

APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 5 | 2 FEB 2024

GLOBAL APERTURE

The United Nation's Trade and Development body (UNCTAD) [raised concerns over escalating disruptions to global trade](#), highlighting the recent attacks on ships in the Red Sea, geopolitical tensions affecting the Black Sea, and climate change impacts on the Panama Canal. The organization underscored the far-reaching economic implications, urging swift adaptations from the shipping industry and international cooperation to address the evolving challenges. The worsening Red Sea crisis and increasing Middle East tensions are expected to [prolong shipping diversions](#) around the Cape of Good Hope.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

USA: Following a snowstorm at Anchorage Airport on January 28, [more than 30 cargo flights were diverted to other airports](#) including Fairbanks, Narita (Tokyo), Taipei, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, and Los Angeles, with eleven more freighters unable to leave. While operations began to recover by the 30th, this latest round of bad weather has once again highlighted the need to address operational efficiency at Anchorage.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Sri Lanka: The Sri Lankan government [has enhanced operational efficiency at the Colombo Port to address the surge in container cargo demand](#) triggered by the tensions in the Red Sea. With an 80% increase in volume by mid-January, the Colombo Port is experiencing heightened transshipment volumes as ships reroute around Africa.

Australia: Dock worker strikes at Australian ports [are worsening the equipment shortage crisis](#) linked to the Red Sea disruptions in Asia. The strikes, ongoing since October, have led to empty-container shortages, impacting shipping from Asia, and contributing to global equipment shortages, while the Maritime Union of Australia has extended the strike action until February 10, causing challenges for container exports and supply chain operations.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Germany: Germany's GDL train drivers' union [strike for higher wages and shorter working hours at Deutsche Bahn ended earlier than planned](#) from January 24th to 28th after both parties decided to resume negotiations. Since November 2023, there have been four strikes at Deutsche Bahn, with this recent one being the longest, disrupting rail service for freight transportation. As both parties have agreed to private negotiations over the next five weeks, [further strikes will not take place until at least March 3rd](#) pending their conclusion.

Hungary: The East-West Gate [rail terminal in Fényeslitke, Hungary, has become Europe's first rail freight terminal equipped with 5G technology](#). The deployment of 5G on the terminal's cranes has increased operational efficiency by 20%, allowing remote control and reducing the need for on-ground workers and contributing to improved working conditions and safety.

France: Two major French farming unions have called on protesters, who have staged tractor blockades across the country, [to end their actions](#) after the government announced measures to address their concerns. The demonstrations, also witnessed in Belgium, Portugal, Greece, and Germany, highlight farmers' frustrations over the impact of EU climate policies, taxes, rising costs, and competition from cheap imports, prompting clashes with authorities and disruptions to supply chains.
