

Global Sustainable Transport Conference

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Statement by

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be given the opportunity to speak about the population dimension of sustainable transport.

Seen through the lens of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcome of the ICPD Beyond 2014 review process, it is clear that effective and sustainable transport plays a crucial role in achieving the goals set out in the ICPD Programme of Action adopted by Member States in 1994 and reconfirmed in 2014, and implementing the Agenda 2030.

The population dynamics of the contemporary world depend on effective transport – to move to a city, or gain access to it; to move in advance of or in reaction to conflict or climate-related hazards; or to move between countries.

The world has seen a major increase in the migration and mobility of people, within and between borders. There are more than 230 million international migrants, including over 21 million refugees. Close to 41 million people are internally displaced as a result of conflicts. An additional 20 million people have been displaced by climate-related hazards, mostly temporary and to locations nearby.

Within countries, the boundaries between urban and rural areas are also increasingly porous, as people move between the two, along with goods and services. Rapid urbanization is occurring in many countries especially in Asia and Africa, often driven by internal migration from rural areas.

When transport breaks down or is insufficient, the cost can be measured in people's well-being or even their lives.

For pregnant women, transport is often a matter of life and death. Poor maternal health outcomes, including death, are linked to delays in reaching care, including emergency obstetric care, due to distance to reach health facilities, availability and cost of transport, poor roads and infrastructure and geographical terrain.

In many countries, healthcare reforms are focused on technologies and human resources, but without proper transport, including access to emergency transport services like ambulances, many people will not be able to reach hospitals and clinics, even if those facilities are of the highest quality.

It is therefore vital that transport solutions prioritize effective connections between rural areas and health care nodes, many of which are in primary or secondary cities. Target 11.a of the SDGs emphasizes the importance of urban, peri-urban and rural linkages.

Within urban areas, the barriers people face to accessing effective care are very different. They are about traffic, affordability, overcrowding and uneven distribution of facilities and transportation within cities.

And within the population – within the groups specified for disaggregation in SDG Target 17.18 – inequalities in access to transport are both significant and particular. Transport systems that properly take into account gender, age and disability are essential, especially as populations are ageing around the world.

Where transport systems respond to the needs of women, the older persons, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations, they can help break down social exclusion and enable people to access services, including healthcare and education, and employment.

This helps boost economies. And it helps ensure that none is left behind.

I thank you.