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Opening Remarks at the Global Sustainable Transport Conference

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 26 November 2016 at 10:00 AM

Your Excellency, Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan,
Your Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to speak at this first-ever global conference dedicated to sustainable transport.

I wish to thank the UN Secretary-General for his visionary leadership in convening this Conference.

Five years ago, the Secretary-General identified sustainable transport as a building block for fighting climate change and advancing sustainable development.

Sustainable transport has been an integral part of the Secretary-General's strategy on climate action. It is now part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On behalf of my UN colleagues, thank you, Secretary-General, for your outstanding leadership.

I also join the Secretary-General in conveying our deepest appreciation to the President and Government of Turkmenistan for hosting this important event, and for your excellent collaboration in organising this Conference.

Turkmenistan has been a leading champion of sustainable transport at the United Nations. Indeed, it leads by example in building sustainable transport infrastructure.

We look forward to your continued leadership and commitment to sustainable development.

Our thanks also go to the Heads of State and Ministers, and to the delegates who are here with us today.

Your participation bears testimony to the growing recognition of the fundamental role of sustainable transport in achieving sustainable development and fighting climate change.

This Conference is of great importance as it is drawing global attention to the critical need for sustainable transport.

Excellencies,

Our transport systems are characterized by unsustainable practices.

They hinder access to basic services and markets, entrench marginalization, and deepen social inequities.

Sustainable transport, on the other hand, helps create the systems and infrastructure needed to build a sustainable future.

At the heart of sustainable transport lie the three dimensions of sustainable development.

We must ensure that the services and infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods are provided in a manner that is safe, affordable, accessible, efficient, and resilient, while minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts.

That is sustainable transport, as defined by the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport.

Sustainable transport provides fair and affordable access - to trade, jobs, markets, education, health care and other services that improve lives.

It empowers women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

It uses energy efficiently and it minimizes greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts.

Simply put, sustainable transport drives sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015, recognizes the global need to enhance sustainable transport systems.

Sustainable transport is included as a target in SDG 11 and is directly linked to other SDGs and targets, such as the SDGs on health, energy, resilient infrastructure, sustainable consumption and production and climate change.

In fact, advances in sustainable transport can contribute to the attainment of all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies,

This Conference brings together Governments, United Nations system and other international organizations, multilateral development banks, the business sector and civil society, to set a new direction for global transport. A direction that fosters prosperity and well-being while protecting the environment.

In our deliberations today and tomorrow, we will address various topics, including rural and urban transport, multi-modal transport, public transport, the links of sustainable transport to climate change and energy, road safety, financing, and specific needs of countries in special situations.

All modes of transport - road, rail, aviation, ferry and maritime - will be addressed, in both developed and developing countries, in landlocked and transit countries, as well as in small island developing States.

We will also explore the strong links between sustainable transport and implementation of the SDGs.

Our dialogue will further serve as a platform for exchanging experiences, sharing lessons learned, and making recommendations on policy frameworks for sustainable transport.

I hope such a dialogue will further enhance regional and multilateral cooperation for sustainable transportation systems.

The Secretary-General will issue, upon the conclusion of the Conference, a statement capturing the key messages and policy recommendations.

A compilation of partnerships and other initiatives, both pre-registered and announced during the Conference, will also be published.

The UN Secretariat will be responsible for following up on these partnerships.

Excellencies,

For the sake of present and future generations, we must have sustainable transport systems and infrastructure, as well as sustainable transportation practices.

Our shared future will depend on safe, environmentally-friendly, energy efficient, inclusive, clean and sustainable transport and transit systems.

We need sustainable transport to carry forward sustainable development.

Working together, we can make it happen.

Thank you
