



Declaration issued by the G7 Transport Ministers on the Red Sea escalating crisis – 20 February 2024

We, the G7 Transport Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the Commissioner for Transport of the European Union strongly condemn the attacks perpetrated by the Houthis against commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and the navy ships protecting them. We underline that these attacks violate international law, endanger innocent lives and threaten navigational rights and freedoms. In line with UNSCR 2722 we reiterated our support for countries that exercise the right to defend their vessels from attacks, in line with international law.

We welcome the launch of the EU maritime operation “Aspides” and the continued efforts of the U.S.-led operation “Prosperity Guardian” along with UK support to protect these crucial shipping lanes, as maritime security and navigational rights and freedoms are critical to ensure free movement of essential commodities to destinations and populations all over the world.

We call for the Houthis to immediately cease their unprovoked attacks on shipping vessels and to release the Galaxy Leader and its crew, which they seized on 19 November 2023. We underscore the importance of safety and security of seafarers and vessels, and commit to promoting them as part of government-wide responses to the Red Sea situation.

We note that the Houthi attacks on commercial ships have seriously hindered the freedom of navigation through the Red Sea, a key waterway for global maritime trade, and pose a grave threat to the security and safety of vessels in the region. The number of ships transiting through the Bab el Mandeb strait has declined sharply since the Houthis began their attacks in November 2023, with many ships now avoiding Red Sea transit and shipping companies are now rerouting their ships to sail around the Cape of Good Hope. These diversions place strains on seafarers and crews, and increase ocean transit times and costs of shipping operations, resulting in considerable disruptions to global supply chains and manufacturing processes, shipping delays, decreased ship schedule reliability, and higher shipping freight rates, as well as in increased greenhouse gas emissions from shipping, adversely affecting climate policy.

We recall that the current crisis in the Red Sea exacerbates strains experienced globally as a result of Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, extreme weather events, and global health concerns such as the ongoing recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of heightened global interconnectivity, these factors can affect all members of the international community. To compensate for the additional shipping days caused by the rerouting via southern Africa, shipping companies have shifted ship capacity from other trade routes to the Asia-Europe route. Freight rates have not only risen significantly on Asia-Europe routes, but also on other routes, such as Asia-North America.

We take note that due to crises, like the disruptions to Red Sea navigation, significant rate increases have been observed for transport. We underscore the benefits of transparency for transport users to enhance coordination, understand the drivers of cost and rate increases, and to safeguard maritime corridors as the backbone of global supply chains.

We acknowledge the role that the G7 can play in global coordination of policies and measures that accommodate smooth freight transport flows. In that respect, we emphasise the significance of continuing discussions at the Senior Officials level on the terms of reference of a G7 Working Group on Transport Supply Chains that we will seek to endorse at the G7 Transport Ministerial Meeting in Milan from 11-13 April 2024.