

**United Nations Forum on Climate Change Mitigation,
Fuel Efficiency and Sustainable Urban Transport**

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Welcome Address by
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Chairman of the eighteenth session of the
United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Chairman of the up-coming eighteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development I welcome you all at the opening of this inter-sessional expert-level meeting, the *United Nations Forum on Climate Change Mitigation, Fuel Efficiency and Sustainable Urban Transport*.

I am indeed grateful to the Government of the Republic of Korea and its Ministry of Knowledge Economy, the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs, and the Korea Energy Management Corporation for co-hosting this event.

I am also grateful to the Korea Energy Economics Institute, the Korea Transport Institute and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its Division for Sustainable Development for jointly organizing a very comprehensive and interesting programme.

I believe that this Forum is attended by experts and participants from no less than 25 countries and international organizations. Thus, this Forum provides an excellent opportunity for us to learn from each other, share information and experiences, assess challenges, review progress in implementation, and discuss policy options that can make urban transport systems more economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

This Forum is organized at the right time. In only six weeks from now, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will meet in New York for its eighteenth session. The agenda of the Commission includes a comprehensive review of implementation in the five thematic areas of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Sustainable development requires adequate and efficient, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound transport systems, as envisaged in

decision 9/3 adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its ninth session in 2001 and reiterated by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002.

This Forum is indeed an excellent opportunity to review progress, trends and issues, achievements and remaining challenges in particular with regard to urban transport systems. I believe that the proceedings of this Forum can provide valuable inputs for an informed discussion on transport at CSD-18 in May.

This Forum is also organized in the right place. Seoul is a mega-city with a population of more than 10 million inhabitants. For some of you this may be your first ever visit to this city. I have only arrived yesterday, but I have already witnessed how well, punctual and effective urban public transport services are organized in this city. Light rail and bus networks offer frequent services at affordable rates for all. Inhabitants of Seoul and its suburbs can travel comfortably from any location in the city to any other by clean, safe and affordable public transport.

I commend the Government of the Republic of Korea for its success in achieving a model “green growth” capital city which offers opportunities and improved quality of life for all citizens. I greatly appreciate the opportunity that we can learn from the many practical experiences of the Republic of Korea in managing public and private urban transport in a sustainable manner.

Please allow me to also share with you a few personal reflections on the main topic of our Forum, the sustainability of urban transport systems:

Transport and mobility are important prerequisites for economic activity, education, access to goods and services, income generation, recreation and welfare. However, transport also causes many negative environmental impacts.

We are all aware that the urban population will continue to grow rapidly, in particular in the developing countries. Many people aspire to own their own cars, and - indeed - motorized transport has grown very rapidly, making transport one of the largest oil consuming, air polluting and greenhouse gas emitting sectors.

In most urban areas the available space for transport is limited. Growing private motor vehicle use leads to congestion, increased travel time, inefficient energy use, growing urban air pollution and negative public health effects, in particular for the urban poor.

Financing of urban public transport systems is a very important issue, and I am pleased to see that our programme dedicates a special session to this topic. I welcome the participation of the representatives of the international financing institutions in our discussions.

There is obviously a great need for urgent action to modernize, improve and expand urban public transport systems, in particular in the developing country cities.

The private sector has an important role to play in the planning, construction, operation, management and maintenance of urban public transport systems. However, the provision of public transport services and its pricing also needs to be effectively regulated. Access to affordable public transport services by the urban poor is a great concern in many developing countries.

Many studies have shown that the aggregate value of economic and public benefits by far exceed the costs of public transport systems. Where necessary, public transport systems may be subsidized for the public benefits they generate.

There is also an urgent need for greater international cooperation in supporting public transport investments in developing countries. I hope that the up-coming CSD session will clearly emphasize this concern.

A rapid expansion of urban public transport infrastructure and services, and an accelerated shift from private to public transport modes could potentially reduce the projected growth in transport energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in a very significant way.

I am indeed pleased to see that the Forum addresses not only technical aspects but also policy issues, and that it relates to both, public and private transport. In fact, efforts to enhance, develop and make greater use of public transport systems also need to be supported by a pro-active set of policies that encourage greater efficiency of energy use in private vehicles and higher levels of consumer awareness of the environmental impact of their chosen mode of transport.

More sustainable urban public transport systems can only be achieved if there is a coherent strategy and good inter-institutional cooperation at national and local levels. It is essential that all concerned ministries work together, including Ministries in charge of urban and land use planning, transport and infrastructure development, economics and public finance, trade, and –of course – the environment.

Decision making on sustainable urban transport rests to a large degree with local and city governments. Therefore, I also very much welcome the participation of several Mayors of Asian cities, who are joining us here today, and who will commit to the principles and sign up to the *Kyoto Declaration on Environmentally Sustainable Urban Transport* this evening.

In closing, I would like to thank all participants and experts for their respective preparations and substantive contributions to this event, and I wish all of you an interesting and informative deliberation.

Thank you.