Western Cape Government

Department of Economic Development and Tourism

Port of Cape Town Stakeholder Dialogue

12 FEBRUARY 2026

Workshop Report

Introduction

The Programme Director, Ilse van Schalkwyk, opened the dialogue by outlining the objectives for the day. She highlighted the need to reflect on disruptive events, particularly the impact of wind on port operations, The purpose of the dialogue was to collectively identify improvements that would make the Port of Cape Town more resilient and future-ready.

With all protocol observed, Ilse welcomed the dignitaries in attendance, including Dr Ivan Meyer, who hosted the dialogue, Minister of Mobility, Mr Sileku, as well as Mr. Solly Letsoalo and the broader Transnet leadership. She reminded participants that this is now the seventh annual stakeholder dialogue, an engagement that sets the tone for the year's priorities, working rhythm, and inter-institutional cooperation. Ilse then introduced HOD Jo-Ann Johnston as the next speaker.

Welcome by HOD Johnston

HOD Jo-Ann Johnston welcomed delegates and reflected on how this annual dialogue has evolved since its inception in 2019. What began as a platform primarily used for complaint-handling has now matured into a robust, multi-stakeholder mechanism for institutional integration and joint prioritization across the logistics ecosystem. She explained that the Port of Cape Town has been identified as a flagship priority in the Western Cape Government's Growth for Jobs Strategy, with three provincial departments, Economic Development & Tourism, Mobility, and Agriculture, working jointly on this mandate. She described how this dialogue fits into a broader governance architecture that includes weekly operational meetings, quarterly strategy workshops, and ongoing collaboration with Transnet and industry partners. Ms. Johnston highlighted progress to date, including Transnet's investment in new equipment, as well as the developments in the digital logistics planning platform aimed at enhancing visibility and predictive analytics. She also pointed to practical interventions, like the leasing of generators during periods of peak exports, that added capacity for cold chain compliance. Current priorities include disruptive-event management, the development of inland terminals and back-of-port facilities, and the establishment of a representative transport organization to strengthen coordination across the supply chain. She also suggested exploring a dedicated secretariat for disruptive event management. She closed by urging delegates to prioritize trust, execution, and momentum, noting that the province's investment pipeline includes more than R400 billion worth of export-oriented projects.

Exporter & Industry Perspective on Disruptive Events (Table Grapes)

Mecia Petersen of SATI presented an exporter's perspective on the season's disruptions, focusing on their knock-on effects and commercial implications. She explained that, throughout the season, inspection volumes exceeded export volumes, resulting in sustained stock build-ups. At times the gap exceeded 21%, causing full cold stores, rising cooling costs, curtailed harvesting, and higher risk of fruit loss. Inspections for the season were up by roughly 14%, with the season starting 10–14 days earlier due to heat and wind, placing additional stress on already constrained peak weeks. Compounding this was the steep drop in airfreight availability, which removed a traditional pressure-relief valve.

Mercia highlighted the strong correlation between CTCT congestion and diversions to the Eastern Cape, with more than 4,500 containers diverted up to Week 6, an increase of more than 250% from the previous season. The European market experienced a "feast–famine–feast" pattern, with large consignments arriving too close together for the market to absorb them, leading to fire-sale

promotions, declining producer returns, and fruit quality issues. The economic consequences were significant. For table grapes alone, CTCT-related disruptions were estimated at R463 million. For pome and stone fruit, diversion-linked losses were estimated at R762 million to date, with more than R200 million in claims borne directly by producers.

She identified ten drivers of disruption, some outside industry control (such as weather and sudden equipment failures), but many others within the ecosystem's sphere of influence, including planning, coordination, agility, processes, and start-up responsiveness. She praised CTCT's operational improvements from mid-January but questioned why such improvements could not occur earlier. She suggested consolidating digital systems across industry bodies, embedding scenario planning, improving behavioural dynamics across the chain, and scaling proven collaboration initiatives such as the genset project. Mercia concluded by emphasizing the high stakes: the Southern Hemisphere supplies half of the Northern Hemisphere's fresh produce imports, and South Africa relies on fruit farming for more than 320,000 jobs supporting 1.28 million livelihoods. The risks of inaction include job loss, declining global competitiveness, and reduced economic resilience.

