

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

Ministers' Forum “Sustainable transport, poverty eradication and economic recovery - direct exchange of views and sharing of national experiences”

Dear Mr. Xiaopeng, Dear Mr. Zhenmin, dear colleagues - Ministers,

It is a great honour for me, as the representative of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Minister responsible for transport, to participate at the Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference.

At the very beginning, I would like to congratulate the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Transport of China for organizing the Conference as the gathering platform to discuss the role of transport in the post-pandemic economic recovery and fight against poverty.

I truly believe that this is great momentum to discuss the current state-of-play and further developments in the transport sector in order to provide a well-balanced strategic response to arising global challenges.

Transport sector is of paramount importance for the Republic of Serbia's development. Investing in transport infrastructure provides a backbone for building confidence, creating employment and shaping a stronger, more resilient economy.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has vastly impacted each aspect of our lives and each sector of our economies. Unfortunately, transport sector was not an exemption.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Republic of Serbia has supported the economy with different relief packages to minimize harmful impact of the pandemic and provide support for recovery and further growth. **Total amount of financial assistance so far is around 8 billion euros, or nearly 17% of Serbia's GDP.**

Regarding transport sector, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure has allocated around **22 million euros to support road transport operators** in prevention and mitigation of the consequences caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Additionally, **the public enterprises operating in the railway sector have received nearly 9 million euros** to keep their operations afloat. In the field of waterways transport, assistance is provided through **favorable credit arrangements** to support the business of shipping agents.

The Covid-19 pandemic indeed represents one of the greatest challenges in modern history, but at the same time, we see it as an accelerator and amplifier of future changes.

Namely, in the previous years, the Republic of Serbia has implemented a set of bold economic reforms, including fiscal consolidation, in order to stabilize public finances and provide sound macroeconomic and business environment. As a result, Serbia has attracted a number of foreign direct investors and achieved substantial economic growth after a period of stagnation.

For all these reasons, **Serbia has managed to fight the pandemic pressures in a highly effective way attempting to preserve both, public health and economic growth.**

In that light, we received great news regarding our economic outlook last week. Namely, on October 6, the World Bank published “Global Economic Prospects” and increased **Serbia's 2021 growth forecast to 6.0 percent.** This great achievement is additional proof that our actions were timely and well-targeted.

To continue pursuing the trajectory of economic growth, Serbia is currently conducting an investment cycle worth billions of euros encompassing carefully selected strategic projects.

At the moment, over 1,000 kilometers of highways and high-speed roads are being designed and built within the 2020-2025 Serbia's Investment Program. We are building communal infrastructure in more than 65 cities and municipalities, expanding the capacities of our ports, and working on modernization and reconstruction of railways as an eco-friendly mode of transport.

We are also very eager to modernize and rehabilitate infrastructure at the local level aiming to increase the productivity of under-developed regions of Serbia. Given that transport infrastructure is critical for achieving long-term poverty reduction, this is yet another reason why we see **investments in transport as a mechanism to increase social cohesion, equality and accessibility in our society.**

We are constantly improving our policy framework as well. Last year we adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Urban Development until 2030, and in the following months, we will develop a new Strategy for Transport as a guiding document to streamline this sector's development.

It is important to emphasize that all our actions are fully in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that we recognize as the key strategy for eradicating poverty and hunger, providing education and health for all, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

We will remain fully committed to building a future-oriented economy and reshaping transport to become safer, more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive.

For this reason, I found today's participation at the Conference highly beneficial and meaningful for us. I am confident that today's discussion will contribute to further progress in the field of sustainable transport and open a fruitful policy dialogue.

Thank you once again for your kind invitation to the Conference and your attention!