Towards safe and inclusive transport and mobility

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document contains a brief review of the road safety situation in Asia and the Pacific and serves to highlight the recent progress made and initiatives taken on improving road safety. Priority actions that can improve road safety and support the implementation of the global plan of action for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 are discussed. The present document also contains suggested policies and measures that could be considered for planning and developing socially inclusive and accessible transport systems in the region.

The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport may wish to consider the policy directions, actions and activities described in the present document in the light of the regional action programme for sustainable transport development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026), in particular its thematic areas of road traffic safety and inclusive transport and mobility. The Ministerial Conference may also wish to share updates and selected highlights with regard to national, bilateral and multilateral policies and initiatives related to these issues.

I. Introduction

1. The availability of safe and reliable transport infrastructure and services that enable all people and goods to reach a range of destinations at reasonable costs and within reasonable time frames is essential not only for economic growth but also for ensuring a balanced distribution of economic and social benefits alongside the proper management of the environmental impact of human development. Accordingly, transport connectivity has hard and soft dimensions and, importantly, is associated with concepts of access. To support sustainable development, enhanced transport connectivity needs to fully incorporate social development imperatives as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This can be partially addressed by considering the impact of demographic trends on transport and mobility needs as well as safety. However, special social development issues should still receive greater political visibility and financial support in order to redress the existing inequalities attributable to shortages in the availability and quality of transport services, which have been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
2. Road safety, in particular, has been a major challenge for societies because economic and social activities depend on motorized road transport. It is not a new problem, and the number of annual global road crash fatalities remains unacceptably high at more than 1.35 million. Globally, road crashes are the eighth leading cause of death for people of all ages and the leading cause of death for children and young adults from 5 to 29 years of age. The number of road traffic fatalities and serious injuries has not decreased during the past decade as had been targeted in the Decade of Action for Road Safety. Road traffic fatalities in Asia and the Pacific have, conversely, shown an increasing trend in recent years, and the situation remains a major challenge for sustainable development.

3. Against this background, the present document contains selected regional considerations on safe and inclusive transport and mobility in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the potential areas for regional cooperation in transport and related activities of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for reducing poverty, promoting gender equality and supporting social inclusion in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The document also contains updated information on the secretariat’s recent and ongoing activities on road safety.

II. Road traffic safety

A. Global and regional mandates for road safety

1. Global initiatives to improve road safety

4. Several global initiatives had the aim of improving road safety in the past two decades. The General Assembly has adopted a total of nine resolutions on road safety since 2004. Three Global Ministerial Conferences on Road Safety were organized, by the Governments of the Russian Federation (Moscow, 2009), Brazil (Brasilia, November 2015) and Sweden (Stockholm, 2020), each of which adopted a declaration urging Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and philanthropic foundations to cooperate in addressing related issues.

5. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the international community clearly included road safety among the top development issues and set the ambitious target of halving the global number of road fatalities and injuries by 2020 as part of Sustainable Development Goal target 3.6. The issue of road safety is also reflected in Sustainable Development Goal target 11.2 on providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

6. Pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 70/260, the United Nations Road Safety Fund was established in 2018 as a United Nations multi-partner trust fund. It was created to finance actions in low- and middle-income countries to (a) substantially reduce fatalities and injuries from road crashes and (b) reduce economic losses resulting from road crashes.

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3 General Assembly resolutions 58/289, 60/5, 62/244, 64/255, 66/260, 68/269, 70/260, 72/271 and 74/299.
7. The most recent Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety was hosted by the Government of Sweden in February 2020. Its outcome, the Stockholm Declaration, provides a vision of global road safety and a description of how existing accomplishments combined with progressive techniques could lead to a new era in which road safety would be integrated into a range of other social development movements and pursued in a comprehensive manner.

8. In its resolution 74/299 on improving global road safety, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 2021–2030 as the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and set a goal of reducing road traffic fatalities and injuries by at least 50 per cent by the end of the Decade. In that regard, the Assembly called upon Member States to continue action through 2030 on all the road-safety-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, including target 3.6.