Resilient Supply Chains & Orchestration (Maersk Perspective)

Azel van der Walt, Head of Logistics for the EMEA region at Maersk, described Cape Town as a critical gateway operating within structural volatility, rather than temporary or exceptional challenges. She detailed Maersk's significant investments in Cape Town, including a 12,000 m² cold-chain facility, multiple cold rooms and steri-chambers, a 40,000 m² depot, on-site PPECB and DALRAD inspections, and a private rail siding that allows containers to bypass road congestion. She explained how these assets act as stabilizing buffers during peak seasons and weather-related shutdowns.

Azel stressed that resilience today is as much about data as it is about physical infrastructure. She highlighted Maersk's investment in digital platforms that provide real-time visibility across carriers, modes, and supply-chain nodes. These systems offer predictive ETAs, congestion alerts, and exception workflows, while orchestration ensures that carriers, depots, terminals, trucking, and rail operate from a single integrated plan. She argued that collaborative planning across government, regulators, ports, terminals, and exporters is essential for fast, informed decision-making during windbound periods and anchorage delays. She concluded by stating that resilience and competitiveness will depend on modelling, integration, and partnership culture.

Container User Forum (CUF): Mandate & Collaborative Projects

Brenda Magqwaba, Interim CEO of the Container User Forum (CUF), explained that the CUF was created as a neutral, industry-led platform to unify the container sector's voice and coordinate cross-chain initiatives with clear owners, budgets, KPIs, and ring-fenced execution capacity. She noted that while sectors like coal and ore have long-standing user forums, containers historically lacked a single, structured mechanism for joint planning and advocacy. The result was fragmentation and inconsistent engagement, with multiple associations and operators advancing partial solutions rather than working to a single system plan.

Brenda outlined the CUF's priority projects:

- developing a corridor strategy for the deciduous season (formalizing short and medium-term rules to split volumes between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape during wind windows),
- pooling security resources for container rail corridors, strengthening back-of-port

connectivity and landside flow,
- driving global standards and upskilling,
- establishing a research unit to provide data-driven advocacy and support regulatory improvements,
- and scaling digitization and innovation to close the worst visibility gaps along the chain.

She said recent seasons have proven that collaboration works, through NLCC/B4SA structures and Western Cape partnerships, tangible improvements have been delivered despite severe constraints. For sustainability, she recommended that complementary capacity (Eastern Cape terminals, pilot Saldanha, and less wind-impacted private terminals) be built into the standard plan rather than only activated in emergencies. She also called for measurement discipline to protect the cold chain and target bottlenecks with real-time data. CUF, will be a neutral coordinator to ensure cross-industry projects move beyond crisis mode into sustained execution.

Disruptive Event Recovery & Lean Restart Principles

Ben Hoseus from the Lean Africa Institute focused on the post-closure recovery problem, arguing that restart behaviour, not just steady-state capacity, determines overall performance. He emphasized that two realities characterize Cape Town: wind closures and congestion after reopening. Restart notices often grant permission but not sequence, which triggers rational but uncoordinated surges as exporters, truckers and terminal teams all act in their immediate best interest. The result is oscillation between idle and overload, extended recovery times, and misalignment between arrival rates and handling rates. He proposed lean-based recovery principles, grounded in international best practice, including:

- Treat each restart as a discrete event.
- Make the terminal the pacemaker (takt-driven) as in Rotterdam/Long Beach/Singapore/PTP.
- Move from a binary open/closed model to a phased recovery approach.

He outlined three phases:

1. Stabilization, a single, neutral coordination point, equitable decision-making, a shared priority log, and common visibility.
2. Reopening & Recovery, controlled releases and defined priorities to eliminate surges.
3. Preparation/Normal Operations, standard work, PDCA (plan–do–check–act), rehearsal, training and iteration.

