Feature by Liesl Venter and Ed Richardson

Bullish outlook for the sector

Project cargo operators across southern Africa are reporting growing optimism as investment in energy, mining and infrastructure increases.

From major LNG developments in Mozambique and Namibia's rapidly expanding oil and gas sector to new mining projects in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and the Democratic Republic of Congo, industry experts say the outlook for project cargo over the next two years is among the strongest seen in recent years.

"Project cargo is definitely on the up," said logistics specialist Kevin Melnick.

"It is a very buoyant market. This isn't something we're seeing in just one country or on one continent. Demand for large-scale projects is increasing globally and Africa is very much part of that growth."

Energy remains one of the biggest drivers. Namibia's offshore oil discoveries, the anticipated restart of major LNG developments in northern Mozambique and continued investment in renewable energy projects are creating sustained demand for heavy-lift, breakbulk and oversized cargo transport.

Mining is providing another significant boost. With Zambia and the DRC on track to increase mining output significantly over the next few years, a healthy pipeline of projects requiring specialised logistics planning and execution is coming together.

> Demand for large-scale projects is increasing globally and Africa is very much part of that growth.
> – Kevin Melnick

Athol Emerton, managing director of LBH Mozambique, believes the sector is entering a sustained growth phase.

"As infrastructure improves and delayed projects resume over the next two years, demand for breakbulk and project cargo logistics will keep increasing," he told *Freight News*.

"Beyond what's already under way, the LNG restart in northern Mozambique – Area 1, Rovuma and Coral – will be the single biggest driver of project cargo demand in the region over the coming years."

He said major transport corridor developments, including the Lobito and revitalised Nacala corridors, together with West African iron ore and rare earth projects, would continue generating significant project cargo volumes.

"The three industrial sectors that will determine how quickly Africa develops are energy, mining and infrastructure," said Emerton. "But without infrastructure development, the first two will remain in the ground."

While demand continues to strengthen, the industry still faces significant operational challenges.

Unlike many other regions, Africa continues to contend with fragmented customs systems, differing regulatory requirements and inconsistent border procedures that can delay high-value project cargo movements. "There is still far too much red tape," said Melnick. "We don't have a harmonised customs environment across the continent. Duties, taxes and customs procedures differ from country to country, so cargo is still held up at borders."

He said successful project execution continued to depend on working with experienced local partners who understand country-specific regulations and can navigate often complex approval processes.

Infrastructure constraints also remain a concern, with ageing roads, limited rail capacity, bridge restrictions and port congestion continuing to affect route planning for oversized cargo.

Global geopolitical tensions are adding another layer of complexity. LV

Top opportunities over next five years identified

For project cargo logistics service providers, big is not always best.

Smaller projects may require larger numbers of processing plants, crushers, mills, smelters, refinery modules, power equipment, heavy transformers, rail systems and other oversized equipment than mega developments.

Among the top opportunities over the next five years have been identified as Simandou (Guinea), Lobito Refinery (Angola), Mingomba Copper (Zambia) and the wider Lobito Corridor industrialisation programme.

The projects combine multibillion-dollar capex with long inland heavy-haul routes and recurring demand for oversized equipment imports.

The $15-20 billion Simandou Iron Ore Expansion includes the transport of crushing plants, processing facilities, stacker reclaimers, heavy-haul rail systems, ship loaders and power generation equipment.

It is described as the largest single infrastructure and mining investment in sub-Saharan Africa.

Cargo is expected to be landed in the port of Morébaya on the Morébaya River in southern Guinea.

A 650-kilometre railway will be built to link the port with the Simandou mountains, and the port will be configured to handle 120 million tons of ore a year.

The $6.6bn Lobito Refinery project is designed to process 200 000 barrels a day.

> “The Lobito Refinery is designed to process 200 000 barrels a day, strengthening regional fuel security.

Construction has stalled due to funding constraints at around 23% completion.

Sonangol intends retaining a 51% majority stake.

Neighbouring countries including Zambia (which holds a 26% stake) and Botswana are reported to be negotiating for equity shares to ensure regional fuel security.

Located in Zambia's Copperbelt region near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Mingomba project is expected to produce more than 300 000 tons of copper a year at full capacity.

KoBold Metals has officially broken ground on the mine.

Production is targeted for the early 2030s, with major construction expected to accelerate after shaft sinking begins.

