Ministerial Round Table
Thursday, 16 December, 10:45 - 11:30 am (video message)

TITLE: Accelerating transformative action in transport for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Question for Nepal: Excellency, what are some good practices that showcase successful examples of sustainable transport systems which foster poverty reduction, economic growth and inclusion of vulnerable groups? Could you point to some of the main obstacles that, in your experience, prevent transport systems from fulfilling their role in ensuring that no one is left behind?

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, let me thank the Executive Secretary of ESCAP for inviting me to this Ministerial Round Table and the question on inclusiveness and sustainability of transport systems in Nepal.

With regard to inclusiveness – after the recent reforms - representation of women and minority groups in elected bodies and government institutions are ensured by the constitution. The current parliament is inclusive with representation of various minorities, and we have about 33 per cent women member of parliament. In the current cabinet 25 per cent (six) are women and three infrastructure related ministries namely Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Energy, Water Resource and Irrigation and Urban Development are all led by women minister. Nepal is in the progress of implementing reforms for inclusiveness in the three level of government: Federal, Provincial and Local level.
Transport and mobility are critical for making development gains in every sector—such as education, health, tourism, trade, investment and gender and social dimensions. One of the priorities of the government is to provide transport accessibility to all district headquarters and improve transport connectivity. Now we have road access to all district headquarters (except one district) and the work on Kathmandu-Terai Fast Track is progressing—that will reduce travel time to Terai plains and connectivity to India. North-South corridors, Mid-Hill Highway and links to China are also being upgraded.

Works are also progressing to develop a mass public transport system in Kathmandu. Study on development of about 1,000-kilometer-long East-West Electrified Railway has already been completed and construction works for one section is in progress. Similarly, Jayanagar- Janakpur- Kurtha section of Nepal India cross border railway has been upgraded to the modern broad-gauge track from the old narrow gauge. Two new rail locomotives have been procured and planned to start operation soon.

In order to ensure employment generation—road construction works, and maintenance works employ local communities and labor-based techniques are used, as far as possible including in rural roads. Contractors are also encouraged to employ local workforce. Women workers are being encouraged in the routine maintenance work of the roads as Length-workers and in Bio engineering works as well.

Focusing on the transport service—both private and public sector are involved in provision of transport services. There is a need to improve overall planning, mode share, quality and reliability and safety of public transport systems and enhance inclusiveness.

There are seats designed for women in public Buses and three wheelers. Bus operated by Sakha Yatayat are disable-friendly with
space and ramps for wheelchairs. Existing transport strategy for
urban areas state that all roads shall be made pedestrian and
disable friendly.

More awareness and advocacy are necessary at city and local level
on the Principals of Universal Design of public facilities, footpaths
and roads. In order to make major streets and public transport
systems inclusive it is essential to partner with the public transport
operators, local communities and city authorities.

Implementation of policies and practices and development
inclusive mobility system would contribute towards universal
accessibility and ensure safety and comfort of differently abled
people.

With regards to environmental sustainability, Nepal aims to reduce
28 per cent GHG emissions from the transport sector by 2030.
Promotion of public electric mobility, operation of electric public
transport in 3 provinces, and e-vehicles to cover 90 per cent of all
private passenger vehicle sales by 2030 are reflected as transport
sector policies and strategies.

Nepal with rich in Hydropower, and current surplus of clean energy
have huge potential to transition to electric mobility. There has
been progress in this front- with operation of electric bus and
minibus in Kathmandu, development of charging infrastructure and
progress in procurement of 200 electric buses for Kathmandu. The
popular electric Safa Temp (clean three wheelers) is operating in
Kathmandu since 1993 and most of the operators are women.

While the road safety is still a major concern in Nepal, we have
adopted new Action Plan for Road safety 2021-2030 and its
implementation will improve safety situation. One of the successful
examples on safety is “Do Not Drink and Drive Campaign” in
Kathmandu valley. Due to its advocacy and enforcement – number of road crashes and fatalities are decreasing in Kathmandu.

One of the challenges for safety has been number of casualties per crashes due to the difficult topography and roads in the mountainous terrain.

Coordination among various institutions in implementing inclusive and sustainable policies is still a challenge in Nepal. COVID-19 has also taught us to look and think beyond transport sector and the need to explore synergies with energy, urban development, health and social sector. One of the common problems has been cost and time overrun of development projects, the government is currently reviewing procurement policies, acts and regulations with a view to improve project implementation.

Nepal is planning to graduate from LDC by 2026, in this transition phase we aim to learn from member States, UN system and development partners in managing the transition as well as accelerating the achievement of SDGs. We would welcome collaboration opportunities and technical support in making Nepal transport system more inclusive and sustainable particularly in the areas of urban mobility, regional connectivity, electric mobility and safety.

I thank you very much for your attention.

Renu Kumari Yadav

Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Nepal

16th December 2021