Success looks like arrival rates matching handling rates, fewer yard re-handles, shorter queues, and measurable reductions in recovery duration. This approach turns each closure into a structured learning event, enabling continuous improvement.

Global Evidence & Best Practice for Disruptive Event Management

Glen Steyn delivered a presentation on global best practice for managing disruptive events in ports, with an emphasis on the parallels to Cape Town's challenges. More than twenty international studies now exist on port resilience and wind disruption, spanning engineering, logistics, transport economics, computer science, and environmental modelling, providing a remarkably consistent set of insights. The resilience framework developed by the University of Genoa and Delft University, evaluates ports across four dimensions: physical infrastructure, institutional systems, human and financial resources, and the broader operating ecosystem. This framework produces quantitative resilience indicators, compares ports against an ideal model, and identifies the "resilience deficit." Glen emphasized that this model almost perfectly mirrors Cape Town's situation and contains "about 80% of the solutions" required locally.

He also referred to the Leuven symposium in Belgium, which analysed how ports should design operations around predictable wind windows. The central conclusion from that work, was that ports experiencing two to three windbound days per week must plan for a four-to-five-day operational workweek rather than assume seven. Findings from Ghent University, examined wind-induced mechanical stress on crane structures and equipment. Although Cape Town has not historically analysed equipment fatigue in this way, Glen noted that the stress patterns identified in the Belgian studies align closely with where Cape Town's crane failures have tended to occur.

Glen referenced a South African study supervised by Prof Jan Lombard on Cape Town's wind disruptions from 2011 to 2017. This research identified wind and IT system breakdowns as the two dominant causes of operational disruption and argued that Cape Town was not planning for wind strategically, was not preparing for rapid restarts, was not using predictive tools effectively, and was not managing IT change in a way that protected performance. This study warned that conditions would worsen if nothing changed, a warning validated by Cape Town's severe 2025 wind season.

He then referenced meteorological risk studies from KwaZulu-Natal that emphasized the need for disruptive events to be explicitly integrated into policy, strategy, and SOPs. This aligned directly with Ben's earlier message that disruptions are predictable and must be planned systematically. Glen followed with a UNCTAD post-COVID report that reviewed 23 major port disruptions worldwide and highlighted a recurring pattern: cargo growth almost always outpaces port capacity, and without proactive planning the system collapses. He then cited an Oxford and Netherlands study estimating that global ports lose roughly US $7.5 billion annually due to disruptions. This helped contextualize Cape Town's estimated annual losses of R1–2 billion. Importantly, the study found that the real differentiator between resilient and fragile ports is not the disruption itself but the duration of recovery. Glen continued with findings from the Makura Project, which analysed 1,600 disruptions across global ports. This project showed that severe disruptions are common, with regions like East Asia experiencing more than 100 disrupted days per year, some lasting up to 35 days. This reinforced his message that Cape Town is not uniquely afflicted. What matters is how the port responds.

Glen then walked delegates through relevant case studies. Wellington, New Zealand—one of the windiest ports globally, uses predictive wind modelling, structured stop/secure/restart SOPs, and "pit-stop engineering" to perfect restarts. Hamburg has embedded wind resilience into its infrastructure through automation and engineering upgrades. Tangier improved resilience significantly through AI-powered decision-support systems, eliminating container-toppling incidents. Rotterdam and Antwerp addressed congestion by developing advanced digital platforms, integrating port users, enhancing hinterland connectivity, and making inland terminal use a normal part of their logistics strategy.

After reviewing these international examples, Glen synthesized the insights into five global patterns found in high-performing ports:

- Strong monitoring and predictive modelling
- Clear and tested SOPs for stopping, securing, restarting, and stabilizing operations
- Use of sheltered operational windows
- Highly integrated digital planning and forecasting tools
- Robust hinterland connectivity prioritizing back-of-port facilities, inland terminals, alternative nearby terminals, and long-range diversions only as a last option.