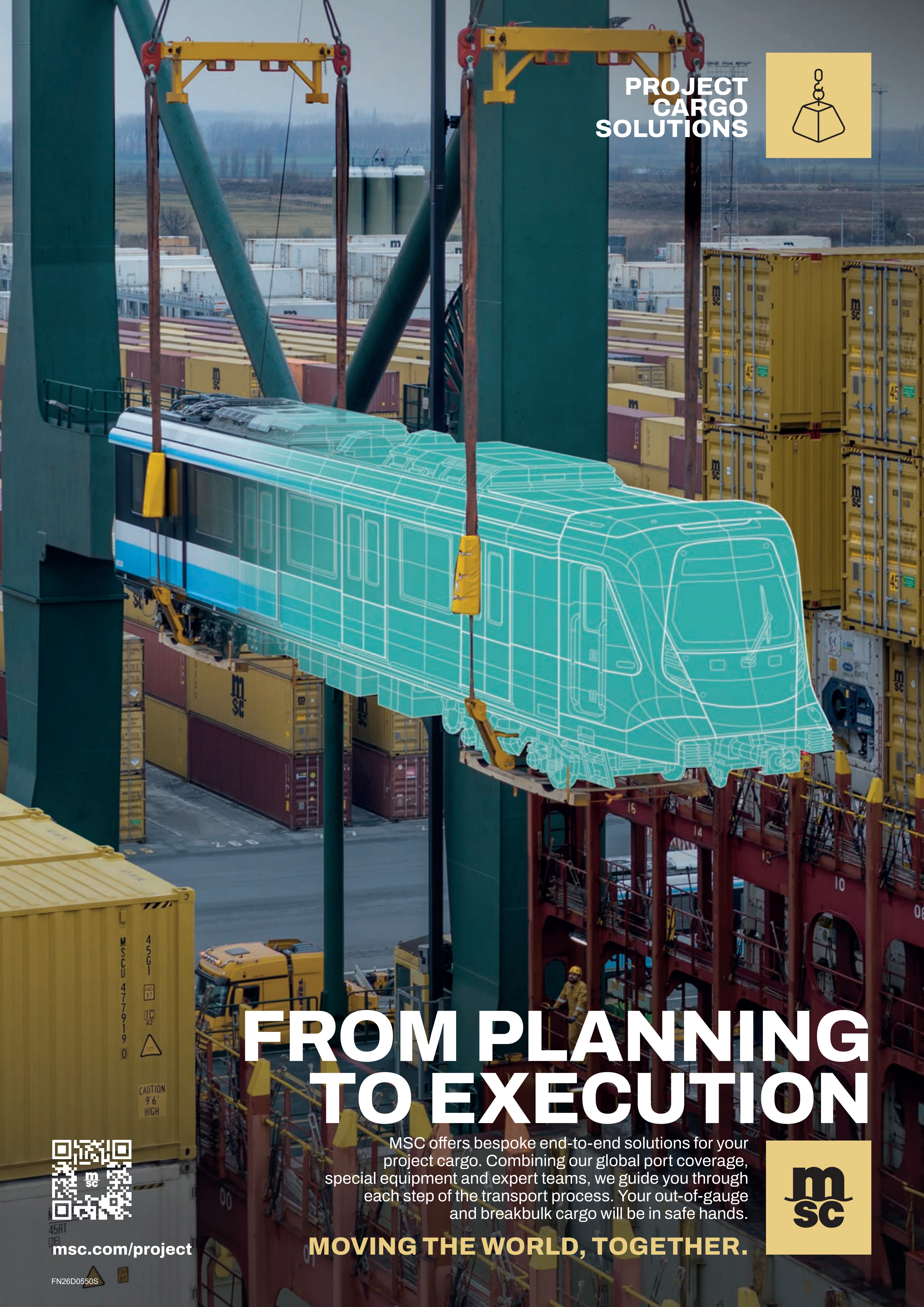
Backed by high-profile investors including Bill Gates and Sam Altman, KoBold says it is deploying artificial intelligence to accelerate exploration and development timelines in a sector traditionally defined by long lead times and high geological uncertainty.

In South Africa, the platinum group metals sector is undergoing a $20bn-plus expansion at Sibanye-Stillwater, Tharisa and Eastern Platinum as mature open-pit operations move to underground mining. ER

Large-scale oil refinery developments are expected to remain a key driver of project cargo demand across Africa over the coming years.

