

**Intervention by Major Groups NGOs  
CSD 18, Round table on TRANSPORT**

*Thursday, May 13th 2010*

Thank you mister co-chair,

Allow me to start on a personal note. Some years ago I visited the United States and stayed with friends in Orlando, which is a metropolitan area with a population of two million people. Literally, the only way to get to their home was by car. Any other means of transport was non-existing or structurally not allowed. As an example, their neighborhood had no walking paths, **thereby making walking illegal**. So the city planners in the land of freedom had restricted the choice of transport to just one – and one of the most environmentally polluting at that.

Of course, this was not by any means an extraordinary experience, but this is exactly the reason why it is suitable to highlight the next few points – which resonate with several earlier interventions, for example the one of the Major Group Local Authorities.

First of all, spatial planning is crucial. This is clearly a question of travel miles, economic, environmental and social costs. It is also a question of access. Here in Manhattan, there are almost as many people living as in greater Orlando, but in less than 1% of the Orlando metropolitan area. Obviously, high density building allows for more efficient and collective transport, and access equity. But there's more to the picture of spatial planning. For example, transport infrastructure has also major consequences for plant and animal life, biodiversity and ecological functions. Roads can divide habitats, interfere with migration routes, increase accidents involving wildlife, and potentially devastate the habitat's carrying capacity for species.

The second lesson to be learned from my experience is that individual transport is still prioritized over collective transport, and motorized transport is privileged above non-motorized forms of transport. All too often, priority still is given to cars, which can easily make using a bicycle too dangerous to even consider; leading to more people actually needing cars. Last week, I had the privilege to cycle through Manhattan, but I was a bit doubtful about the safety of my undertaking.

Moreover, and this relates to the third question, what is almost completely forgotten in our transport conversation is that animals are still an important source of transportation for goods and people – and they will likely to continue to be so in the next decades or so, especially in rural areas of developing countries. To improve these animal-based transport services, provisions should be in place to provide adequate shelter, water, food and access to veterinary care. Such improvements are typically relatively very low cost, but can make a substantial difference to achieving development goals.

Finally, my example shows that transport is also all about culture. The total absence of any free choice in transportation matters was to my American friends the exact opposite, as to have a car was precisely that: the epitome of freedom. This means that alongside changing planning and changing modes of transportation we must change the way we think and experience transport, change public and political perceptions, so that new, sustainable forms of planning and collective and non-motorized forms of transport become something to aspire to – and unsustainable forms will be discouraged and restricted.

Thank you very much.