To conclude, Glen recommended that TNPA deepen the CSIR wind study; benchmark Cape Town's SOPs against top global ports; establish a Disruptive Event Mitigation Task Team that activates only during disruptions; develop a hinterland strategy that sequences Saldanha and inland terminals before expensive long-distance diversions; and move rapidly on digital integration, which requires not just platforms but upgraded data architecture and analytical skills. He ended by noting how

striking it was that every presentation earlier in the day, Jo-Ann's strategic framing, Mercia's industry data, Azel's supply-chain modelling, Brenda's collaborative approach, and Ben's restart-focused methodology, lined up perfectly with the lessons from global research.

Transnet Group COO Commitments

Solly Letsoalo (Transnet Group COO) shared three concrete Transnet commitments agreed with the Minister of Transport and industry stakeholders. First, efficiency and predictability: improve gross crane productivity (targeting 30 moves per GCH) to shorten and stabilize ship turnaround time, with turnaround time as the headline KPI. This must be supported by new haulers, RTGs, and incoming STS cranes, operated by well-trained teams.

Second, closing the SOP gap: benchmark CTCT's SOPs against world-class terminals, convert independent assessments (including Lean insights) into specific improvement actions, and prioritize wind recovery practices.

Third, Plan B for wind: design and implement an alternate logistics solution that can be switched on when wind forecasts indicate extended closures, using inland terminals as buffers, rail at the lowest possible cost, and alternate ports where necessary. The aim is to protect fruit export volumes and reduce diversion losses running into the hundreds of millions of rand. Letsoalo concluded: "When Transnet works, South Africa thrives," committing to transparent measurement and reporting through 2026.

TNPA Update — Adverse Weather Mitigation & Port Performance

Adv Phyllis Difeto opened by acknowledging the value of the stakeholder dialogue for Transnet. She noted that the Western Cape Government had requested specific updates for the session, and Transnet had prepared its material precisely in line with that brief. She mentioned that TNPA's long-standing "Strategic 8-Point Plan" for the Port of Cape Town, includes combating adverse weather conditions. She highlighted that, the impact of weather, especially wind, long waves, swell, fog and related marine conditions, has intensified significantly. Craft availability, such as pilot and tug boats, remains consistently above 98%, and on-time vessel service sits at 98–99%, demonstrating reliability in the marine operations area TNPA directly controls.

Adv Phyllis reported significant progress following TNPA's procurement of 18 shore tensioners, specialized equipment used to stabilize vessels during long-wave conditions. Six tensioners are already operational, and additional units were delivered to achieve the target of four per berth (twelve in total). Adv Phyllis then addressed high swell and the longstanding industry request to use helicopters to deploy marine pilots during weather disruptions. She confirmed that TNPA had now successfully utilized a private helicopter for pilot transfers, with approval from shipping lines. This initiative is currently operational, and TNPA is pursuing a formal concession model to ensure it becomes a permanent part of the operational toolbox rather than an ad-hoc measure.

TNPA has commissioned a comprehensive wind study with the CSIR and signed an MOA to advance predictive modelling, engineering responses, and economic analysis. The economic impact component of the study is well advanced and expected to be completed by March 2026, after which TNPA will present the results to stakeholders. Importantly, the wind forecasting model, a key deliverable of the partnership, has already been successfully tested and integrated into TNPA's Integrated Port Operations Support System (IPOS). This provides real-time, localized wind forecasting, trend evolution, and operational decision support directly to Port Control. Adv Phyllis also described progress on unlocking terminals less exposed to wind. A-Berth, previously used mainly for rig repairs

and offshore projects, has been converted into a multi-purpose berth and is now handling container vessels. Operators AGL and FPT are active at A-Berth, and procurement of mobile harbour cranes is underway to enhance productivity. She noted that this initiative originated from previous stakeholder forums and demonstrates how industry feedback directly shapes operational decisions.