TOP 10 MINING, PROCESSING AND MANUFACTURING PROJECTS IN AFRICA (2026–2031)

PROJECT	COUNTRY	VALUE (USD)	TARGET START/ RAMP-UP
South African PGM Processing and Underground Expansions	South Africa	$20bn+	2026–2031
Lobito Refinery	Angola	$6.6bn	2028
Mingomba Copper Mine	Zambia	$2.3–2.5bn	2027–2031
Manhize Steel Plant Expansion	Zimbabwe	$2bn	2026–2030
Lithium processing plants	Zimbabwe	$1–2bn+	2026–2030
Longonjo rare earth mine	Angola	$217m	2026–2028
DRC Copper-Cobalt Refining Hub Projects	DRC	$1–3bn combined	2026–2031
Tanzania Nickel and Battery Metals Projects	Tanzania	$1–2bn	2027–2031
Lofdal rare earths project	Namibia	$400m	Seeking funding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MSC offers bespoke end-to-end solutions for your project cargo. Combining our global port coverage, special equipment and expert teams, we guide you through each step of the transport process. Your out-of-gauge and breakbulk cargo will be in safe hands.
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Additional routing options boost export access

Africa is entering a new project cargo investment cycle, with major developments in LNG, mining, renewable energy and industrial infrastructure driving demand for heavy-lift and specialised logistics. As governments and private investors commit billions of dollars to projects across the continent, the sector is preparing for a pipeline of increasingly complex cargo movements.

"Africa is once again becoming the focus of resource development, from bulk projects on a truly massive scale, like the Guinean iron ore developments, to the almost 'boutique' but strategically important rare earth and platinum group metals (PGM) projects," said Athol Emerton, managing director of LBH Mozambique.

Speaking to *Freight News*, he said several major infrastructure developments were expected to reshape project cargo flows. "The Lobito Corridor in Angola, renewed momentum on the Nacala Corridor and the continued development of Namibia's transport corridors are creating additional routing options for project cargo while improving access to export markets for bulk minerals."

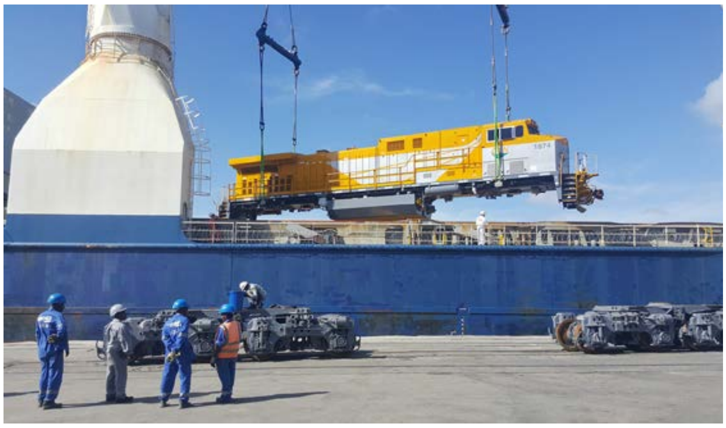
South Africa's terminal upgrade programme and the long-awaited introduction of private rail operators are also boosting confidence. In Mozambique, the planned expansion of the Port of Maputo and growing cargo volumes along the Maputo Corridor demonstrated the value of integrated corridor development, said Emerton.

> "The future project scenario in Africa needs careful focus and country-specific knowledge.
> – Athol Emerton

Similar initiatives are under way in West Africa, where multiple corridor projects are expected to unlock future project cargo movements and support mineral exports.

"I am really excited about the future project scenario in Africa, although it does need careful focus and country-specific knowledge. We have been involved in the LNG projects in Afungi since handling the first exploration vessels back in mid-2008, and it has been rewarding to support such a broad range of project logistics as the development has progressed. It is arguably the biggest project under way in Africa," he said.

That optimism is reflected in growing project cargo activity across the continent. According to Emerton, volumes are increasing as investment gathers pace.



Heavy-lift cargo movements are expected to increase as investment in ports, rail and transport corridors improves access to projects across Africa. Photo: LBH Mozambique

"There are only two frontier continents left with real scope for resource exploration – Africa and Antarctica. And it's far too cold down in the latter, so let's focus on warm, friendly Africa!" he quipped.

The sector, however, is not without challenges. "In Africa, logistics for these massive projects demands a practical response: corridor capacity, port productivity, customs efficiency and multimodal connectivity all need to improve together. This means dialogue between any country's bureaucracy and resource project investors needs to be open and pragmatic at all times," said Emerton.

