



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Workshop on Transport and Climate Change
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Bangkok

OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Barry Cable, Director, Transport Division, ESCAP

*Excellencies
Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this workshop on Transport and Climate Change, an event which has been jointly organized by ADB and ESCAP with a view to focussing our attention on transport issues in the run-up to Ad Hoc Working Group Meetings under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Asia and the Pacific has witnessed remarkable economic growth over recent years, with developing economies growing at an average 7 per cent annually, prior to the recent economic downturn.

The provision of transport services, along with lower barriers to trade and investment, and lower information technology costs are widely acknowledged as the principal driving forces behind this growth and development.

In this era of globalization, the provision of efficient transport plays a crucial role in every country's ability to develop its international trade, enhance the competitiveness of its agricultural and manufacturing industries and attract foreign investment.

Transport does this by providing access: access to economic and social opportunities, including markets, employment, education, health and other services, that are fundamental for economic and social progress

Measured in terms of development, the achievements of improved transport have already benefitted populations in coastal areas, particularly near seaports. There remains therefore a substantial transport task in reaching out to large populations in deeper hinterlands as well as landlocked countries to encourage inclusive prosperity.

At the same time, the impacts of the transport sector on the environment, both local and global, are a growing source of concern. The total amount of CO₂ emissions by the transport sector in the ESCAP region was 1.5 billion tons in 2005. This compares with almost two billion

tons in North America and a little more than one billion tons in Europe. Within the transport sector, the road transport mode is by far the largest contributor to CO₂ emissions in the region, releasing 1223.9 million tons of CO₂, compared to only 64.3 million tons from railways, providing strong support for the advocacy of modal shift from road to rail.

Given the relevance of the transport sector, both in terms of socio-economic benefits, as well as environmental impacts climate change considerations will need to be integrated into transport policies.

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Since the inception of the Trans-Asian Railway network five decades ago, ESCAP has worked with member States to promote railway development in the region. With the recent entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway on 11 June 2009 ESCAP is promoting a modal shift to rail transport in the region, thereby contributing to low-carbon development. At the same time, ESCAP is advocating “green growth” as a balanced approach to sustainable production and consumption that can meet the needs of development while fully integrating climate change considerations.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), established by the UN General Assembly to ensure follow-up of major global sustainable development commitments, meets annually in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues. Transport is one of the thematic issues chosen for the 18th and 19th sessions, to take place in 2010 and 2011. ESCAP was given the mandate to coordinate the CSD process in Asia and the Pacific, and will be convening a Regional Implementation Meeting from 30 November to 1 December 2009 in Bangkok. This event is expected to highlight, among others, priority areas for achieving sustainable transport in the region.

Moreover, ESCAP is organizing the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport, to be held in Bangkok, from 14 to 18 December 2009. The central focus of the Forum is sustainable and inclusive transport with a specific item on transport and the environment.

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It is expected that the outcomes of today’s event will feed into these processes and help promote a low-carbon high-growth development path for Asia and the Pacific.

In concluding I would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Bangkok.

Thank you for your attention.