2. Regional initiatives to improve road safety

9. With a view to improving road safety infrastructure, the secretariat, in close collaboration with the Korea Expressway Corporation, completed a three-year project in 2017 on harmonizing road safety infrastructure facilities along the Asian Highway network. As a follow-up to the project, a new annex II bis to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety”, was adopted by the Working Group on the Asian Highway at its 7th meeting, in December 2017. As per article 8, paragraph 5, of the Agreement, annex II bis will enter into force 12 months after two thirds of the parties to the Agreement have deposited an instrument of acceptance with the Secretary-General, either directly or through the secretariat, which stands ready to assist in the process. The eventual entry into force of annex II bis to the Agreement is important, as it would trigger an interactive process among member States towards improving their local infrastructure standards to accommodate new facilities as deemed appropriate.

10. In 2018, the Commission adopted resolution 74/3 on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable transport systems, in which it emphasized the need for further strengthening of international cooperation and knowledge-sharing on road safety at all levels and encouraged all members and associate members to intensify national efforts and regional collaboration with a view to meeting the road-safety-related targets of the 2030 Agenda and to take steps to improve road safety, including by promoting the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021).

11. As part of the United Nations Road Safety Fund pilot projects approved in 2019, the secretariat and the Global Road Safety Partnership implemented a project on strengthening speed management in the Philippines. Under the 2020 United Nations Road Safety Fund call for proposals, the secretariat, the Asian Institute of Transport Development and the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research are currently implementing a project on the improvement of the driver licensing system in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. In addition, the United Nations Road Safety Fund accepted the secretariat’s 2021 project.

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5 See www.roadsafetysweden.com/about-the-conference/stockholm-declaration/.
6 General Assembly resolution 74/299.
7 See United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2323, No. 41607; and E/ESCAP/AHWG(7)/5, annex III.
8 E/ESCAP/73/15/Add.1, annex I.
proposal on strengthening the lead national road safety agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

12. At a regional meeting on the theme “City and transport: safety, efficiency and sustainability”, held online on 9 and 10 June 2021, participants adopted the Bangkok Declaration. The Declaration served to recognize the importance of introducing measures to implement a systematic approach to improve the safety of urban transport systems and, in turn, reduce the number of fatalities and casualties in crashes (i.e. a safe system approach).

13. The secretariat and a regional group of development organizations contributed towards establishing the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory as a regional forum on road safety data, policies and practices. The group of development organizations included the Asian Development Bank, the International Automobile Federation, the International Transport Forum and the World Bank, with support from WHO and the Global Road Safety Facility. The objective of the Observatory is to better serve and support member countries in their efforts to address issues related to road safety data. As of August 2021, 20 ESCAP member States had become members of the Observatory. The first annual meeting of the Observatory was held online, on 21 and 22 April 2021, to discuss the challenge of collecting and collating road safety data for more informed policymaking.

B. Status of road safety in the Asia-Pacific region

14. During the past decade, the overall number of road traffic fatalities has significantly increased in the Asia-Pacific region. Calculations by ESCAP of data available from WHO indicated that road traffic fatalities increased from 733,541 in 2013 to 812,995 in 2016, an increase of almost 11 per cent during this period. In 2016, the Asia-Pacific region accounted for 60.5 per cent of global road fatalities. While the road traffic fatality rates were reduced in the East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia and South-East Asia subregions, road traffic fatalities in the South and South-West Asia subregion increased from 16.42 to 20.30 per 100,000 population. Numbers and rates of road traffic fatalities in ESCAP member countries are provided in figure I. The road traffic fatality rates of different geographical areas are provided in figure II.

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10. A list of the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory members can be found at www.aprso.org/about-aprso (accessed on 25 August 2021).


