Enhancing transport system resilience and sustainability

Hall 1, Level +1

Thursday, May 28, 2015, 15:00 - 16:30

This session explored recent experiences with two major challenges to transport system operations: natural disasters, such as earthquakes and volcanoes, and manmade technological innovations, such as larger ships calling at ports. These challenges have the potential to disrupt transport systems and the lives of local residents and global residents alike. The session considered how the government and the private sector can best respond following major natural disasters as well as strategies for ensuring transport systems are more resilient to future natural disasters and technological innovations.

Natural disasters in New Zealand, Chile, Iceland and Japan in recent years have very prominently disrupted transport systems and lives on a local and global scale. The first hand experiences of the speakers demonstrated the difficulty of the critical immediate responses following these disasters when the basic capabilities of the transport system are severely reduced. While initial responses focus on emergency relief, speakers advised to also focus on restoring ‘normality’ to transport and people’s lives as soon as possible to ensure a strong social and economic recovery.

When planning for the next transport disruption there are often difficult cost trade-offs to be made, but speakers identified several opportunities to improve future resilience at relatively low cost. With climate change potentially increasing the frequency and severity of some natural disasters, and the volume of trade and travel increasing, a case can be made for investing in some degree of network redundancy (e.g. back up systems or network links). However, these investments should be carefully assessed as responding to the most vulnerable and important components of the transport system. This will depend very much on the local context of risk, geography and the nature of the economy.

Lower cost opportunities for improving resilience included clear and appropriate action plans (supported by simulations or ‘drills’) with clear communication systems and legal frameworks in place. In the case of air traffic disrupted by volcanic ash, building the scientific knowledge about ash levels for safe operation and then building appropriate monitoring systems will support future decision-making during such disruptions. Such measures aim to reduce the duration and severity of the impacts on transport users and economies generally. Another potential opportunity for increasing resilience of transport systems was the sharing of fleet among airline alliance partners, however, this was considered to not be feasible in the short term in most markets due to a lack of interoperability and potential market access limitations.

Increases in demand and supply of some transport services are putting pressure on the
resilience of supply chains. For instance, in aviation many major airports are operating close to capacity, meaning that even minor disruptions can ripple through to a large number of passengers and freight users very rapidly. In the sea freight sector, the rapid increase in the size of ships, and the scale of port facilities required to accommodate them, is putting increasing pressure on land-side transport networks. Larger peaks in demand from these large ships can negatively affect the reliability of adjoining rail and road networks if these are not sufficiently adapted to the evolving freight task. Building transport resilience for these freight supply chains requires careful strategic planning for the appropriate number, scale, location and supporting land-side infrastructure for ports in a city, country or region. This kind of planning can raise difficult decisions about port relocations or closures that can run counter to political aspirations for these assets.

The threat of climate change means that transport needs to play a central role in reducing its environmental impacts, but at the same time, the session concluded that transport systems need to improve resilience to these and other impacts. The high cost of supply chain disruptions in the last decade suggests that the trade-off between efficiency and redundancy needs to be recalibrated in favour of risk mitigation and resilience. Getting this trade-off right is of critical importance to social and economic development for local, national and global communities. The session heard from a number of speakers who suggested that this message is being heeded and turned into positive actions and policy to improve resilience to future disruptions.

(Provision summary)

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Speaker

Andrés Gómez-Lobo
Minister of Transport and Telecommunications
Chile

Andrés Gómez-Lobo is Chile’s Minister of Transport and Telecommunications. He was chief of staff of the Ministry of Transport between 2008 and 2010. As a consultant, Gómez-Lobo has advised public and private organizations on issues of infrastructure, natural resources, grants, public transport and telecommunications, including the World Bank, National Economic Prosecutor, Civil Aeronautics Board and Ministry of Public Works. He has served as Academic Director of the Masters in Public Policy and Academic Director of the Diploma in Territorial Policies, Urban and Environmental Faculty of Economics, University of Chile.
Violeta Bulc has been European Commissioner for Mobility and Transport since 2014, prior to which she served as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister Responsible for Development, Strategic Projects and Cohesion in the Government of Slovenia. From 2013 to 2014, Bulc was Chief of the Program Committee of the SMC Party, Slovenia. She was also CEO of Vibacom Ltd, Sustainable Strategies and Innovation Ecosystems from 2000 to 2014. Between 1999 and 2000 she was Vice-President of Telemach, a telecommunications provider.

