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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions: transport

Global attention to sustainable transport development**

Summary

Sustainable transport drives poverty alleviation and sustainable development. There are a number of SDG targets directly linked to transport, including SDG 3 on health, SDG 7 on energy, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure, SDG 11 on sustainable cities, SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production and SDG 14 on oceans, seas and marine resources. In addition, sustainable transport enables the implementation of nearly all the SDGs through connectivity-access impacts.

With recognition of such comprehensive role of sustainable transport, the United Nations convened the first ever Global Conference on Sustainable Transport in Ashgabat on 26-27 November 2016. The Conference was attended by three Heads of State, one Head of Government, six Deputy Prime Ministers, two Foreign Affairs Ministers, 42 Ministers and Vice-Ministers of transport and infrastructure. Some 200 business and civil society representatives, along with representatives of over 20 intergovernmental organisations and the United Nations entities participated in the event.

During the Conference, the Government of Turkmenistan deposited instruments of accession to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports.

At the Conference, the secretariat launched its study report entitled “Making the road sector a key vehicle for sustainable development”, which recommended to establish an international road organization to effectively address the sector’s challenges in road safety, emission, pollution, security, cross-border efficiency and intelligent system under sustainable development agenda.

The information paper presents the prominent outcome document of the Conference.

* E/ESCAP/73/L.1.

** This information paper is being issued without formal editing.

Ashgabat Statement on Commitments and Policy Recommendations of the Global Sustainable Transport Conference (*ADVANCE/UNEDITED*)

1. As an integral part of the United Nations commitment and strategy to advance sustainable development and combat climate change, the UN Secretary-General convened the first-ever Global Sustainable Transport Conference on 26-27 November 2016, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.
2. The Conference - an initiative welcomed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 70/197, which was initiated by Turkmenistan and adopted unanimously by the Member States - builds on the outcomes of earlier intergovernmental deliberations, including the Future We Want, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs, the Vienna Programme of Action for the LLDCs, the SAMOA Pathway for SIDS, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda.
3. The Conference brought together important stakeholders from Governments, UN system, Multilateral Development Banks, the business sector, and civil society in a series of forward-looking and action-oriented dialogues that emphasized the enabling power of sustainable transport and its multiple roles in supporting the achievement of the SDGs.
4. The Conference addressed all modes of transport—road, rail, aviation, ferry and maritime, including both passengers and freight, and accorded priority attention to the concerns of developing countries, particularly those of Africa, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
5. Participants reaffirmed commitment to enhancing the role of sustainable transport in connecting people and communities to jobs, schools and health care and in the delivery of goods and services to rural and urban communities, thus providing all with equal opportunities and leaving no one behind.
6. Deliberations at both plenary and thematic sessions demonstrated that sustainable transport drives inclusive growth and access to local, regional and global markets, and powers growth of trade and tourism. The transport sector also makes a significant contribution to national GDP, employment and local and national revenues.
7. For transport systems to fully fulfil their multiple enabling functions in advancing sustainable development, all stakeholders need to work together to ensure the availability of safe, universally accessible, reliable, secure, affordable, fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly, low-carbon, and climate-resilient transport services, systems, infrastructure and operations, with due attention to local, national and regional circumstances.
8. While there are various transport challenges facing the world today, including safety and security challenges, there are also tremendous opportunities to re-think the current, largely unsustainable, transport policies, and to fast-track best practices to a new paradigm of sustainable transport in particular in developing countries.
9. All stakeholders need to work together to put in place integrated multi-modal transport and transit systems and corridors that optimize the comparative advantages of each mode of transport to achieve sustainable

transport of passengers and freight within and between countries, including through regional and sub-regional connectivity, integration, and harmonization of transport systems and frameworks. In this regard, there was recognition of the need to revive the ancient Silk Road with modern technology and advanced management of transit corridors. The “One Belt One Road” initiative was welcomed.

10. In developing multi-modal transport systems, it is necessary to take into account road, rail, maritime, ferry and air transport, as well as non-motorized transport such as cycling and walking, and emphasis should be placed on low-carbon-based-energy modes of transport and an increased reliance on interconnected transport networks, including public transport systems, for seamless and “door-to-door” mobility and connectivity of people and goods.

11. In this regard, there is need to assist developing countries, in particular African countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, to “leapfrog” to sustainable transport, including in strengthening policy planning, standard setting and regulatory frameworks.

12. Participants further reaffirmed commitment to support efforts to provide communities in rural areas in developing countries with access to major roads, rail lines, and public transport options that enable access to economic and social activities and opportunities in cities and towns and that unleash productivity and competitiveness of rural entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers. Addressing these circumstances will be among the essential steps needed to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise to “leave no one behind”.

13. Participants also underlined the commitment to expand the public transport sector, which requires a shift that takes into account multi-modal transport systems, cooperation among stakeholders and transport authorities, policy integration, digital mobility, capacity building and a redirection of finance.

14. Participants further reaffirmed commitment to increasing investment in hard and soft infrastructure development and in multimodal transport in the LDCs, including in railways, roads, waterways, airports, warehouses, port facilities and logistics services, and to supporting partnerships designed to strengthen infrastructure building of LDCs.

15. Also highlighted was the importance of addressing the special needs of LLDCs, inter alia, by establishing and promoting efficient transit transport systems that link them to international markets, by developing, upgrading and maintaining all modes of transit transport infrastructure, by promoting and harmonising enabling environment, regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements for transit, and by forging genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, bilateral, sub-regional, regional and global levels.

