

Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference – “Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Development”

Line to Take for Ministers’ Forum (hybrid format) entitled “Sustainable transport, poverty eradication and economic recovery - direct exchange of views and sharing of national experiences,” taking place Friday, 15 October 2021, 2:00 – 3:30pm (Malta Time) → 8:00 – 9:30 p.m. (Beijing Time)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Ministers,

First of all, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Li Xiaopeng, [Minister of Transport, People’s Republic of China] & Mr. Liu Zhenmin, [Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations] for giving us this privileged opportunity to share our views in this Forum.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the crosscutting challenges of transport and sustainability have never been more apparent. As our global economies now transition out of this pandemic, we should grasp this opportunity to rethink our transport models and investigate the next era of transportation towards a more sustainable approach.

It is our firm belief that it is only through close collaboration that together we may take on the changes required to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and steer all the transport sectors to move out of the current downturn. In this important transition, governments need to act as catalysts whilst soliciting industry-driven solutions.

To do so, we need to ensure that the digitalisation, technology-push policies and decarbonisation processes are well underway, thereby providing our economies with the impetus for the much-needed recovery while at the same time incorporating these important transitions. This includes scaling up charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, shifting to sustainable aviation and shipping fuels and supporting zero-emission travel.

Concurrently, the introduction of green lanes is to be further supported at a global level to ensure that multi-modal transport works effectively in areas including waterborne freight and air cargo. To ensure continuity, it is also essential that contingency planning efforts should not be restricted purely to the smooth movement of freight with an overly narrow focus – attention needs to be granted also to the fluid and safe movement of transport workers.

For Malta, air connectivity remained crucial throughout the COVID pandemic. By maintaining the ability of airlines to reconfigure and offer extended cargo operations, essential medical supplies such as cancer treatments and vaccines were also supplied throughout the pandemic.

The importance of shipping cannot be underestimated also, particularly for the essential connectivity of small island states such as Malta. Maritime transport remains the most reliable, efficient, and cost-effective method of

transporting goods internationally. Shipping remains the leading facilitator of global trade, and particularly now in the wake of the global pandemic, it will be crucial for economic recovery and future sustainable growth. Continued cooperation is welcomed and should be further strengthened to support ongoing developments and initiatives within the framework of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Turning to the road sector, sustainable forms of transport and the use of electric vehicles will now also move into a higher gear. Malta is actively promoting cleaner vehicles as an alternative, greener, mode of travel by heavily incentivizing the purchase of electric vehicles and the scrappage of old fuel-based vehicles. Malta has invested and is planning to invest heavily in transport infrastructure to mitigate traffic congestion in the short term and to offer alternative transport solutions in the medium to long term, to reduce the reliance on tradition vehicles.

Last-mile solutions and the simplification of administrative procedures are regarded as one of the future pillars of mobility and can also be instrumental as part of a global effort towards sustainable transport solutions.

To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic with its health and socio-political reactions has reminded us of the vulnerabilities of our societies but also of our ability to respond to such unprecedented challenges. One key lesson we

have learnt is the need for complementary measures to urgently address the recovery of the transport sector, ensuring that no opportunities for digitalisation, efficiency and sustainability are lost in the process.