She closed by acknowledging the severe increase in windbound hours — from 740 hours in 2022/23 to 1,396 hours in 2025/26 (with the year not yet complete) and reiterated that while weather cannot be controlled, the port has demonstrated clear progress in all areas within TNPA's influence. She thanked stakeholders for their partnership and committed to presenting the full wind-study results at the next engagement.

TPT Operational Recovery & Start-Up Performance

Earle Peters the Managing Executive for Cape Town and Durban container terminals, acknowledged the pressure and expectations associated with the role, pressure made very real by the severe wind events that Cape Town experienced just as he stepped into the position. He described the situation he found on arrival: vessels had diverted away from Cape Town and were not returning voluntarily due to the high costs associated with repositioning cargo. However, the cost of not acting would have been far greater for the country, especially in a season with a strong crop. The last thing South Africa could afford, he emphasized, was to "juice the fruit", losing market opportunities due to export failures. One of TPT's immediate strategic goals, therefore, was to rebuild confidence and physically bring vessels back to Cape Town.

Earl then moved to operational data. Compared with the forecast of 626,000 TEUs, TPT now expects to process approximately 688,000 TEUs by the end of the year, a significant achievement considering the disruptions. Productivity indicators, including moves per hour and ship working hour, have shown improvement, and although moving from 14 to 15 moves per hour may seem small on paper, he stressed that such gains require an enormous amount of effort. He described the "un-forecasted surge" of wind patterns in November, December and January, noting that this escalation was something he had previously experienced in Durban, where once the system enters a downward spiral, climbing out requires intense operational alignment. TPT could not overcome this alone. It required collaboration across co-loaders, shipping lines, transport partners, and integrated systems.

Earle then described the major equipment investments that have fundamentally shifted capacity. The commitments made to the previous year's stakeholder forum, including 27 RTGs, new haulers, trailers, a Terminal Operating System upgrade, new reach stackers, two new empty handlers, and a new mobile harbour crane (MHC) for MPT, have all been delivered. These upgrades, combined with the three MHCs at MPT, resulted in a 259% year-on-year increase in MPT throughput. He described a remarkable breakthrough: a recent full discharge call at MPT during a wind event, something he said would have been "unthinkable" in 2003, when he first ran the terminal. Using the analogy of a freeway at rush hour, he explained how reopening after a wind event almost immediately triggers congestion unless sequencing is managed carefully. TPT now prepares for restarts before the wind even dies down: machines are repositioned, operators are kept on equipment (within safe wind thresholds), cranes and RTGs are locked down and secured, and the terminal is placed in a state of "operational readiness", meaning the first productive move can take place almost immediately when the wind allows.

He emphasized that CSIR wind blocks have become the team's "rock". The ability to see green and red operational windows in advance allows TPT to pre-calculate which vessels will be worked, which cranes will be assigned, which stacks must be prepared, and how the landside flows must be structured. Operators now remain in their machines until 100 km/h winds, significantly higher than the

previous limit of 72 km/h, while water-side wind bounds (shipside operations) trigger at around 80 km/h. This enables TPT to continue housekeeping, yard reorganization, and cargo alignment even while quayside operations are paused. Engineering resilience is being strengthened through the deployment of 24/7 OEM technicians, improved condition monitoring, and centralized spare-parts visibility. Long-term improvements include the arrival of two new ship-to-shore cranes within 12–18 months, although assembling all cranes simultaneously would sterilize too much operational space. A ninth crane has already arrived to create necessary maintenance windows, Earle stressed that "run-to-failure" is no longer an option.

He also detailed improvements in reefer management, a critical success factor during fruit season. Enhanced plug/unplug teams strengthened communication structures, and structured fruit-forum engagements (held on Mondays and Thursdays) have enabled TPT to manage situations like last week, where plug-point capacity was 3,200 but demand surged to 4,700 boxes. Through coordinated stack allocation and load/discharge balancing, TPT was able to absorb these volumes. He noted that TPT anticipates three more challenging weeks ahead but expressed confidence that by June/July, the terminal will demonstrate significant, measurable productivity improvements, particularly with the arrival of 14 new spreaders, historically one of the main causes of operational stoppages after wind. He concluded by emphasizing the need for integrated action across transporters, cold stores, rail, and port users, explaining that TPT alone cannot resolve landside bottlenecks. Collaboration is the only functional model.

