

11 July 2018

Remarks – Jean Todt, United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety

High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Review of Implementation of SDG 11

3pm-6pm on 11 July in Conference Room 4

Intervention

Thank you Chair, and President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Marie Chatardová,

Thank you, moderator Aggarwala,

Commissioner Abeywardena,

Executive Director Maimunah Sharif,

Ms. Al Shaikh,

Distinguished guests,

I appreciate the opportunity to bring to your attention an important consideration when we speak about the implementation of SDG 11; an important consideration when we speak about transformation towards resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. (PAUSE) When we speak about no one being left behind.

As the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety, I would like to alert you that 1.3 million people die on the roads each year and an estimated half of these lives are lost in urban areas. What’s more, the majority of these lives are lost in middle- and low- income countries.

When we speak about no one being left behind, we must keep in mind that road crashes place a heavy burden on both national economies and households. Many of the victims are young, economically productive people, who are providing for their families and relatives.

It is estimated that road traffic deaths and injuries in low- and middle-income countries cause economic losses of up to 5% of GDP.

As urban areas continue to flourish and become rampantly inhabited around the world - by people, vehicles and new road networks, how do we ensure that road safety is a critical element for consideration when planning for sustainability?

In terms of concrete recommendations for governments, road safety must be considered as part and parcel of sustainable mobility and transport. Thus, it is not yet another additional criterion, but a basic condition for liveable cities.

Sustainable transport and mobility in the urban setting require a combination of policy elements, including safe, reliable and affordable public transport, investment in infrastructure for motorized and non-motorized transport as well as environmentally friendly, efficient and multimodal transport options.

In addition, these policies must align with urban and spatial planning, land management, housing, environmental and other relevant policies that many have already highlighted in the forum today.

Transport and mobility even with all of these elements can only be sustainable if they are also safe.

Unfortunately, safety is frequently a missing consideration during the planning and evaluation of urban transport projects and policies around the world. Governments must therefore prioritize building local technical capacity in this regard. This includes acceding to and implementing the UN conventions on traffic rules, road signs and signals as well as on vehicle regulations, which also address emissions.

We know that urbanization is strongly correlated with motorization, including the rise of motorbike and moped use. It is important that we implement strategies that decouple growth of mobility from the growth of road crashes. In urban areas, it is particularly important to prioritize the safety of pedestrians, who are amongst the most vulnerable road users.

I was pleased to see road safety addressed in the New Urban Agenda, thanks to the work of UN Habitat. In measuring the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, I hope that safety is not only a theoretical consideration for sustainable transport and mobility but also a measurable outcome.

For a sustainable city, it is absolutely essential to keep its habitants healthy and for this we must strive for a massive reduction in road fatalities and injuries.

We have already witnessed in a number of countries and cities that this is possible. What we need is cooperation and partnerships, especially through integrated transport and urban planning at the national and urban levels. By all means, it is essential to promote the development of mass transit, which must of course be safe, as well as to better integrate safety considerations into transport planning.

Wouldn't it be an achievement if in 2030, we could report that mobility and transport is safe in all the cities around the world, or at least in a growing number of them?

There have been proven positive results in cities when safety is prioritized:

- Developed cities such as New York City, Minneapolis and Copenhagen have reported safety improvements overall. In addition, they have installed quality infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians - protecting the most vulnerable road users while promoting multimodal transport options.
- In developing cities such as Bogota in Colombia and Ahmedabad in India implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System – together with quality infrastructure- have also seen a marked improvement in safety.
- Addressing exposure to road traffic fatalities by promoting fewer vehicle miles travelled has also shown to be effective in decreasing collisions and road traffic fatalities in cities such as London.
- European cities with well-developed and safe public transport should not be forgotten either, when we speak about models to follow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

In closing, I would like to re-state SDG target 11.2, I quote: “To provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons by 2030”

Achieving this target would mean a beautiful reality for sustainable mobility and transport.

One that includes road safety as a key consideration in urban planning and infrastructure design. One that addresses vulnerable road users such as children, cyclists and pedestrians. One that provides a future where every child, regardless of where they live, can have a safe journey to and from school, whether it is by foot, public transport, or as passengers in motor vehicles.

One that builds cities which are well planned, connected environments that facilitate economic growth, reduce negative environmental impact of transport, increase accessibility and enhance health and safety of its dwellers.

I think we all agree that it is only by making road safety an important consideration, that we will be able to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Thank you