16. Participants reaffirmed commitment to enhancing inter-island connectivity and linking the economies of SIDS to regional markets and global supply chains, including by integrating them into existing and emerging maritime and multimodal transport and economic corridors, and to encouraging sustainable transport initiatives in the context of the SIDS Partnership Framework. The importance of effective climate change adaptation and DRR for critical coastal transport infrastructure in SIDS was highlighted, as was the related urgent need for capacity-building and financing.

17. Participants re-emphasized the need to promote harmonization, simplification and standardization of rules and documentation, including the full and effective implementation of international conventions on transport and transit as well as bilateral, sub-regional and regional agreements. The benefits of harmonized international regulatory frameworks for transit cooperation include, amongst others, more efficient and effective border and customs controls, simplified and standardized procedures and enhanced cooperation, which will lead to faster, cheaper and more reliable cross-border trade and transport, especially for LLDCs.

18. Participants further resolved to renew efforts to reshape transport networks and planning by optimizing operations through smart hubs, organizing routes and schedules to reduce empty mileage, improving land use planning, and harmonizing regulatory frameworks across the transport sector.

19. Bearing in mind that close to a quarter of energy-related GHG emissions come from transport and that these emissions are projected to grow substantially in the years to come, participants reaffirmed commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector and to accelerating progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

20. Given the potential for climate-related damage, disruption and delay across closely interconnected global supply chains, participants resolved to take multi-pronged strategies to accelerate transition to low-carbon energy sources and technologies, increase investments in climate-resilient transport infrastructure, and encourage uptake of new and innovative technologies, including ICT-based solutions, in support of intelligent multimodal transport systems.

21. Participants acknowledged the decision of the 39th session of the International Civil Aviation Organization's Assembly to implement a global market-based measure to address the increase in total CO₂ emissions from international civil aviation above 2020 levels, taking into account special circumstances and respective capabilities of States.

22. Participants noted that international maritime transport plays an essential role in facilitation of world trade; and that the International Maritime Organization, following the adoption of mandatory energy efficiency measures for ships in July 2011, which entered into force on 1 January 2013, is also developing a strategy to consider further measures to reduce GHG emissions from ships, including implementation schedule.

23. It was also highlighted that air pollution caused by transportation is a growing public health risk, contributing to several millions of premature deaths, predominantly in developing countries. There is a need to improve vehicle and propulsion technology, encourage electric mobility, enhance end-use fuel efficiency in transport, improve and upgrade public transportation, reduce road congestion, encourage vehicle sharing and integrated charging system, and shift to more compact city planning. In addition, it was emphasized that renewed efforts should be made to support industries in energy-efficient and low-emissions vehicle manufacturing.

24. Participants underscored concerns over traffic deaths and injuries, which have overwhelming effects on families and livelihoods. Every year around 1.25 million people are killed, mostly in developing countries and between 20 and 50 million are seriously injured on the world's roads. It is imperative that the international community redouble efforts to reach the SDG target of halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road

traffic accidents by 2020 and make renewed efforts to implement relevant UN conventions on road safety. In this regard, participants also highlighted the need for adequate pedestrian and public spaces in cities and the importance of improving street design in ensuring road safety and integration with mass-transit modes.

25. It was emphasized that public transport services and infrastructure were critical to enable the mobility of people and goods, in particular taking into account needs of vulnerable groups (women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants). This is particularly important for cities, because by 2050 the share of world population living in cities is expected to rise to about 67 per cent, with much of the urbanisation happening in developing countries. Sustainable public transport provides enormous benefits for cities, reducing air pollutants and GHG emissions, while contributing to the economic vitality of cities.

26. Governments, local authorities, business and civil society must work together to launch public-private partnerships to develop innovative, smart, forward-looking and people-centred sustainable transport systems. In this regard, a representative of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Transport presented a summary of the discussion at the Ashgabat Transport Business Forum and its outcome document.

27. Mobilizing finance for sustainable transport will be an enormous challenge, especially given the strain on public finances that exists in many countries. In this context, participants reaffirmed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and underscored the vital role of public finance, both domestic and international, in meeting sustainable transport needs and in catalysing all sources of finance, including traditional official development assistance, domestic resource mobilization, direct private investment and a wide array of partnership models, including Public-Private partnerships (PPPs).

28. Participants further stressed the need to promote the integration of science, technology and innovation into sustainable transport systems by tapping into technological opportunities in the decades to come to bring about fundamental, transformative changes to transport systems, including energy efficiency technologies as well as the information and communication technologies and called for strengthening capacity building support to developing countries.

29. Participants welcomed stakeholders who have developed and launched sustainable transport initiatives, and called on all stakeholders to continue to seek collaborative partnerships for new, innovative, sustainable transport paradigms. The UN Secretariat will organise effective follow-up on the implementation of these initiatives.

30. Participants emphasized the need for improved reporting and data collection systems to ensure effective implementation of low-carbon, sustainable and resilient transport systems. Adequate and quality data is key for setting baselines and benchmarks as well as for measuring performance and tracking and monitoring progress.

31. It was also emphasized that states that have not yet done so should consider acceding to or ratifying United Nations legal instruments relating to transport. Member States and other relevant stakeholders are also encouraged to further strengthen their participation in UN intergovernmental deliberations

on sustainable transport, including through specialised platforms convened by the United Nations system.

32. Participants expressed appreciation for the contributions of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport. The United Nations system entities resolved to strengthen UN system follow-up networks and inter-agency cooperation, including monitoring and evaluation arrangements, for sustainable transport initiatives launched in the lead-up-to and during the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, linking tracking frameworks, targets and indicators, where appropriate, to the implementation of the SDGs.

33. Participants expressed profound gratitude to the President, Government and people of Turkmenistan for their warm hospitality and generous support for the preparation and organization of the Global Sustainable Transport Conference. They reiterated their commitment to continue working on sustainable transport issues and keep them high on the global sustainable development agenda.
