

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION



Statement by
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At the
“Global Sustainable Transport Conference”

Plenary session
26-27 November 2016
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

[5 minutes]

Secretary-General,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished participants,

On behalf of the UNECE, it is a great pleasure to address you this morning. I would like to thank the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting this important conference, and for the warm hospitality.

The Danish author of fairy tales, Hans Christian Andersen, 170 year ago said “to travel is to live”. Today to travel is to survive for too many people, but traveling, trading, transporting is also key to life all over our planet. It is key to people, prosperity, peace and to partnerships. It is key to reaching the sustainable development goals.

This is why we must strengthen sustainable transport throughout the world and do so based on transport agreements and transport law.

This is what member States in UNECE’s Inland Transport Committee

(ITC) has strived to achieve during the past almost 70 years. The result is 58 UN transport conventions and legal agreements and numerous technical standards in support of sustainable transport, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and the technological revolution ongoing in the transport sector.

I sometimes like to say that, although some of you may not know us, UNECE is the best-branded organization in the world. The reason for that is our World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations - a unique worldwide regulatory body where experts come together to develop vehicle standards, and these standards are in every one of your cars. Notice the letter “E” in all windows on all wheels, of all vehicles, on the seat belt, child seat, emergency brakes...The “E” stands for “Economic Commission for Europe”, or as we say it today “E for Excellence”. And these standards are very important, because applying them makes vehicles greener, safer and more efficient.

Another critical aspect of our work is enhanced connectivity. Our Euro-Asian Transport Links project and our key conventions like the TIR Convention and the Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods are key to allow landlocked developing countries access to markets. Use them to ensure that we leave no country and no person behind.

Transport cannot be sustainable if it is not safe – and for too many of our citizens it is not. Every year 1.25 million people are killed, and around 50 million injured, in road traffic crashes which makes it one of the most pressing health emergencies and development issues of our time. Joining and implementing the key UN conventions on traffic rules and signs, vehicle regulations, inspections and transport of dangerous goods can help significantly to improve road safety. Based on the request in UN General-Assembly resolution 70/260 and together with the UN Secretary-Generals Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, we here at the conference launch for consultation a proposal to establish a UN Road Safety Fund.

Nowadays, technology advances at a dizzying rate. The past few years have seen the rise of innovations such as automated vehicles, intelligent transport systems, and advanced systems for freight transport and logistics. But we need a regulatory framework to deploy these innovations safely and efficiently. This framework should handle everything from horse-driven carriages and bicycles to autonomous vehicles and drone supported transport systems. It is a complex challenge, and one we need to address urgently – and our member States have started to do so – addressing issues as automated driving. As technological innovations continue to shape us, ITC will continue to be at the forefront of policy, technical and regulatory development, to help governments create the smartest and most sustainable transport systems for their citizens.

With the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, we have one global agenda - a global mandate for all countries – and for all of the UN. UNECE is proud to work closely with all relevant UN organizations, not least with the four other UN Regional Commissions. Together we recently published the flagship publication “Transport for Sustainable Development: We hope you will find it inspiring and useful.

The Inland Transport Committee carries almost 70 years of experience in connecting countries, driving progress and impacting lives by developing norms, standards and conventions that guide and help all users of our roads, rivers and railways. The majority of these instruments are available for all countries in the world. We encourage you to join them, use them, implement them in support of sustainable transport, and we are ready to help all countries in doing so in cooperation between all five regional commissions. And we invite you all to the 70th anniversary session of the ITC in February 2017 to continue these fruitful discussions.

Thank you.