Figure 1
Road traffic fatalities and road traffic fatality rates of member States, 2013 and 2016

15. Road traffic fatalities relative to population size are moderately higher among the region’s upper- and lower-middle-income countries compared to high- and low-income countries. The upper- and lower-middle-income countries account for 93.6 per cent of the region’s population but more than 97 per cent of its road traffic fatalities (see figure III). The moderate disproportionality is slightly more acute in lower-middle-income countries.
16. Progress in reducing road traffic fatalities in the region has not been uniform among the country income groups. According to the secretariat’s calculations based on 2013 and 2016 data from WHO, there was more progress in reducing the number of road traffic fatalities in upper-middle-income and high-income countries than in lower-middle-income and low-income countries. Figure IV shows the progress (or lack of progress) in reducing road traffic fatalities in Asia-Pacific countries between 2013 and 2016, by country income group.

Figure IV
Number of Asia-Pacific countries with increase, decrease or no change in road traffic fatalities between 2013 and 2016, by country income group

Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from WHO, *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018* (see figure III).

17. Road traffic fatality risk varies by type of road user. For example, people using motorized two- and three-wheel vehicles account for 39.20 per cent of all road fatalities in the region, and vulnerable road users as a category, comprising the above-mentioned group as well as pedestrians and cyclists, account for 54.76 per cent of the region’s road fatalities. Among ESCAP subregions, South-East Asia has the highest number of vulnerable road user fatalities as a percentage of total subregional road traffic fatalities, at 75.17 per cent. Figure V provides data analysis on vulnerable road user fatalities in Asia-Pacific in 2016, by subregion and road user type.

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Figure V
Vulnerable road user fatalities in Asia and the Pacific, by subregion and road user type (2016)

Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from WHO, *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018* (see figure III).

18. There are several risk factors for road crashes, injuries and fatalities. Among them, the key risk factors include speeding, drink-driving, non-use of motorcycle helmets and non-use of seat belts. They all have great impacts on the severity of the consequences of a road crash. As shown in figure VI, legislation on speeding, drink-driving and the use of motorcycle helmets has been enacted by member States, but more consideration and action is required to enact legislation on four other key risk factors, namely use of seat belts, use of child restraints, mobile phone use while driving and drug-driving.
19. Speed is considered one of the main road safety risks. There is a direct relationship between increasing speeds and the likelihood of both injury and fatality. For example, a 5 per cent decrease in average speed leads to approximately 10 per cent fewer crashes involving injuries.\(^{14}\) In this regard, in member States including Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, local authorities have the power to modify speed limits to ensure road safety.

20. Drink-driving is another main cause of road injuries and fatalities in the region. Indeed, it is the greatest cause of road traffic fatalities in Australia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Tonga. In South-East Asia, drink-driving accounts for approximately 33 per cent of total road traffic fatalities. Most member States have adopted blood alcohol concentration limits for the general population of drivers but not for young novice drivers.\(^{15}\) In Japan, in 2002, the blood alcohol limit was lowered to 0.03 grams per decilitre (g/dL) and penalties for drink-driving were increased; as a result, alcohol-related traffic fatalities per billion kilometres decreased by 38 per cent.\(^{16}\)


\(^{15}\) Strategies to Tackle the Issue of Impaired Driving for Road Safety in the Asia-Pacific Region: Implementation Framework (ST/ESCAP/2887).

21. Motorized two- and three-wheel vehicle crashes are the leading cause of road traffic fatalities, with deaths in such crashes accounting for 39.2 per cent of all road traffic fatalities in the region in 2016. Despite WHO-recommended measures directly relating to mandatory helmet use and helmet standards, many riders still do not fasten their helmets or use proper-sized helmets. Community-based initiatives using the safe community concept can promote the use of helmets among motorcyclists. Some member States, including Azerbaijan, China, Georgia and Uzbekistan, prohibit children under 12 years of age from riding on motorcycles in any capacity.

22. Seat belts have been proven to be one of the most successful means of preventing or reducing injuries and fatalities to vehicle occupants. While vehicle crashes can never be totally prevented, the use of protective measures such as seat belts can help to reduce the severity of crashes. An analysis by ESCAP showed that in 2016, only 50 per cent of the reporting member States applied seat belt laws to rear seat occupants, but in Australia, New Zealand and Samoa, the rate of seat belt use for car passengers in the rear seat was reported to be more than 90 per cent.