Rail Reform & Network Strategy (TRIM)

Riaan Erasmus is a senior manager within the Strategy and Business Planning unit of the recently established Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager (TRIM). He explained that rail reform in South Africa has fundamentally changed the structure of the freight-rail environment. TFR is now repositioned as a Train Operating Company (TOC), one among several TOCs that will operate on the network. TRIM, by contrast, is now the designated network owner, responsible for capital investment, maintenance, safety, granting open-access slots, and improving the reliability and performance of the nation's rail infrastructure.

Riaan explained that TRIM's mandate is to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective rail infrastructure that supports the national objective of shifting freight from road back to rail. The strategic intent is to modernize infrastructure, adopt advanced rail technologies, improve efficiency and network density, and rationalize under-utilized lines where possible. He described the multi-year maintenance and capital investment plan required to reach the national target of 250 million tonnes annually by 2030, a plan that must run ahead of actual demand. Riaan explained that Western Cape clusters have already been delineated, including Caledon, Calvinia, George, and Klipplaat groups, and TRIM is awaiting the Minister's approval to issue an RFI for private-sector participation. Once the RFI is published, TRIM will issue a Prospectus for branch-line investment, followed by structured RFP processes.

He concluded by acknowledging Prof Havenga's comment that the majority of rail returns currently stem from bulk lines and that general-freight growth remains stagnant. He agreed that most investment is currently allocated to bulk corridors and that private partnerships will be crucial in addressing the backlog. He emphasized that improvements have been made in maintenance scheduling and operational performance, but the work ahead remains significant.

First Discussion Session

The first round of the Q&A session began with Professor Jan Havenga, who raised a technically significant concern regarding the freight-rail figures presented earlier. He pointed out that the national target of reaching 250 million tonnes per year by 2030 requires careful differentiation between bulk volumes and general freight volumes. While bulk commodities such as coal, iron ore, and manganese continue to show incremental recovery and growth, largely due to established export corridors, the general freight network (GFN) has stagnated, contributing almost none of the incremental gains. Havenga explained that if the system ends the year close to 170 million tonnes, with perhaps an additional 20 million tonnes realistically achievable from further stabilization of bulk lines, then the remaining 60 million tonnes must come from the general freight network, a network that currently lacks a credible investment strategy, maintenance model, or capacity recovery plan. He stressed that this gap cannot be closed by TRIM alone and requires coordinated national effort, multi-stakeholder investment models, and a far more aggressive approach to revitalizing general freight. His comments were made "with respect," recognizing the constraints under which rail professionals are working.

In response, Riaan Erasmus acknowledged the accuracy of Havenga's assessment and confirmed that, at present, most rail infrastructure investment is indeed flowing to bulk corridors, as these remain the economic backbone of South Africa's rail system. He explained that the B-Network (branch lines) receives only maintenance funding sufficient to keep a small subset of grain and agricultural lines operational, and that the backlog built up over years is profound. Riaan reiterated that TRIM is pursuing partnerships with private operators, that several new Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are preparing to enter the network as open-access reforms take effect, and that these operators are expected to support the system's ability to reach the 2030 target. However, he reiterated that the maintenance backlog is substantial and cannot be eradicated overnight. He assured the room that progress is being made, albeit gradually.

The next contribution came from Joy Moodley, who raised concern from the import community. She emphasized that while the day's discussions had focused heavily on exports, the import side of the logistics chain is equally significant. She highlighted a long-standing issue with Customs stops on containers, explaining that when Customs identifies a container for inspection, costs escalate rapidly. Joy outlined that Section 44 of the Customs Act legally allows importers to take control of a stopped container through a bonded, licensed remover, but despite SARS having clarified this position to SAAFF and SASOA in 2021, the provision is not being enforced. As a result, shipping lines continue to hold operational control over stopped containers and bill for associated costs, which often exceeds the cost of importing the cargo. She appealed to the Western Cape Government and Transnet to intervene at national level to ensure that the Act is upheld.

