

# Important Customer Advisory

## Middle East Operational Update: 04

12 March 2026

Dear Customer,

As the situation enters a new phase, we are seeing the first signs of a **controlled reopening** for selected Gulf cargo flows. One major carrier has introduced indirect, corridor-based solutions, signalling a shift from full suspension toward selective restoration. However, global capacity remains under heavy pressure.

### 1. Updated Risk Heat Map (Day 12)

Trade Lane	Disruption Risk	Cost Risk	Service Reliability
Asia – Middle East	● CRITICAL	● CRITICAL	● CRITICAL
Asia – Europe / ISC – Europe	● High	● High	● High
Transatlantic / Asia – USEC	● Elevated	● Elevated	● Elevated
Asia – US West Coast	● Moderate	● Moderate	● Moderate

### 2. Key Market Changes: "Controlled Reopening"

While direct port calls remain suspended by most, alternative operating models are emerging:

- **The Corridor Strategy:** One major carrier has reopened bookings via indirect routes:
  - **Sohar Corridor (Oman):** Feeder and land bridge support.
  - **Jeddah Corridor:** Serving Red Sea-linked Gulf distribution (FCL only; Consol/LCL remains a challenge).
  - **Aqaba / Mersin Corridors:** Utilized for Iraq-bound cargo.
  - **UAE Feeder Hubs:** Routing via Khor Fakkan / Fujairah into Jebel Ali / Khalifa.
- **"Ghost Blank" Impact:** The physical effect of earlier Cape rerouting is now hitting destination ports. Expect a period of reduced vessel arrivals followed by vessel bunching, leading to port congestion and slower equipment repositioning.
- **End of Voyage (EOV):** Several carriers have announced "End of Voyage" at alternative ports. ECU is actively negotiating to have this cargo delivered to accessible GCC ports.

### 3. Market Outlook & Cost Implications

The market is currently balancing structural tightness with selective restoration.

Trade Lane	Disruption Risk
Capacity Relief	Not immediate; space remains strictly controlled and restricted by cargo type.
Surcharges	Continued exposure to emergency fees, feeder costs, and inland transfer surcharges.
Rate Stability	Upward pressure remains; rates and routings require reconfirmation at the time of execution.
Reliability	Improving only in stages; dependent on carrier participation and gateway performance.

### 4. Strategic Recommendations for Clients

To protect cargo continuity during this volatile reopening phase, we recommend:

- **3-4 Week Booking Window:** Secure space and routing options by booking as early as possible.
- **Cargo Prioritization:** Clearly differentiate "Must-Ship" vs. "Can-Defer" cargo to ensure time-critical goods are prioritized for limited space.
- **Routing Flexibility:** Remain open to alternative gateways and feeder/land bridge combinations (e.g., via Sohar or Khor Fakkan).
- **Cost Reconfirmation:** All quotes and transit expectations must be reconfirmed at the booking stage due to fluctuating feeder and surcharge costs.

**Our Commitment:** ECU Worldwide remains fully engaged with terminals and carriers to secure the most viable routing options. We will continue to provide updates on "End of Voyage" notifications and surcharge adjustments as they are validated.

Best Regards,