23. Unsafe road infrastructure is an important factor in the improvement of road safety, especially in the low-income and lower-middle-income countries. A study of road crashes on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway in India showed that 22.5 per cent of all road crashes were due to a combination of human and infrastructure factors. To avoid or minimize the harm and consequences of traffic crashes, the “forgiving roadway and roadside” concept is applied to road safety design. It is necessary to proactively install basic road safety infrastructure (e.g. signs and signals, median dividers, side barriers and speed control measures) and additional road safety infrastructure (e.g. crash cushions, coloured pavements and road lighting) in high risk locations. While road safety audits and inspections have been in practice for decades, a comparatively new methodology, called the star rating, is now in practice globally.

24. The design, manufacture and maintenance of motor vehicles, including motorized two- and three-wheel vehicles, can play an important role in improving road safety. Historically, many safety features were designed to reduce the severity of road crashes. Nowadays, such safety features as intelligent speed control can be used to prevent crashes. In this regard, the aim of the Global New Car Assessment Programme, in particular its programme for South-East Asian countries, is to elevate vehicle safety standards, raise consumer awareness and encourage a market for safer vehicles in the region.

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19 ESCAP calculations based on data from WHO, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018.
20 JP Research India Pvt LTD, “Mumbai – Pune Expressway road accident study” (Maharashtra, India, 2019).
25. When a road crash occurs, the top priority is to provide a timely and effective post-crash response. An efficient post-crash response is an important part of the overall safety system to reduce the number of crashes that result in fatalities and lifelong disabilities. In this regard, injury care is most critical in the first 60 minutes after a crash – sometimes referred to as “the golden hour” in emergency care. Prehospital care includes the coordinated dispatch of ambulances and trained providers, and emergency response systems connected to global navigation satellite systems have been very useful in that regard. In that connection, it is worth noting that in 2016, fewer than 50 per cent of the reporting member States had national or subnational trauma registries.22

26. Integrated transport and land use planning can have a positive impact on road safety. Roads serve a variety of functions for the benefit of road users. Each functional road class needs to include tailored safety features. Road safety can be improved through the application of appropriate evidence-based solutions for each functional road class. Given the rapid pace of private motorization, transport and mobility policies must contribute towards a massive shift from automobile trips to safer, cleaner and more affordable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport. This shift is already under way in many places. For example, the rail transit systems of Bangkok are being extended to reach neighbouring provinces, and Dhaka will launch its first metro rail line in 2021.

C. Priority areas and actions to improve road safety in the region

27. In its resolution 74/299, the General Assembly requested WHO and the regional commissions, in cooperation with other partners in the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration and other stakeholders, to prepare a plan of action of the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 as a guiding document to support the implementation of its objectives. In line with that request, in September 2020, the secretariat joined with other United Nations entities in an effort led by WHO to prepare a draft global plan of action. As the Asia-Pacific region has unique traffic characteristics and road safety problems, it is essential that a regional plan of action for the Second Decade addressing the particular needs of the region be prepared in line with the global plan of action. Such a plan would need to be adopted and implemented by the member States, and national policies and strategies would need to be formulated and implemented accordingly.

28. The safe system approach is typically aimed at developing a road transport system that is better able to accommodate human error by providing a safe operating environment, and effective post-crash care. It is a holistic approach that includes multiple sectors in addressing road safety. Shared responsibility is the essence of the safe system approach, which requires aspects of good governance such as transparency and accountability. It is important that member States implement safe system interventions, taking into account road infrastructure, vehicle safety, road user behaviour and post-crash response.

29. The inaccuracy and scarcity of road crash and safety performance data have proven to be a formidable challenge for evidence-based road safety policymaking in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, underreporting of the road crash data is a significant problem, especially in low- and middle-income countries. An ESCAP comparison between government-reported road crash fatalities and WHO-estimated fatalities in 2016 indicated profound underreporting in low-income countries (84 per cent) and middle-income countries.22

ESCAP calculations based on data from WHO, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018.
countries (51 per cent). The data discrepancy inhibits understanding of the scale and impact of the problem. In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory can be a useful tool. However, to become a functional regional tool, the Observatory will require broad participation by member States.

