

Transitioning to Low Carbon Shipping Module Sustainable Sea Transport Solutions for SIDS: Pacific Island Countries Case Studies

7. Conclusion

<http://unctadsftportal.org/sftf toolkit/transitioningtolowcarbonshippingmodule/chapter7/>

Summary

The concluding chapter wraps up the case for SIDS to transition to low carbon transport.

Key Themes: SIDS – Transition – Barriers

Despite its apparent logic, traction, priority and financing for a low carbon transition of the SIDS transport sector has to date not been apparent. Yet, current and past initiatives show that successful and even profitable transitions to low carbon pathways are not necessarily difficult or unattainable. The barriers to transition are complex and multi-faceted, are poorly characterized or understood, and research in this field is still in the beginnings.



Watch “Green Talks: Live – Shipping after #COP21, will we miss the boat?”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZepELSE2qs>

7. Conclusion

The case for SIDS to transition to low carbon transport futures is predicated on three principal assumptions:

1. That to avoid the worst effects of climate change on SIDS (that is to say, avoiding global warming of more than 1.5°C), global decarbonisation is required now across all energy sectors and the sub-sector of transport needs to play its fair share of change.
2. That not affecting a transition to low carbon transport futures for SIDS commits such states to every increasing dependency on largely imported fossil fuels, which is in turn a major barrier to all aspects of sustainable development for SIDS.
3. That a transition to low carbon transport futures for SIDS is logical, rational and available, could provide multiple benefits to island governments and communities. The small scale of shipping on which SIDS are most reliant makes this an ideal testing ground for new technologies and operational approaches.

Despite its apparent logic, traction, priority and financing for a low carbon transition of the SIDS transport sector has to date not been apparent and has certainly not gained the same profile as transition in the electricity sector. There is a dearth of best practice or market leading examples. Yet those that do exist and the historical record strongly implies that successful and even profitable transition to low carbon pathways are not necessarily difficult or unattainable. The barriers to transition are complex and multi-faceted, are poorly characterised or understood and research in this field is embryonic.

Yet despite these barriers, increasingly the various elements essential for successful transition are becoming visible. High level policy commitment to support inclusion of low carbon transport in mechanisms such as the SAMOAO Pathway emanating from the UN SIDS Conference in 2014 now provide direction and momentum from the apex of the policy architecture. Leading technical analysis such as that provided by Lloyds Register, IRENA and leading research centres increasingly serve to allay the general perception that renewable energy and energy efficiency measures are not credible or realistic.

Low carbon transport transition for SIDS certainly requires a paradigm shift. It will undoubtedly require a whole of sector, multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach. It must be underpinned from a strong research and education base. SIDS, acting independently or individually, are unlikely to command sufficient capacity to achieve a successful transition unaided. Technology and knowledge transfer through strategic partnerships with leading research and industry centres of

excellence will be essential and greater understanding and analysis of public private partnerships critical.

Adequate and appropriate financing, especially for the research and proof of concept phase essential to prove commercial viability, is likely to remain a major and dominant barrier. Transition is after all primarily an economic not a technological process. Whilst the cost of transition is not to be underestimated and will be large in comparison to the resource base of individual island states, this needs to be placed in both a global context and in comparison to the already substantive investment being made in low carbon electricity. The cost of not acting is most likely far higher than the investment needed to catalyse and maintain a transition. Carbon financing mechanisms provide a new and exciting opportunity for addressing this most fundamental of adaptation and mitigation areas.

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