

The World Bank has placed the Port of Cape Town at the bottom of a list assessing global container port performance, at a position of 347 out of 351.

Cape Town ranks lower than all other ports in Africa which means it is less efficient than Djibouti, Abidjan, Beira, Maputo, Walvis Bay, Dar es Salam and Mombasa, according to a press release by the office of the Western Cape Minister of Finance and Economic Opportunities, David Maynier.

"While Cape Town is listed as the top-performing port in South Africa, this is no indication of success as all of South Africa's container ports including Durban, Gqeberha and Ngqura dominate the lower end of The Container Port Performance Index 2020 - a sad reflection of competitiveness of ports in South Africa," the statement said.

The Port of Cape Town is an important channel for exports and imports, and a major economic gateway for Cape Town, the Western Cape and South Africa.

"However, it continues to face severe congestion issues as a result of aging infrastructure and equipment, staffing shortages and weather disruptions," it said.

"The result is that vessels have been bypassing the Port of Cape Town or have been waiting up to seven days before they can berth which impacts businesses across the entire port logistics supply chain who experience significant delays and financial losses."

"In the end, our terminals at the Port of Cape Town are simply unable to service the volume of cargo that can potentially flow through Cape Town. And we are aware of the frustration and often the anger of the exporters and importers in the Western Cape."

The Minister's office said that for this reason, it has established a Port Task Team which has brought together stakeholders from across the port logistics value chain to find solutions to the challenges facing the Port of Cape Town.

"While this Task Team has achieved a number of successes to date, improving port efficiency will ultimately require an intervention by national government which is why we have called on President Ramaphosa to urgently visit the Port of Cape Town," it said.

In its inaugural edition, the Container Port Performance Index 2020 outlines the importance of globally competitive ports for emerging economies like South Africa: "container ports, as a result, have become critical nodes in global supply chains and are central to the growth stories and strategies of many emerging economies."

"In many cases, the development of high-quality port infrastructure, operated efficiently, has served as a prerequisite to successful, often export-led, growth strategies. Done well, port infrastructure provides the necessary confidence to facilitate investment in production and distribution systems, supporting the expansion of manufacturing and logistics, while creating employment and raising income levels."