30. In many member States, vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and those using motorized two- and three-wheel vehicles are still largely ignored in the planning, design and operation of roads. While isolated and piecemeal approaches have been adopted to address the crisis of fatalities among vulnerable road users, there is a need for comprehensive guidance, which remains unmet. In this regard, member States are encouraged to take evidence-based approaches to developing and promoting knowledge products on safety and risk factors for vulnerable road users.

31. Smart transport technologies, including intelligent transportation systems and the emergency response systems connected to global navigation satellite systems, are important tools that can be used to improve road safety. Despite the benefits of smart transport, its deployment in the region varies from world-class to very minimal. Lack of awareness is a major obstacle to deploying smart transport technologies. Smart transport holds great promise for the future, and as technologies improve and become cheaper, these technologies have the potential to make substantial improvements to road safety. Member States need to work on increasing awareness of the application of smart transport technologies.

32. It will be essential to utilize lessons learned and knowledge shared from the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 on how existing accomplishments combined with progressive techniques can lead to a new era in which road safety is integrated into a range of other social development initiatives. In this regard, the Commission, in its resolution 74/3, emphasized collaboration with development partners and stakeholders. Member States are encouraged to strengthen collaborative research and knowledge transfer across and beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

33. Transport and mobility policies need to contribute towards a massive shift from automobile and motorized two- and three-wheel vehicle trips to public transport. The expansion of public transport will be necessary, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

III. Social inclusion in transport

34. Traditional transport policies and interventions tend to focus on the economic impact of transport and connectivity, while their social benefits have often been believed to evolve as a by-product of the economic stimulus of infrastructure development and a corresponding increase in the volume of goods and passengers transported. Although this holds true to some extent, it does not necessarily reveal the full extent of the social dimensions of transport and mobility. Conversely, there is enough empirical evidence showing that extending infrastructure or reducing transport costs do not always guarantee a significant impact on poverty reduction or inequality. To the contrary, the persisting social gaps in the region can be partly attributed to the existing transport systems and policies which reflect the current distribution of economic and social power in societies. With the exception of road safety, which is extensively addressed in the activities of ESCAP, these elements have, until now, been largely absent from the systematic regional transport activities and transport cooperation of member States.
35. Transport disadvantage, which is specific to an entire country or region, and social disadvantage, which is specific to individuals, households and groups, directly and indirectly interact to cause what is referred to as transport poverty, thus disadvantaging the affected person(s) even further. The result of such an accumulation of disadvantages is inaccessibility, which, in turn, leads to social exclusion. This mechanism explains why transport-related deprivations and geographic isolation particularly affect vulnerable socioeconomic groups.

36. Transport poverty is hard to measure, and there is no universally agreed definition. Moreover, some question whether it even exists as a stand-alone phenomenon or whether it is simply an extension of being poor. In general, an individual can be considered transport poor if, in order to satisfy daily basic activity needs, at least one of the following conditions apply:

   (a) There is no transport option that is suited to the individual’s physical condition and capabilities;

   (b) The existing transport options do not reach destinations where the individual can fulfil his/her daily activity needs;

   (c) The weekly amount spent on transport leaves the household with a residual income below the official poverty line;

   (d) The individual needs to spend an excessive amount of time travelling, leading to time poverty or social isolation;

   (e) The prevailing travel conditions are dangerous, unsafe or unhealthy.

37. Documenting and addressing the link between transport interventions and the various dimensions of poverty, accessibility and income inequality warrants more systematic research and policy attention. There is a lack of analysis of how and when transport interventions can help to reduce poverty and income inequality in the available literature, leaving significant knowledge gaps for the development of transport policies. Even though the association between transport infrastructure and economic growth has been well established, there is little evidence to show that economic growth attributable to infrastructure development alone will consequently lead to a reduction in inequality.

