

**Video speech by Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, at the UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference, 14 October 2021**

President Xi,  
Secretary-General,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference. It's an honour and a pleasure to say a few words to you from the Netherlands today.

The first thing that came to mind when I heard about this conference was the 'nine million bicycles in Beijing', in the famous Katie Melua song.

I don't know if this number is correct, but what I do know is that in my country of 17 million people we own about 23 million bikes.

Together with an extensive network of cycle lanes, this makes the Netherlands the world's number-one cycling country.

Cycling is a green, clean and healthy mode of transport, so let's hope its momentum keeps on growing.

And that brings me straight to the heart of this conference.

Transport is a big factor in tackling climate change.

Because we know that over twenty per cent of the world's emissions still come from transport and mobility.

We know that global demand for transport is expected to double between 2015 and 2050.

So we also know that we need ambitious decarbonisation policies in the transport sector to keep climate change below critical levels.

Less mobility and less transport is of course an illusion – and in many ways a bad idea too. Because connectivity, and the economic development that it brings, is more important than ever, for both developed and developing countries.

The only option we have is to change how we commute, travel and transport our goods.

And we have to do it fast.

We need to innovate and accelerate if we are to move away from oil and other fossil fuels.

We also need to optimise the physical and IT infrastructure that's needed.

It's clear that the pandemic has made the world more aware of all the options for meeting and doing business online without emitting a single gram of carbon dioxide – this conference and this video message are a case in point.

But above all, ladies and gentlemen, we need to work together globally to make this transformation a reality.

And it is already happening.

Take the Port of Rotterdam – the gateway to Europe – which makes shore-based power available for inland and seagoing vessels, so that diesel generators can be switched off in the port.

Another promising example is the first Dutch electric inland-shipping vessel that recently made its maiden voyage.

And of course I should mention that China and the Netherlands are planning to work together on smart and green inland shipping.

And that includes experimenting with autonomous sailing.

The Netherlands supports the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 as laid down in the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement.

This means, for example, that from 2030 all new cars sold in the Netherlands will be zero-emission vehicles.

We already have 80,000 charging points and 350 rapid chargers, which makes us a frontrunner in Europe.

Car manufacturers are telling us that they are ready for the future.

And I believe we should send a strong signal to the market that climate neutrality is our goal for freight vehicles too.

That's why we've initiated a Global Memorandum of Understanding on Zero-Emission Freight Vehicles, to be signed at COP26.

It includes a full transition towards zero emissions for all new freight vehicles by 2040.

We're already getting a lot of support from around the world.

Today I call on China and other countries to sign this ambitious MoU with us.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

With COP26 just around the corner, this conference offers an excellent opportunity to call on countries, cities and companies to make the transport sector greener and more sustainable.

So let's seize this opportunity, join hands and work together.

Thank you.