Chong Meng Tan is the Group CEO of PSA International, one of the world’s largest port operators. Before taking up this position in 2011, Chong Meng Tan was Executive Vice President, Global Commercial, Shell Downstream, of the Royal Dutch Shell Group where he had spent over 20 years in an international management career spanning sales, marketing, trading, refinery operations, customer service, and mergers and acquisitions. Prior to Shell, he served for five years at Singapore’s Ministry of National Development. As well as his duties at PSA, Chong Meng Tan is currently a non-executive director of Singapore’s National University Health System; and a director of IE Singapore, the state agency which promotes the internationalisation of Singapore’s enterprises.

Peter Davie joined Lyttelton Port of Christchurch (LPC) as Chief Executive in 2003. Since his commencement, he has had a strong focus on relationships with customers and staff, and improving operating systems. He has been heavily involved in upgrading infrastructure and expanding container facilities. This has been critical since the 2011 and 2012 Canterbury earthquakes which damaged 75% of the Port’s wharves. The Company has since faced unprecedented challenges as it supports Christchurch City’s post-quake rebuild and Canterbury’s growing economy. His long term vision for the rebuild and enhancement of the Port will be the largest development in the Port’s history and one of the most significant recovery projects ever undertaken in New Zealand.
In January 2013, Frank Brenner was appointed Director General of EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation: an intergovernmental Organisation with 41 Member States. The Organisation aims to build a Single European Sky that will deliver the air traffic management performance required for the twenty-first century and beyond. Since taking up his functions at EUROCONTROL, Brenner has initiated the development of a Vision and Strategy, including supporting controllers with new technology to increase safety. Prior to joining EUROCONTROL as Deputy Director General in November 2012, Brenner was General Manager Operations for FABEC, the largest of the new Functional Airspace Blocks covering Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Joakim Reiter (Sweden) took up the position of Deputy Secretary-General on 1 April 2015. Immediately prior to joining UNCTAD, Reiter was the Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, heading the Department for International Trade Policy. From 2011 to 2014, he held the position of Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Reiter was Minister Counsellor and Head of the Trade Section at the Representation of Sweden to the European Union in Belgium from 2008 to 2011. From 2004 to 2008, he served at the European Union Directorate General for Trade in the European Commission, where he was involved in a number of multilateral, regional and bilateral negotiations with countries at different levels of development. In 2006, he served as Vice-Chair of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Party of the Trade Committee.
Speaker

David Scowsill
President and CEO
World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

Prior to joining World Travel & Tourism Council as President and CEO in November 2010, Scowsill worked for six years in private equity and venture capital, completing deals in technology and travel sectors. He was chairman of PrivateFly and Yuuguu.com; vice-chairman World Hotels AG; non-executive director of On the Beach holidays and Venere.com. Scowsill was CEO of Opodo.com, a pan-European online travel company, from 2002 to 2004, building the business from start-up. He joined the board of Hilton International in 1997 as Senior Vice President of Sales, Marketing and IT. Scowsill was Regional General Manager Asia/Pacific at British Airways from 1993 to 1997. He established the joint service agreement and global alliance with Qantas.

Moderator

Melinda Crane
Moderator
Chief Political Correspondent, Deutsche Welle-TV

Dr. Melinda Crane is Chief Political Correspondent at Deutsche Welle-TV and hosts the talk shows "Quadriga" and "People and Politics" She was Senior Producer of "Global Players" on CNBC. She has moderated a wide variety of podium discussions and conferences for public organisations and private sector clients. Among her areas of expertise are transatlantic politics; women, family education issues; climate and environment; business and economics; new media and the internet. Dr. Crane holds a Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School and a PhD in political economy from the Flettscher School of Law and Diplomacy.