38. It follows that the transport sector can do more to better articulate its role as a vehicle of poverty reduction and social inclusion. However, improved transport alone cannot reduce poverty. While transport systems are development prerequisites, in the absence of a special focus on poverty reduction and accompanying wider policies, they cannot bring about well-being, solve the challenges of poverty and increasing inequality associated with social mobility, or fulfil its role as one of the key mechanisms for the development of human capabilities. Although social inclusion, and exclusion, should be regarded as a process rather than a fixed state, operational understandings often overlook its dynamic, relational and multi-scalar nature.

39. In order to address these issues effectively, it is not only necessary to conceptualize the links between poverty, inequality and transport but also to collect and analyse the relevant information and translate it into policies and investment choices. There is a striking lack of data in the region on this topic. Findings and conclusions can be extrapolated through proxy indicators and data collected for other development areas. In view of the pressing need to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative that regional cooperation on transport incorporates direct poverty reduction considerations in transport interventions and that appropriate data and metrics be developed to support decision makers.
A. Inclusive transport and vulnerable groups: selected considerations

40. According to WHO, 93 per cent of all fatal road crashes occur in low- and middle-income countries, which are home to 85 per cent of the world’s people, who nevertheless own only 60 per cent of all vehicles. The statistic shows that the risk of dying in a traffic accident is three times higher in low-income countries than in high-income countries. Furthermore, the transport conditions and mobility behaviours of lower-income population groups have been documented to have very specific patterns that are highly differentiated from their higher-income counterparts in almost every country in the world. Accordingly, it could be contended that, as with other technological advances, neither the benefits nor the costs of motorization are equally or fairly distributed, and that poverty and road traffic deaths and injuries are strongly interlinked. Specific recognition of these differences is extremely important for the planning and delivery of policies that can effectively link the reduction in road traffic injuries and fatalities to poverty reduction strategies.

41. Furthermore, almost 60 per cent of the world’s 650 million persons with disabilities live in Asia and the Pacific. Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities, such as less education, poorer health outcomes, lower levels of employment and higher poverty rates. A fundamental factor in the link between disability and poverty is limited access to transport or inability to use transport services. Lack of mobility has economic and social consequences. In economic terms, a large number of people are lost to the workforce and so cannot contribute to the national economy. The World Bank estimates losses of between 15 and 40 per cent in gross domestic product due to disability in low-income countries.

42. Much of the existing research tends to compare transport use between disabled and non-disabled populations, rather than between different groups of people with disabilities. Consequently, there is limited evidence of what works for specific groups. Given the scarcity of data on transport disadvantage for persons with disabilities, identifying solutions can be even more challenging. Moreover, there is very little research on the types of journeys persons with disabilities make, the modes of transport they use, and their overall experiences of the journey. Therefore, more information is needed for planners and policymakers to understand where, what and how they should best invest in making transport more inclusive of people with disabilities.

43. Finally, transport infrastructure and services are often mistaken as being gender neutral, however transport projects, systems and services do not equally serve men and women. The transport sector is traditionally gendered through socioeconomic conditions, traditional ways of life, women’s legal status, their position in the labour market and their role in decision-making. While extensive data on gender and transport for the region is generally lacking, the International Transport Forum has recently estimated that in the Asia-Pacific region, women are found in fewer than 20 per cent of transport jobs and are particularly underrepresented in senior roles in the transport, logistics and infrastructure sectors. Accordingly, gender perspectives are less likely to be considered in decision-making. Designing transport to respond to gender needs would, thus, require including women more systematically in the transport sector and in the decision-making processes.

44. Most research on transport and gender has been focused on the end-user perspective and analyses mobility choices and patterns; this is largely on account of data availability which makes this type of approach more comprehensive as compared to other gender perspectives. Women’s everyday mobility is a central focus for gender scholars because they have long argued that a woman’s ability
to be mobile has a direct impact on her access to resources and opportunities. In other words, mobility is empowering, and because it is empowering, more mobility is a good thing. Greater numbers of women in the region are now working farther away from home than ever before. As the urbanization and feminization of the urban labour force continues, urban public transit systems represent one of the most productive venues through which scholars have investigated gendered mobility. It is well-documented that women, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, have particular mobility patterns owing to their socially determined reproductive, productive and community-related gender roles.