"I fear there is often great political and investor enthusiasm to unlock Africa's large resources with projects, but the momentum slows at a practical level through complex bureaucracy, from customs regimes to heavy-lift equipment permitting."

Practical constraints often extend well beyond ports and terminals. A country may have a modern, efficient port, but a damaged bridge several hundred kilometres inland or ageing road infrastructure can quickly become the weakest link in the logistics chain. Successfully executing complex project cargo movements therefore requires detailed local knowledge and careful planning across the entire transport corridor.

Emerton said demand for breakbulk and project cargo logistics would continue to grow as infrastructure improved and delayed projects moved forward over the next two years. LV

Risks of transporting giant lithium batteries underestimated

The authorities are not paying sufficient attention to establishing rules and regulations for the safe transport of giant lithium battery arrays being installed in solar and wind farms to provide grid stability, according to Carl Webb, managing director of Project Logistics Management (PLM).

In South Africa, lithium-ion batteries are classified as Class 9 hazardous materials under SANS 10228.

"Class 9 is a category for hazards that don't fit neatly into other classes. In this case, lithium batteries pose a combination of chemical and energetic risks rather than flammability or toxicity alone," according to an Arrive Alive advisory on the transport of the batteries.

"Being Class 9 means that any significant shipment of lithium-ion batteries (for example, bulk batteries or batteries not installed in equipment) must adhere to strict transport requirements, including the use of appropriate labels, documentation and packaging.

"It is a very big problem area," Webb told *Freight News*.

"We are getting orders to move 400 containers of lithium batteries weighing between 35 and 43 tons each, to different parts of the country.

"The problem there is that none of the abnormal registered vehicles which can carry that weight are hazardous registered."

> "What the authorities and hauliers do not realise is that if a lithium battery comes off and ignites, there is no way of putting out the battery fire.
> – **Carl Webb**

The registration challenge is that the NaTIS system does not allow a vehicle or trailer to be registered as both abnormal and hazardous, he says.

This has implications for insurance claims, in addition to non-compliance with road regulations. "There will be very big problems if something goes wrong.

"Nobody seems to realise that. The port is quite happily loading these containers onto trucks and trailers that, firstly, are not registered, and secondly, are not built for the load.

"We had a 43-ton battery the other day loaded on a 30-ton trailer.

Large battery energy storage systems present new logistical, regulatory and safety challenges for heavy-haul transport operators.

"Trucks are going in without twist locks. They are getting loaded, with the battery just chained down."

The batteries also pose a hazard where they are being stored in transit, as well as at their final destination.

"What the authorities and hauliers do not realise is that if a lithium battery comes off and ignites, there is no way of putting out the battery fire.

"They do not realise the extent of the disaster that's going to happen, and it will happen."

Webb says project cargo operators and the Road Freight Association have been trying to address the risks with NaTIS for two years, without success.

"So, we're going to carry on with the situation until something happens, and when it happens, it is going to be a big disaster."

Webb is also concerned about the quality of the mainly Chinese vessels transporting the batteries to South Africa.

"At any one time you will have four or five Chinese vessels discharging in the harbour (Durban).

"The exporters use the cheapest possible boat that they can find."

The vessels' cranes often do not work, and offloading is haphazard, he adds. ER

Demand for heavy-lift capabiity

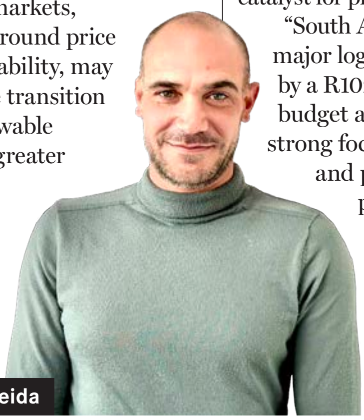
After several years of uncertainty, Africa's project cargo sector is beginning to show signs of recovery as previously delayed projects move into execution phase and new awards enter the market.

While activity remains uneven across the continent, demand is gradually improving, underpinned by investment in renewable energy, mining, power generation and infrastructure.

According to Kyle De Almeida, national project manager at Fr. Meyer's Sohn South Africa (FMS), these sectors are generating sustained demand for the movement of oversized and specialised cargo.

