

Statement to the Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development – Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting

Transport theme

Tuesday, March 1, 2011, 10:00 am

Mr/Madame Chairperson,

Since the last session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, Canada has continued to work actively with its domestic and international partners to move people and goods with efficiency, safety, security and with environmental responsibility.

Canada recently released its first three-year Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, which will strengthen the way in which the Government of Canada promotes environmental sustainability, and it makes important improvements to the transparency and accountability of environmental decision-making.

Under this Strategy, there are 38 commitments related to the transportation sector under the themes of Addressing Climate Change and Air Quality; Maintaining Water Quality and Availability; Protecting Nature; and additional commitments under the theme of Shrinking the Environmental Footprint – Beginning with Government.

Canada is also taking action on a regulatory front to curb emissions from the transportation sector.

Domestically, Canada has published greenhouse gas emission regulations which establish progressively more stringent fleet average GHG emissions standards for new cars and light trucks sold in model years 2011 through 2016. The government also announced the development of greenhouse gas emission regulations for new on-road heavy-duty vehicles of the 2014 to 2018 model years. It is expected that proposed regulations would be published in 2011.

Air pollutant emission regulations for the rail industry are also being developed in alignment with the United States and it is expected that they will take effect in 2011.

In Canada, there are regulations to control air pollutant emissions from various classes of new on- and off-road vehicles and engines.

Canada has established regulations that control sulphur levels in gasoline and in on-road diesel fuel. There are also regulations that control the levels of sulphur in diesel fuel used in off-road, rail and marine engines.

In addition, Canada supports renewable fuels development and has in place regulations requiring an average renewable fuel content of five per cent in gasoline

As well, on February 10, 2011, the government announced that it would move forward with the requirement for an average 2 percent renewable content in diesel fuel and heating oil.

Internationally, Canada supports the development of international standards and recommended practices within the International Maritime Organization and International Civil Aviation Organization concerning greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutant emissions from marine and aviation sources, respectively.

Indeed, the Government of Canada continues to work with the United States and France to implement a designated Emission Control Area for North American coastal areas, under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization.

In addition to reducing air emissions from the transport sector, the Government of Canada also strives to protect the marine environment by contributing to the reduction of water pollution from transportation sources.

Canada supports international standards and enhance domestic regulations to prevent pollution from vessels operating in Canadian waters, including the implementation and enforcement of international standards through inspections and aerial surveillance.

In addition, we adopt measures to further protect the environment from the introduction of invasive species into Canada's water from vessels operating both domestically and internationally, and work towards compatible approaches in Canada and the United States to manage ballast water discharges in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway system.

Canada also advances the development of a national regime to prepare for and respond to marine incidents involving hazardous and noxious substances, and work towards establishing a liability and compensation regime.

Reliability and sustainability are cornerstones of a strong transportation system. Canada recognizes that environmental goals and economic goals are not mutually exclusive. A more efficient transportation system for example, not only helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also is important for the economy. There may be an opportunity for the UNCSD process to make linkages with the ongoing international work on Green Growth.

With respect to the suggested policy elements and actions found at the end of the transport theme report, Canada recognizes the need to consider that many countries' transportation systems are managed across several levels of government and that varying challenges and opportunities exist. This being said, we suggest that less prescriptive options would allow countries to pick and choose the most appropriate tools depending upon their particular situation.

As noted at the 2008 International Transport Forum, approaches should be built on a package of policy measures which include: technology development, strengthened research into new technologies and alternative fuels, increased use of information technology and integrated mobility management as well as a wide variety of non-technology policy tools.

We understand that the policy options noted in the paper are mainly characterized by system efficiency. While important, these should be complemented by fleet and fuel efficiency policies to ensure a broader range of options.

The overall policy options and measures identified in the transport paper are generally lacking from a cost-benefit and/or technical perspective. Several would require significant and costly infrastructure investment before they would be viable on a large scale.

In summary, Canada hopes that the above considerations are taken into account in the May deliberations.

Canada remains committed to working with our domestic partners and the international community to address the challenges we face in working towards a more sustainable transportation system. I look forward to today's discussions.

Thank you.