45. Accordingly, it is imperative that research on gender and transport moves beyond the end-user perspective and delves deeper into transport as an employer of women and women in decision-making positions, both of which would serve the objective of better designed and, eventually, gender-neutral transport systems. To that end, improved statistics and gender-disaggregated data are essential to ensure systematic gender inclusion procedures for transport and in the training of professionals, as well as in the design and planning of networks and services. The secretariat is taking steps to mainstream gender in all its activities. Support by member States, particularly in providing gender disaggregated data on transport as much as possible, will be instrumental in making progress in this regard.

B. Inclusive transport and climate change

46. Despite ongoing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – referred to as mitigation – the levels of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion are increasing, owing to investment in high carbon infrastructure and increasing worldwide demand for energy and transport. Transport, in particular, is responsible for approximately one quarter of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the transport sector is the second largest (and second-fastest-growing) source of global greenhouse gas emissions.

47. Given the extensive coastlines and mountainous topography of Asia and the Pacific, along with its increasing urban population living at low elevations and in coastal zones, the population and infrastructure of the region are particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change. Investments in the transport sector are among the most vulnerable, including with regard to the expected sea-level rise and changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Although significant emissions reduction measures have been introduced, climate change is unavoidable and therefore calls for adaptation measures.

48. Climate change adaptation refers to actions that reduce the negative impacts of climate change while taking advantage of new opportunities. It involves adjusting policies and actions because of observed or expected changes in climate. Adaptation can be reactive, occurring in response to climate impacts, or it can be anticipatory, occurring before effects of climate change are observed. Considerations of climate change adaptation can have a significant impact on inclusive transport policies, as there is increasing recognition that the most vulnerable population groups will be more profoundly impacted by transport and mobility restrictions attributable to climate change, in particular in remote and rural areas.

49. Moreover, the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change brought special attention to gender and climate action linkages as an essential cross-cutting theme, in particular in transport. Data have shown that gender inequality,
together with intersecting inequalities (e.g. in income, age, ethnicity and disability) often determine a person’s access to transport and, thus, to employment and socioeconomic opportunities. Further research has indicated that climate change impacts can worsen existing gender inequalities, including in transport. For example, livelihoods in rural areas depend largely on natural resources, and rural women in particular tend to rely more heavily on informal or underdeveloped transport networks and services (including to access health care) that are at severe risk from disruptive climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events. It follows that climate change adaptation actions that do not take gender perspectives into account may result in maladaptation and could unintentionally amplify gender inequalities that already exist in transport. Therefore, it is imperative that future work strengthen the understanding of these linkages through research and capacity-building activities and identify effective climate actions with due consideration to gender differences in transport needs, as well as the adaptive capabilities of vulnerable groups.

IV. Observations for future action on inclusive transport

50. Asia and the Pacific has yet to fully define the optimal set of interventions, beyond investment in transport infrastructure, to include reforms and policies that would extend the wider economic benefits of that infrastructure to areas of unrealized economic potential or produce possible positive spillovers for social development. The concrete ways in which transport can serve the social development agenda, notably gender equality, accessibility, safety, inclusiveness and social mobility, should receive special attention in policies and integrated holistically into implementation strategies. The regional action programme for sustainable transport development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026) will, thus, help to produce broader and more concrete socioeconomic benefits from transport connectivity by supporting evidence-based decision-making with improved data, analysis and other tools.

V. Issues for consideration

51. The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport may wish to consider the policy directions, actions and activities described in the present document in the light of the regional action programme for sustainable transport development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026), in particular its thematic areas of road traffic safety and inclusive transport and mobility. The Ministerial Conference may also wish to share updates and selected highlights with regard to national, bilateral and multilateral policies and initiatives related to these issues.