De Almeida said the global energy transition remained one of the biggest structural drivers of project cargo growth as countries invested in cleaner energy and electrification. Growing demand for critical minerals such as lithium, copper, nickel, cobalt and rare earth minerals is driving investment in new mining operations and the supporting infrastructure required to develop them.

"The continued volatility in global oil markets, particularly around price and supply stability, may accelerate the transition towards renewable energy, with greater emphasis on domestically produced sources such as wind and solar to enhance energy security and reduce reliance on external energy supplies," he said.



Kyle De Almeida

He added that global shipping lines were also investing in dedicated project cargo and specialised equipment divisions to meet growing demand for complex project logistics services.

Infrastructure investment gathering pace

While these trends are evident globally, De Almeida said South Africa was experiencing similar growth, with renewable energy, mining and infrastructure continuing to underpin demand for project cargo services.

"In the renewable energy sector, continued acceleration of renewable energy deployment is driving demand for the transport of wind turbine components, solar infrastructure and photovoltaic equipment. These projects require specialised heavy-lift capability, abnormal load transport and detailed route planning."

While mining continues to generate sustained project cargo demand, De Almeida believes South Africa's logistics reforms could become the next major catalyst for project cargo growth.

"South Africa is undergoing a major logistics reset supported by a R102 billion transport budget allocation, with a strong focus on rail recovery and private sector participation," he told *Freight News*.

"This shift will have a powerful impact on the mining sector and containerised cargo flows, as it directly influences export capacity, corridor efficiency and port performance. Opportunities for project cargo will be generated through rail network upgrades and expanded port infrastructure development, as these large-scale infrastructure programmes require the movement of heavy, oversized and specialised equipment."

With major rail, port and corridor projects moving from planning to implementation, De Almeida believes the outlook for project cargo is becoming increasingly positive.

Several strategic logistics projects are already gathering momentum, including the partnership between Transnet and International Container Terminal Services Inc (ICTSI) at Durban's Pier 2, upgrades to the Gauteng-eThekwini freight corridor, the development of the Ngqura manganese export corridor and plans to expand Richards Bay's dry bulk handling capacity. Together, these projects are expected to improve freight efficiency while creating significant demand for the transport of heavy equipment during construction and implementation.

Cost pressures persist

Despite the improving outlook, significant challenges continue to constrain growth across the sector.

According to De Almeida, rising fuel prices and increasing security surcharges are placing additional pressure on project logistics, driving up the overall cost of moving oversized and specialised cargo. As a result, investors are becoming more cautious, particularly when assessing projects in high-risk and remote regions across Africa.

Equipment availability is another growing concern.

"High-demand corridors offering transporters better commercial returns continue to attract relatively consistent transport capacity, while other routes are experiencing tighter vehicle availability and a reduced pool of reliable logistics providers," he said.

This imbalance is creating additional planning and scheduling challenges for project cargo movements across the region, particularly for projects requiring specialised equipment and carefully coordinated logistics.

While challenges remain, De Almeida believes the market is well positioned for further improvement.

"I expect a number of previously on-hold projects to commence if current market conditions stabilise over the next one to two months," he said. LV

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Recent Fr. Meyer's Sohn South Africa (FMS) projects reflect the growing demand for specialised logistics in the mining and renewable energy sectors.

Among them is the transport of equipment for a new silver mining project from South Africa to Australia, involving around 100 in-gauge containers and 21 out-of-gauge shipments, with the largest unit measuring five metres wide.

The company also managed the landside logistics for a 128 MW hybrid renewable energy project in the Western Cape, coordinating the movement of more than 600 containers through the Port of Cape Town and overseeing the full logistics chain from customs clearance and port operations to transport, craneage and on-site delivery.

Zimbabwe on a beneficiation drive

Zimbabwe's mining sector is driving demand for project cargo services for both mine expansion and beneficiation.

Mineral exports reached $3.4 billion in 2025, a 14% increase from the previous year.

At the same time, the government is enforcing a transition from bulk ore exports to high-value beneficiation.

In February, the government banned the export of raw minerals and lithium concentrates.

The ban includes all categories of unprocessed minerals – including lithium ore, chrome, nickel and platinum group metals.

> "In February, the government banned the export of raw minerals and lithium concentrates, including all categories of unprocessed minerals.

Then, in April, the Zimbabwe cabinet approved the Minerals Value Chain: From Mining to Beneficiation, Industrialisation and Exportation framework.

Presented by Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, the plan was based on four pillars, President Emmerson Mnangagwa told a media briefing.

