Agenda Item 3: Major issues in transport (cont’d) - (a) Towards an efficient and resilient transport and logistics network and mobility | 14 December | 14:30-15:30 (Bangkok) | 8:30-9:30 (Geneva)
Statement by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

1) Key data
Based on the latest UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport and the complementary statistical data sets.¹

- In 2020, Asia and the Pacific together accounted for 55.4% of all seaborne trade exports, and 66.7% of the world’s seaborne imports. 97% of ship building and 98.7% ship recycling takes place in Asia,

- Most seafarers are from Asia and the Pacific – and the crew change crisis that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic has left hundreds of thousands of seafarers stranded at sea long beyond their contract time, and others unable to sign up for their time at sea. The Philippines was the top provider of both seafarers and officers, Indonesia took third place for ratings and fifth for officers, China was third for officers and fourth for ratings, and India was fourth for officers and fifth for ratings. The Russian Federation was the other country in the top five list.

- The region outperformed others in liner shipping connectivity, with the top five most-connected economies being in Asia – China, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region, China), Malaysia, Republic of Korea, and Singapore.

- On another concerning note, Pacific islands have been confronted with a vicious circle as regards their maritime connectivity. Being faced with high shipping distances, a geographical position mostly away from the main shipping routes, small trade volumes, and strong imbalances in the type of cargo traded, the SIDS in Asia and the Pacific are not served by frequent and reliable liner shipping services. And this low connectivity in turn makes their foreign trade often uncompetitive, further exacerbating their situation, as low volumes then lead to further dis-economies of scale and low service frequencies.

¹ UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport: http://unctad.org/RMT.
Maritime statistics: http://stats.unctad.org/MARITIME.
2) Key policy areas for action

Policy areas considered particularly relevant for the development maritime transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific.

- **First**: Digitalization and maritime trade facilitation. In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a surge in demand for a wide range of UNCTAD programmes. These include Customs Automation and ASYCUDA, Single Windows, Trade Information Portals and generally solutions that aim at ensuring that ports remain open, ships moving, and cargo continues crossing borders, while at the same time ensuring compliance with regulations and protecting our populations.

- **Second**: The most important challenge for maritime transport in the next decades is the decarbonization of shipping. The necessary energy transition to achieve the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions is as transformational as the move from sail to steam, and from coal to oil. UNCTAD’s assessment has shown that Least Developed Countries and SIDS will require support during this transition.

- **Third**: The maritime industry is undergoing structural changes, notably a process of horizontal and vertical integration. It will be important to ensure a competitive environment, where shippers – i.e. the importers and exporters – will continue to have access to competitive port and shipping services.

3) Cooperation

In view of the importance of maritime transport for the development of Asia and the Pacific, and also the importance of the region for the maritime business globally, we are very pleased to be joining forces with ESCAP in a range of recent and upcoming activities.

- Three on-going technical cooperation projects on maritime connectivity, sustainable freight transport, and transport and trade connectivity in times of COVID-19.

- Research, including the recent Asia-Pacific Trade & Investment Report 2021, and the “changing sails” study on SIDS connectivity.

UNCTAD looks forward to the further deliberations in this conference and commits to supporting the concrete actions emanating from it.

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