Glen Steyn responded briefly, acknowledging the seriousness of the issue. He confirmed that the concern would be formally recorded and that an appropriate response would be prepared. Glen added that SARS had been invited to the dialogue but could not attend, and he expressed appreciation to Basil Hanival for his ongoing work interfacing with SARS on industry concerns.

The next question came from Jolene Wium, who asked Ben Hoseus from the Lean Institute how to address the slow operational ramp-up in the first two hours after a wind closure. She noted that data across several seasons showed reduced container arrivals and truck arrivals during the critical early restart period. Ben responded that the issue stems from a lack of granularity and coordination in restart sequencing. He recommended treating each restart as a discrete operational event, with an explicit plan detailing what must move first, where, and in what order. He argued for a

structured, visible "restart steering function", possibly involving a neutral coordinating body, to avoid delays caused by decision bottlenecks and communication chains. He further emphasized the need for a robust Plan vs Actual review after each disruption to ensure continuous learning and refinement.

Earle Peters expanded on this from an operational perspective, noting that while TPT has already implemented improvements, including keeping operators in their machines during windbound periods, pre-staging trucks, and prioritizing specific cargo types, the system still suffers from stakeholder misalignment. For example, reefer trucks sometimes leave the terminal to seek plug-points, only to require re-booked slots later. Earle noted that what the terminal needs to load first, and what packhouses or cold stores dispatch first, are often misaligned. He explained that the industry and TPT will need to deepen collaborative planning and system logic so that dispatch aligns with vessel stowage priorities.

The final question of this round came from Paulo Fernandes, who asked the Container User Forum whether it is a national or Western Cape-specific organization, and how it is funded. Brenda, the Interim CUF CEO, explained that the CUF is national in scope, reflecting the fact that container logistics spans all ports and provinces. She explained CUF's tiered membership model, where strategic, core, and associate members contribute according to their category, and strategic members also participate on the CUF Board. She described the Customer Collaboration Fund, formerly known as the Joint Investment Fund, which enables pooled project-based funding for specific initiatives, and noted that the CUF is exploring an additional long-term funding mechanism pending formal approval.

Second Discussion Session

The second round of discussions began with Basil Hanival's first question that focused on the hot-seat changeover process during start-up after wind closures, noting that this remains one of the most contentious operational issues among users. His second concern centred on the unauthorized and forced leave experienced during peak season, which left terminals under staffed at critical periods. He pointed out that staffing shortages directly contributed to operational failures, including delays in deploying newly delivered equipment. Basil also raised the matter of nine newly delivered RTGs that had been standing idle due to incomplete commissioning. He stressed that the early activation of these RTGs was essential to improving both landside and quayside productivity. Finally, he asked for clarity on timelines: which interventions were happening when, and when users could expect full implementation.

Earle responded that operators now remain in their machines during most wind conditions up to safe thresholds, a major procedural shift that has already shortened start-up times. Regarding staff availability, he explained that TPT had identified a gap in night-shift transport. Without reliable transport, staff simply could not report for duty. Since reinstating night-shift staff transport a week earlier, operator attendance increased dramatically, with machine availability jumping from 16 machines to between 22 and 28 machines almost immediately. He acknowledged industry frustration around delays in activating the nine RTGs but confirmed that commissioning is underway. He further clarified that 14 new spreaders, a major cause of lost time after wind, would arrive within five months, and that refurbishment programmes for certain cranes would be completed by July 2026.