The first is mineral-specific architecture and mandatory standards, which sets out legally binding minimum processing standards, including mandatory requirements for the issuance of export permits.

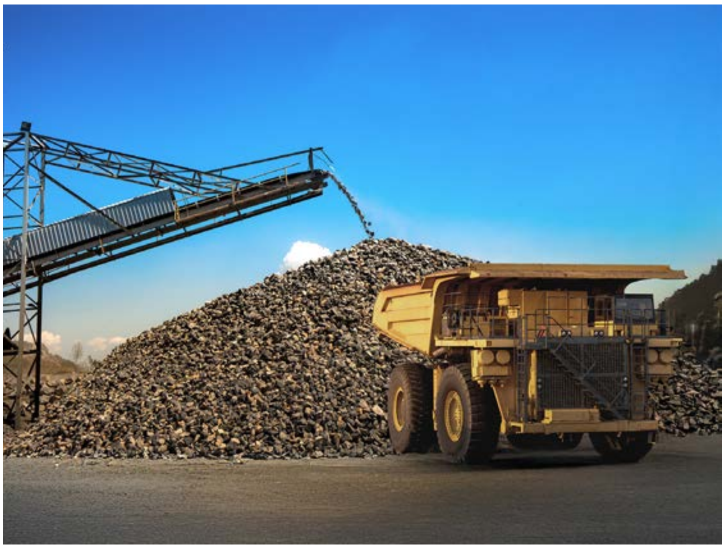
Second is a decentralised network of specialised analytical hubs for mineral certification, which will be co-located at national universities/ scientific institutions, with each institution serving as a dedicated referee for specific mineral clusters within the region.

The mine-to-market operational control system pillar will focus on smart tracking of mineral exports to secure value by preventing leakages and fraud through the adoption of a secure and real-time "mine-to-market" smart corridor.

Fourthly, new investors will be directed to eight specialised regional mineral hubs where they can share infrastructure and scale operations efficiently.

If rolled out successfully, the plan will attract large-scale investment in the mineral hubs, as well as in supporting infrastructure.

Mnangagwa said the four pillars would be supported by key enablers, including reliable energy and affordable power supply incorporating energy self-generation incentives for beneficiation projects.



Expanding mining projects and increased investment in beneficiation are creating new opportunities for project cargo specialists in Zimbabwe.

While the investments will require large-scale project cargo support, operators will want to see real progress before investing in equipment and resources.

An earlier mega government project, the Mines-to-Energy (Mapinga) industrial park value-addition complex along the Great Dyke, is reported to have stalled.

This is due to the main Chinese investor pulling out due to delays in land allocation and finance challenges, according to former Mines Ministry Permanent Secretary Pfungwa Kunaka.

It was to have included a lithium salt plant, graphite processing, nickel-chromium alloy smelter, nickel sulphate plant, coking facilities and two 300 MW power stations to support energy-intensive processing.

If more successful this time round, the Zimbabwean drive to add value to its minerals will see the region's ports bidding against each other for the project cargo business.

While Beira handles the bulk of exports, Durban is currently the primary gateway for heavy mining equipment.

It will face competition from Beira, Walvis Bay and possibly Maputo. ER

Clearing skills shortage adds to risks

An ageing (and retiring workforce), combined with the industry's seeming inability to attract and retain young talent, is affecting movers of project cargo.

"There's an issue in the industry; the knowledge and experience have gone," Carl Webb, managing director of Project Logistics Management (PLM), told *Freight News*.

"The majority of staff now in the clearing and forwarding industry are container orientated.

"Very few are project or breakbulk orientated.

"That is a problem because they cannot see the bigger picture," he said.

Delays in the movement of project cargo have been defined as a systemic project-delivery risk across the region.

A shortage of specialised clearing and forwarding skills adds to delays because customs clearance is more than an administrative task; it requires technical knowledge of customs regulations, trade documentation, tariff classification, valuation, permits and cross-border compliance.

In the SADC region, where shipments often move through several jurisdictions, limited access to experienced personnel can cause delays at every stage of the logistics chain.

> "Delays in the movement of project cargo have been defined as a systemic project-delivery risk across the region.
> – **Carl Webb**

The general skills shortage in the clearing and forwarding sector was raised at the inaugural Forwarding and Clearing Summit held in Johannesburg in June 2025.

