towards greener modes of transport, such as rail and short sea shipping. Improving fuel efficiency and reducing emissions was crucial, given the recent growth – 67 per cent – of Indonesia’s freight movement, from 9.4 billion tons in 2006 to 15.7 billion tons in 2011. He also addressed the issue of building climate- and natural-disaster-resilient transport

infrastructures, which included the creation of a marine highway connecting sea and road systems in Indonesia's main islands.

4. In the same vein, Rabah Touafek, Legal Counsel of the Ministry of Transport of Algeria, described progress achieved by his country in the field of transport infrastructure and services and sustainable transport, including road and rail networks in support of national development, and regional trade and integration. Those achievements were worth noting, given the setback resulting from the political turmoil that had affected the country in the past decade.

5. The second segment focused on recent developments in sustainable freight transport. Alan McKinnon, Head of Logistics and Dean of Programme of the Kühne Logistics University in Germany, set the scene about options that could be used by government, the transport industry and society as a whole when seeking to promote sustainable freight transport and to decouple negative externalities from growth in freight transport.

6. A sustainable freight transport framework was proposed that described the inter-relationship between gross domestic product and freight-related externalities. The framework classified a broad range of green logistics measures into six categories that included supply chain structure, modal split, vehicle utilization, energy efficiency and emission intensity. The level of importance and application of those categories depended relatively on a country's level of development and geography.

7. Examples of local governments and business sectors in Europe and India were presented to illustrate how policy alternatives could also be tailored to meet national and local needs. Particular mention was made of the need to establish baselines and gauge improvements in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions based on precise data. In addition, there was a need for governments and international organizations to collect much more data on freight transport operations and their environmental impacts.

8. Yan Peng, China Director of the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia), gave an overview of global green freight developments and more specifically in Asia, citing the example of a 10-truck pilot project designed by CAI-Asia and carried out in cooperation with the World Bank and other partners in Guangdong province. The project had been supplemented with a China green freight initiative of the Ministry of Transport and the China Road Transport Association. Similar programmes building on the experience of the SmartWay Transport Partnership, which had been established in the United States of America, were expected to emerge in India and other Asian countries.

9. Ko Sakamoto, Transport Economist at the Asian Development Bank, presented climate change financing instruments that were currently available, as well as other potentially new and merging sources and instruments. These instruments could help promote sustainable freight transport in several ways, including by motivating initiatives, making marginal projects viable, attracting international attention and leveraging other funding flows.

10. The last segment of the panel reflected industry views. Ahmad Yousef Almass, Acting Chair of Qatar Ports Management, introduced the new Doha Port project that was being designed, planned and built in full compliance with environmental sustainability principles. That included operational improvements that would drive down fuel use, emissions and waste, including the extensive use of electrical power, cold ironing for ships, solar energy for reservoirs and lighting, and highest capacity container vessels. Ramón Gómez-Ferrer, Director of Valencia Port Authority, highlighted the role of ports in building global sustainable transport networks. As part of the corporate policy of the Port of Valencia, the port had taken a more proactive position when dealing with environmental and safety issues. As a result, the Port of Valencia had evolved into an eco-port over a 15-year period.

11. The role of the port authority in promoting public sustainable development policies was crucial, as was the need to involve all stakeholders and to accommodate their operational needs. Dirk Vande Velde, President of the Cargo Incident Notification Organization (CINO), described the success of CINO as a platform for sharing information about incidents that entailed environmental, health and safety impacts. This had helped prevent future incidents. The collaborative approach adopted by CINO helped involve all stakeholders in the international maritime transport chain and make use of common, agreed tools to gather and process information related to CO₂ emissions in maritime transport. In particular, the speaker highlighted the benefits of the proposed instrument in monitoring improvements and providing individual and collective incentives for all parties to adhere to the proposed network for more sustainable transport.

12. Participants underscored the urgent need for better freight data and for the standardization of legislation concerning certain issues. Mr. Jos Verlinden, Head Transport and Logistics of the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC) noted the chemical industry's leadership in the area of chemical transport and logistics. A recent CEFIC publication on measuring and managing CO₂ emissions for chemical freight transport showed that 40 per cent of emissions arose from sea transport and therefore should be considered alongside road transport for sustainability purposes. Reconciling academic research interests and industry needs would bring greater clarity to the specific issues that needed to be tackled. Sustainable freight transport was still in its early stages and most companies were still in the learning phase. A combination of many actions would be needed to improve logistics efficiencies in tandem with transport decarbonization.

13. There was a strong convergence of views that multi-stakeholder approaches were required to design and implement sustainable freight transport actions adapted to reflect specific local conditions. While governments could provide policy incentives and work in cooperation with industry and other stakeholders, cooperation between and among financial institutions, including development banks and international organizations, should also be strengthened.

14. General consensus was also expressed as to the role of UNCTAD in helping enable a paradigm shift towards sustainable freight transport, in particular for developing regions such as Africa, where the development of new transport infrastructure and services would benefit from an early implementation of sustainable principles.

15. Financing and investments that were required in order to shift towards sustainable freight transport were a major consideration. Existing and new sources and mechanisms of funding, including climate finance and public-private partnerships, had a role to play. In addition, their application in the context of sustainable freight transport should be further examined.

16. 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. They also suggested that UNCTAD, with likeminded partners, should explore how new sources such as climate finance could be channeled to support sustainable freight transport.

17. One participant proposed that UNCTAD should act as a key partner in holding a conference in April 2013 with a view to launching the creation of a global green freight forum.