Sri Lanka

Agenda item 3. Major issues in transport - (c) Towards safe and inclusive transport and mobility

Statement by Mr. W.A.D.S. Gunasinghe, Director General Planning, Ministry of Transport, Sri Lanka

Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to participate in this important and timely conference on sustainable transport. Like many other countries, we recognize, regional cooperation and integration as an essential part of our development strategy.

First of all, we must thank UNESCAP, particularly the transport division, for organizing and convening this Conference. Discussions held at preparatory level meetings, greatly helped us to understand the importance of collaboration and cooperation for safe and inclusive transport and mobility which in turn will have great impact on overall economic development.

Generally, among other factors, the inability of catering to the demand in terms of quality and quantity, keeping the pace with development of other sectors is a
challenge faced by the transport sectors in many countries. Maintaining business as usual scenario will not help us to overcome these challenges.

Excellencies,

Distinguish delegates,

**Holistic approach**

Development policy of our country gives high priority for the development of transport sector and, looking at the sector in the context of national spatial system.

There are several projects underway to that end. Steps have been taken to increase the freight transport by rail though developing required infrastructure and rolling stock. Development of missing links in railways to connect main sea-ports and establishing dry ports are on the pipeline. Construction of multi modal transport hubs is yet another action undertaken.

Initial steps have been taken towards e-mobility through undertaking a feasibility study on Developing Green and Smart Urban Transport System in Colombo.

**Public Transport**

In last several years, there was a tendency, especially with the middle income groups of the population to use private vehicles rather than using public
transport means. It is reported that over 40% of passengers in Colombo metropolitan region – our capital city - use private vehicles for day-today-travel. This has led to several issues such as heavy traffic congestion, increased air pollution, high rate of road accidents etc. Concerted efforts including measures such as park and ride services are taken to improve the safety, reliability and comfort of the public transport to reverse this trend.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

**National Freight Transport Strategy**

Under the technical assistance of UNESCAP, National Strategy for Freight Transport was developed. This will pave the way to address the long-standing issues in freight transport in the country. Increasing role of railway transport, improving intermodal freight transport, addressing urban freight transport issues are among the key focuses of the strategy.

Technological advancement of the sector is a key to improve operational connectivity in the region which in turn will maximize the potential to harness the emerging opportunities in trade, attracting investment and job creation.

**Road Safety**

Vehicle ownership in Sri Lanka grew rapidly - for instance by 67 % between 2011 and 2018 whereas transport infrastructure and the traffic control
facilities have not been developed comparably. Estimated annual per capita road crash death is 17.7 and ironically, majority of road crashes involve low-income commuters. Multiple modes of interventions ranging from modernizing infrastructure, adopting management systems, low enforcement and institutional capacity building is required to address this issue. Following the global agenda of Sustainable Development Goals, efforts are being taken to scale up the current programmes following a data driven approach.

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Nevertheless, the journey towards more efficient, resilient and sustainable transport network is not an easy one. We believe that cooperation, knowledge sharing in terms of technology, management and best practices in the thematic areas of Regional Action Programme will help us to step into the next level.

Having said that, with all the good wishes for the deliberations at the conference and productive outcome, let me conclude my remarks.

Once again thank you very much.