Kgatile Nkala, executive manager for corporate services at the Transport Education Training Authority, said forwarding and clearing businesses "form the backbone of our trade logistics sector, yet many lack access to the training and development resources required to keep pace with global standards".

Challenges facing the sector have also been raised by Ingrid Du Buisson, chief executive officer of the Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF).

"In 2026, freight forwarding and customs compliance are already being dominated by tightened regulations, digital documentation mandates, real-time audits and geopolitical trade fragmentation.

"Forwarders face challenges in maintaining accuracy across multiple jurisdictions, integrating environmental and data governance rules and avoiding costly penalties for even minor errors.

"Compliance now affects routing, carrier selection, documentation timing and even customer communication," she says in an ICFF perspective article.

Research undertaken by the ICFF across the industry has identified and verified a list of critical skills that require development to address the challenges.

Most impact the movement of out-of-gauge cargo.

They include international shipping procedures, trade finance and documentation, customs documentation and compliance, customs regulations and updates, incoterms and trade agreements, freight management systems, forwarding control (logistics control), data and supply chain analytics, freight cost optimisation, dangerous goods regulations, client relationship (customer service), insurance and risk controller, cargo and warehouse controller, sales with regulatory structure and management and leadership. ER

Record Chinese EV exports constrain capacity

The switch to electric vehicles is reshaping breakbulk logistics through changing trade flows and the risks involved in transporting vehicles powered by large lithium-ion batteries compared to internal combustion engines.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), global EV sales are expected to reach 23 million in 2026, or 30% of all cars sold worldwide.

Electric models accounted for nearly one in 10 trucks sold worldwide in 2026.

Moving electric vehicles by sea and land requires specialised handling, stronger safety measures and compliance with changing regulations.

While rare, lithium-ion battery fires are difficult to extinguish.

Carriers are investing heavily in ro-ro vessels equipped with enhanced fire suppression systems, climate-controlled storage and onboard battery charging capabilities.

Carriers also have to manage capacity more closely due to the heavier vehicle profiles.

An electric hatchback weighs up to 400 kg more than a petrol equivalent, and an electric SUV up to 500 kg more.

There is also a major shift in supply lines.

Chinese automakers supplied 60% of electric cars sold worldwide, while European and North American automakers were each responsible for about 15% of global sales.

Chinese electric car exports doubled to a record high of more than 2.5m.

This growth is continuing through 2026, causing bottlenecks due to capacity constraints.

In response, Chinese electric vehicle assembler BYD is investing in its own fleet of pure car and truck carriers.

Shippers are also using standard shipping containers to move EVs to Europe and other regions.

The market is fluid.

In response to the imposition of protective trade tariffs in markets such as the United States, European Union, Türkiye and Mexico, Chinese EV companies are building assembly plants in high-demand countries.

This involves logistics demands from international ocean shipping to local supply chain routing.

Landside logistics is also affected, with ports and distribution hubs investing in charging points.

EV battery packs add significant weight to finished vehicles. That can affect trailer capacity, axle weight distribution, equipment selection and routing.

A road or rail carrier that handles conventional vehicles may not have the right equipment to manage EVs at scale.

Factors that need to be considered include the vehicle state of charge, vehicle mass, fire safety protocols, secure parking and storage, and inspection of both the battery and vehicle at origin and destination.

Another impact, according to PWC, is that there is a steady decline in the volumes of components shipped by automotive manufacturers as electric vehicles require a fraction of the parts needed for an internal combustion-driven vehicle. ER

> “ Chinese automakers supplied 60% of electric cars sold worldwide, compared to European and North American automakers’ 15% share.

Agricultural machinery imports growing

A combination of government incentives, the need to feed and provide jobs for a growing population, and export opportunities is supporting growth in agricultural machinery imports, mainly on ro-ro vessels.

Incentives include VAT and/or duty-free importation of agricultural and agro-processing equipment.

They vary between the different southern African countries and by HS code.

Imports include new and used machinery.

Freight News has seen large harvesters and other equipment being shipped through Walvis Bay, Maputo and Beira.

While official figures are not readily available, regional studies indicate that South Africa remains the largest importer of high-value agricultural machinery, followed by Tanzania, Angola and Zambia.

South Africa is also the only significant manufacturing and assembly hub within the region.

Most remaining SADC members rely almost entirely on imported tractors, combines, irrigation equipment and precision farming technologies because local manufacturing capacity is limited, according to an INDEXBOX report.