Next, Taction Mafatle from PPECB provided a detailed input on how rising fruit volumes are putting the entire system under structural pressure. He explained that volumes that once excited the industry, such as 130 million cartons of citrus or 40 million cartons of grapes, are now considerably

higher. Current projections show citrus volumes exceeding 210 million cartons and deciduous fruit exceeding 70–75 million cartons. These numbers indicate not temporary surges but a sustained volume profile that will continue intensifying pressure on inspection services, cold stores, trucking, and port operations. He stressed that the increasing complexity of supply chains requires far greater data transparency so that ports, packhouses, depots, shipping lines, and regulators can make coordinated decisions. Taction argued that decisions such as "do not pack", "do not dispatch", or "delay movement due to expected wind or swell" will become essential tools to protect the network.

This was followed by a comment and question from Charl du Bois, representing the Fresh Produce Exporters Forum and Capespan. Charl relayed feedback from the recent International Fruit Congress in Berlin, where Tesco, which controls approximately 27% of the UK grocery market, informed suppliers that their biggest supply-chain risk globally is the Port of Cape Town. Tesco stated bluntly that they would prefer sourcing from origins not dependent on Cape Town, such as Peru, Chile, India and Egypt. Charl noted that this is alarming for South African exporters and constitutes a direct reputational threat. He asked Jabu whether any form of PSP (Private Sector Participation) similar to the ICTSI concession at Pier 2 Durban was being considered for Cape Town, noting that ICTSI manages 50% of South Africa's citrus exports at Pier 2 and appears to be performing well. He also emphasized that the industry is willing to share data to provide upstream visibility to Transnet. Jabu responded that no PSP projects are currently under consideration for Cape Town Container Terminals.

As a final stakeholder input, Terry Gale, Chair of Exporters Western Cape, reiterated that the Western Cape Government should promote the collaborative model it has developed. He reminded the room that even Singapore, often seen as the global benchmark, recently experienced prolonged congestion of three to four weeks, warning that Cape Town should not be overly self-critical. He emphasized that the Western Cape's strength is its cooperation and collaboration, which must now expand and deepen.

Closing Remarks

Minister Ivan Meyer delivered an enthusiastic closing speech, expressing gratitude to the Western Cape Exporters Forum, Transnet leadership, his Standing Committee, and all stakeholders. He reiterated that the province now lives in a "permanent state of crisis", citing droughts, floods, foot-and-mouth disease, and port disruptions as overlapping challenges requiring "unconventional courage". He argued strongly for full-scale private sector participation, rather than incremental reform, and he warned that the agricultural sector cannot endure repeated losses of R1 billion annually due to port delays.

The Minister celebrated South Africa's agricultural export growth, noting that the value had risen from US$13.7 billion (2024) to US$15.1 billion (2025), thanks largely to producers' resilience. He described recent engagements in Berlin, Madrid, Dubai, and with EU and ASEAN markets, emphasizing that global appetite for South African produce remains high — but only if the country can deliver reliably. He announced that the Western Cape will host Fruit Attraction Africa (2027) and spoke passionately about attracting international delegations, biosecurity enforcement, rail-tourism revival, and ongoing work to defend South Africa's international market share. His closing message was firm: structural reform is no longer optional.

The way forward

Glen closed the dialogue by outlining a focused set of priorities to take forward collectively. First, he emphasised strengthening TNPA's partnership with the CSIR, to advance wind-monitoring and predictive-modelling capabilities, so that Cape Town's approach reflects global best practice. Second, he highlighted the need to benchmark SOPs for disruptive events against leading international ports, to improve how Cape Town stops, secures, restarts and stabilises after wind or other interruptions. Third, he recommended establishing a Port-Community Disruptive Event Mitigation Task Team that activates during disruptions and coordinates rapid, structured recovery across terminals, cold stores, shipping lines and logistics partners. Fourth, Glen stressed the importance of optimising hinterland connectivity, including testing the viability of Saldanha as an overflow or support port during peak volumes or extended weather disruptions. Finally, he called for accelerating digital platform integration across the entire port community, ensuring all users operate from shared, real-time data to improve forecasting, planning and overall system resilience.

He thanked Ilse for leading the dialogue and noted the strong alignment across all speakers and stakeholders. He also thanked all delegates for their participation.

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