

WHO

**GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CONFERENCE**

**Ashgabad, Turkmenistan**

**26-27 November 2017**

[27 NOV 2016  
10:00 - 13:00]

**Statement of Dr. Haik NIKOGOSIAN, World Health Organization Regional Director Special Representative**

Honourable Chairperson, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

The World Health Organization warmly congratulates the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting this first ever global conference on sustainable transport. Shortly more than a year from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this event represents a major opportunity to reflect on the pivotal positive role that healthy and sustainable transport policies may play in achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease, are collectively responsible for almost 70% of all deaths worldwide. Addressing NCDs is one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. However, it will be impossible for the health sector to achieve this goal by just focusing on traditional health promotion strategies. As recognized in the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, addressing NCDs is a major global challenge, which threatens economies of many Member States, increases inequalities, and requires the coordinated effort and engagement of all sectors of society to generate effective responses<sup>1</sup>.

The WHO fully recognizes that healthy and sustainable transport policies, integrated with healthy and sustainable urban planning, can deliver multiple benefits, turning major challenges into major opportunities. For example, a shift towards efficient and clean public transport, coupled with the promotion of safe walking and cycling, could meet our needs to access services, jobs, education and amenities while at the same time reducing ambient air pollution, the single most important environmental threat to our health, and a major cause of NCDs, which in 2012 was responsible for 3 million deaths globally<sup>2</sup>. Additional huge benefits could be accrued from the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gas and noise, as well as from the opportunity of reintegrating or maintaining physical activity, a major protective factor for NCDs, in everybody’s daily life. Improving road safety, which remains the leading cause of death worldwide among young people aged 10-24 years, delivering higher efficiency in the use of energy and natural resources, as well as providing new opportunities for the creation of jobs in the green economy and for the regeneration of the quality of our living environments make these policy changes all the more attractive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What I am saying here, comforted by a rapidly growing body of compelling scientific evidence, is however not completely new! Since 20 years, WHO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe are working together to support Member States in making the transition towards healthy and sustainable transport policies with multiple health, environment and societal dividends. The Transport,

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un\\_ncd\\_summit2011/political\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/political_declaration_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.who.int/gho/phe/outdoor\\_air\\_pollution/burden\\_text/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/phe/outdoor_air_pollution/burden_text/en/)

Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), jointly serviced by the WHO and UNECE, is an example of a pioneering policy platform offered to the ministries of transport, health and environment of the pan-European Region to come together and learn from each other, develop innovative tools, forge new partnerships and promote research to attain THE PEP vision of “Green and healthy mobility and transport for sustainable livelihoods for all”<sup>3</sup>. At the global level, the UN Road Safety Collaboration is another important example of collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions. The Collaboration aims to facilitate international cooperation and to strengthen global and regional coordination among UN agencies and other international partners to implement UN General Assembly Resolutions and the recommendations of the World report on road traffic injury prevention<sup>4</sup>. I am delighted to see here today Mr Christian Friis Bach, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, our key partner in these endeavours.

THE PEP and the UN Road Safety Collaboration are very tangible examples of how we can make a difference by working together. I wish to thank wholeheartedly those of you, who have been working with us and supporting our joint work over time, and warmly invite you all to join in these efforts that will contribute to ensure “the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.”<sup>5</sup>

Thanks for your attention.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/thepep/documents/D%C3%A9claration\\_de\\_Paris\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/thepep/documents/D%C3%A9claration_de_Paris_EN.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/about/en/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E)