Item 3(b): Towards environmentally sustainable transport systems and services

1. We compliment the Secretariat for thoughtfully bringing out the significance of enhancing the sustainability of freight transport in achieving the sustainable development goals and highlighting the need for optimal integration of modes of transport through efficient intermodal interfaces.

2. The central issue in transport policy and planning is to determine optimal intermodal mix in the context of dynamic growth of the economy. This necessitates integration of economic, social and environmental imperatives into development of transport networks and promoting rational modal choices.

3. We reckon, the first step in this direction is to undertake empirical studies of working out social costs and traffic flows of different modes of transport. Past studies have largely addressed financial and economic costs only ignoring the cost of externalities. The next step is the adoption of efficient pricing and charges with the aim of promoting sustainability.

4. The Institute has been seriously engaged with both the systemic approaches. It has carried out a comparative study of rail and road modes. In the area of pricing, the Institute, along with UNESCAP, had carried out a study on sustainable transport pricing and charges. The joint publication is available both in hard and soft forms.

5. We wish to submit that in the calculus of evaluating modal choices, use of land by different modes also needs to be built in. This aspect has assumed great importance for countries with large population and relatively limited land endowments. For instance, rail requires much less land than the road transport. Waterways have still a greater advantage.

6. I am glad to inform that the Institute has set up a Centre for Green Transport to accelerate research and capacity building programmes to promote environmentally sustainable transport system. The Institute would be pleased to share its knowledge-base in furtherance of measures that would promote sustainability in all its manifestations.