The report forecasts moderated but sustained growth for the region's agricultural machinery market through 2035, driven by food security needs, gradual mechanisation and technology adoption.

However, the demand for breakbulk services is expected to be uneven and constrained by what it calls macroeconomic, regulatory and logistical challenges.

Stakeholders' success will depend on managing this fragmentation, understanding local value chains and balancing cost efficiency with sustainability.

South Africa accounts for 50% of the market, while Angola is the second-largest market at 12 000 units, reflecting strong post-conflict recovery and government efforts to revive commercial farming.

In its National Development Plan 2023 – 2027, the Government of Angola is focusing on increasing the production of both cereals and livestock to reduce reliance on imports and diversify the economy away from its dependence on oil, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Zimbabwe follows with 5 300 units and a 10% share, supported by demand from large commercial farms and a growing base of mid-sized enterprises.

The government estimates that the country has over 50 000 medium- to large-scale farmers but only 25 000 functional tractors, far short of the 40 000 required for commercial cultivation, according to the US International Trade Administration.

Around 35 000 small-scale farmers have begun receiving post-harvest and mechanisation equipment valued at $2.1 million.

The mix of crops is also changing, according to INDEXBOX. Broadacre crops such as maize, wheat and soy remain central, but specialised sectors are creating new demand.

These include high-value horticulture and vineyards, which require low-power, narrow-track models, and forestry operations that use skidders and forwarders.

Government and NGO smallholder mechanisation projects are also opening an emerging segment for versatile, lower-horsepower tractors, it adds. ER

Maputo invests in digital trade platform

Digitalisation is becoming an increasingly important part of project cargo logistics, as ports seek to improve coordination between the multiple parties involved in moving oversized and specialised cargo.

Against this backdrop, the Port of Maputo has appointed Kale Logistics Solutions to implement Mozambique's first Port Community System (PCS), another step in strengthening its position as a regional logistics hub.

According to Osório Lucas, chief executive of the Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC), the PCS will create a smarter, more connected port ecosystem by enabling real-time collaboration and information sharing between stakeholders.

> "Our Port Community System will create a smarter and more connected port ecosystem.
> – Osório Lucas

"By enabling real-time collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, we are strengthening the Port of Maputo's role as a strategic gateway for regional and international trade," he said.

The PCS forms part of Mozambique's broader digital transformation programme and will provide a single digital platform linking shipping lines, terminal operators, customs authorities, transport providers, warehouses and other stakeholders. It is expected to improve information sharing, automate processes and enhance visibility across the port's operations.

The system will support vessel management, import and export cargo, truck and rail movements, customs interactions, warehouse operations and performance monitoring, while integrating with existing digital platforms, including the Customs Single Window and terminal operating systems.

Mozambique's Minister of Transport and Logistics, João Matlombe, said the initiative was a key step in modernising the country's logistics sector.

"Digital transformation is no longer an option; it is a prerequisite for competitiveness," he said. "As Mozambique's first Port Community System, this initiative positions the Port of Maputo as a pioneer and lays the foundation for the digital evolution of our national logistics network."

Lucas said the platform would help prepare Mozambique's logistics sector for the next generation of regional and international trade. LV

Flexibility key as shipping uncertainty prevails

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East continues to disrupt global shipping, with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) condemning attacks on commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz and warning that innocent seafarers are being placed in direct danger.

The heightened security risks, coupled with continued instability in and around the Red Sea, are forcing many project cargo operators to rely on longer but safer shipping routes to protect both cargo and crews.

Many vessels continue to bypass the Suez Canal in favour of the route around the Cape of Good Hope, avoiding areas where attacks on commercial shipping have occurred. While the diversion reduces security risks, it also adds significant transit time to already complex project cargo movements, affecting delivery schedules and increasing operational costs.

Project cargo experts *Freight News* spoke to said the longer voyages had reinforced the need for meticulous planning and closer collaboration between shippers, carriers and project logistics specialists. Operators are increasingly building greater flexibility into project schedules to accommodate delays, secure suitable vessel capacity and ensure critical cargo reaches project sites on time.

Despite the ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, demand for project cargo remains robust. Industry players say effective risk management and route planning have become essential to maintaining reliable supply chains in an increasingly unpredictable operating environment.

According to Lloyd's List Intelligence, more ships transited Hormuz in the last two weeks of June than in the previous month and a half. Traffic peaked on June 24 with 57 transits, which was roughly half the daily pre-war average. LV