



Security Council (Advanced Session)

Dist: General
17 February 2022

Original: English

First session

Agenda item
26 March 2022

**Synopsis for Preventing Future
Blockages of Critical Canals**

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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Security Council the topic synopsis entitled "Preventing Future Blockages of Critical Canals" (SP/ADSC/SYN/IIF/00.2).



Stabilizing US-Iran Relations

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Section I—Introduction

As the United Nations was created following the end of World War II, the Security Council was created as the only committee able to use veto power, employ peacekeepers, and enforce sanctions. This elite committee of fifteen, with five permanent and ten rotating members, was created to maintain international peace and security. During the Cold War, its power was questioned, but since then it has been active and engaged in various world issues, including the situations in Iraq, Syria, and the Central African Republic.

Section II—Background Information

The blockage of canals used for global shipping and the impact on global trade is a relatively modern phenomenon in history. With increased globalization and the creation of larger and more technologically advanced ships, canals are among the busiest thoroughfares in the world. These waterways include the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, Rhine-Main-Danube Canal, Volga-Don Canal, Kiel Canal, Houston Ship Canal, and Danube-Black Sea Canal. With major incidents like the container ship *Ever Given* Suez Canal obstruction, it has become a more mainstream concern in recent years. Resulting in the loss of millions of dollars and the hindrance of trade, canal blockages have detrimental effects on the global economy. It is therefore imperative that this issue be brought to the attention of the United Nations.

The Suez Canal is one key canal that has undergone multiple blockages in recent years. The UN Security Council has intervened through the use of peacekeepers, notably with the Suez Crisis in late 1956 between France, Israel, and Britain.

Though earlier blockages mostly resulted from conflict and war, more modern blockages are due to human error and other extraneous factors, such as the *Ever Given*, which was run aground due to a combination of high winds (according to the Suez Canal Authority), and poor navigation from its captain. Multiple attempts were made to free the ships, including tugboats which proved ineffective, and resulted in the need for heavier construction equipment. The ship was freed in roughly a week, during which billions of dollars were lost in delays and funds owed to the Egyptian government as compensation for the incident.

Responsibility for how a ship is moved through a canal can be tricky—With the Suez Canal, international maritime law dictates that the vessel's captain takes all responsibility for the directing of the ship. Captains are aided by pilots but are under no obligation to follow their advice or guidance. In the case of the *Ever Given* the chief senior pilots had more than thirty years of experience. In addition, the Suez Canal requires its own canal pilots, electricians, and riggers with specialized rope experience at great cost to the companies utilizing the canal.

Due to the recent, raised alertness of the issue, canal blockages have faced decreased news coverage. However, when this alertness subsides, the potential for more blockages on other critical canals can cause delays that cost billions of dollars.

Section III—Possible Solutions

A mandate widening and/or deepening canals to lower the chance of a ship getting stuck in it would be a possible solution to this issue. This solution, however, requires the consideration of its expensive and impractical nature with some canals. Another possible solution would be to require that the canal staff operate the ship when passing through the canal rather than the captain of the ship; though, this requires the consideration of the difficulty of finding skilled personnel that can speak the languages of the ships they board and control a ship deftly which might prove impractical in some locations. Imposing fines equal to the cost of the disruption for companies that have their ships stuck in canals is another solution to the issue. However, this solution might lead to company bankruptcy depending on the size and time period of the disruption, which could deal large blows to certain nations' economies. Improving the standards of the workers operating large trade vessels could also prevent blockages. Informed workers would be more aware of the warning signs of possible blockage and could make quick decisions and adjustments to avoid scenarios similar to that of the *Ever Given* incident.

Section IV—Bloc Positions

African Bloc: African countries enjoy the commerce that flows through the Suez as it provides a source of employment for countries within Africa. Since Africa benefits from the world economy thriving, it benefits off of the maintenance of the Suez Canal.

Asian Bloc: The ship *Ever Given* is owned by a Japanese firm, which paid an undisclosed amount to settle the incident. The Suez Canal is the shortest trade route from Europe and Asia, therefore, countries in Asia have an increased incentive to keep the critical trade node open.

Latin American Bloc: A sizable portion of the Latin American Bloc relies on the Panama Canal for imports. Although a situation similar to *Ever Given* has never happened, the occurrence of one is possible.

Middle Eastern Bloc: The Middle Eastern Bloc relies on the Strait of Hormuz to ship oil internationally. 1.2 billion dollars worth of oil runs through the strait daily. Though the chances of a ship blocking the strait are phenomenally lower, it stands to benefit from any resolutions passed by the UN. There are geopolitical concerns with the Strait of Hormuz which may enter into this discussion, of course.

Western Bloc: The Western Bloc is the most reliant on imports and exports for their economy as the lifeblood of their economies lie in the waterways allowing commerce. The United States recognizes this and was the reason the US Navy lent dredging experts to help expedite the *Ever Given* removal from the Suez Canal.

Section V—Questions That Should Be Taken Into Consideration

What do nations stand to lose with canal blockages?

How will your solutions reduce the chances of a ship causing an obstruction?

How will your solution work with aging admiralty/international maritime law?

Should there be a consequence for the companies that cause canal blockages? What will this consequence entail?

Section VI—Helpful Sites and Resources

Video—Al Jazeera—Can Another Suez Canal Blockage Be Avoided?

bit.ly/IIMUN2022-ADVSC (Shortened URL from www.aljazeera.com)

Article—Deutsche Welle—Suez Canal Blockage: 4 of the Biggest Trade Chokepoints

bit.ly/IIMUN2022-ADVSC1 (Shortened URL from dw.com)

Article—Business Insider—How the Strait of Hormuz, “a Narrow Stretch of Water Where Ships Carry \$1.2 Billion of Oil Every Day, Is at the Heart of Spiraling Tensions with Iran

bit.ly/IIMUN2022-ADVSC2 (Shortened URL from businessinsider.com)

Article—Business Insider—The Suez Canal Has a Contentious History and Has Been Blocked and Closed Several Times since Opening

bit.ly/IIMUN2022-ADVSC3 (Shortened URL from businessinsider.com)

Article—USA Today—How Did Evergreen's Ship Get Stuck in the Suez Canal and Create the World's Heaviest Traffic Jam?

bit.ly/IIMUN2022-ADVSC4 (Shortened URL from usatoday.com)

Article—ABC News—The Ship Blocking the Suez Canal is Called *Ever Given*, Even Though 'Evergreen' is Written Across it in Huge Letters

ab.co/3rXHwob (Shortened URL from abc.net.au)

Article—NBC News—Dislodged Suez Canal Cargo Ship *Ever Given* Held Amid \$916 Million Claim

nbcnews.to/33zko64 (Shortened URL from nbcnews.com)

Potential Search Terms— shipping canal obstruction, shipping canal blockage, global supply chain disruption , Evergreen *Ever Given*,