

Secretary-General's High-level Group discusses Sustainable Transport

New York, 2 October 2014 - An informal meeting of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport took place on Wednesday 24 September. The aim of the Advisory Group, established in August 2014, is to promote accelerated implementation of sustainable transport, aligned closely with inclusive and equitable growth, social development, protection of the global environment and ecosystems, and addressing climate change.

The Group will work with Governments, transport providers, businesses, financial institutions, civil society and other stakeholders to promote sustainable transport systems and their integration into development strategies and policies, including in climate action. The range of transport providers it will work with includes aviation, marine, ferry, rail, road and urban public transport.

Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo welcomed the members that attended the informal meeting and expressed his and the Secretary-General's deep appreciation for their acceptance to serve on the Advisory Group.

"Transport and mobility are essential preconditions for sustainable development," said the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development and Executive Secretary of the Advisory Group, who briefed it on sustainable transport challenges and opportunities. "Adequate transport infrastructure and affordable transport services facilitate access to education, social services, jobs and export markets," he said, also highlighting that "they contribute to economic and productivity growth."

But safe and affordable transport services are still widely lacking in many developing countries, in particular in rural areas. Increased urbanization and motorization have resulted in unprecedented congestion, wasteful energy use, increased motor vehicle emissions, road safety issues, and deteriorating urban air quality in cities, with serious negative impacts on public health, living conditions and climate change.

The members of the group exchanged views on its priority areas and scope of work, highlighting, among other things, the social dimension of transport, especially the inequality aspect, and its impact on economy, productivity and the daily lives of people. Urbanization was identified as figuring prominently in meeting the growing challenges of transport. Nouakchott, Mauritania, was cited as an example illustrating the scale and magnitude of the challenges ahead and the urgent need for a new urban policy, new urbanization and in that context sustainable transport.

Members agreed that given its broad social, economic and environmental dimensions, its increasing share of CO₂ emissions, and the importance of intermodal transport, transport must be addressed through a holistic, integrated and balanced approach at the strategic level. They also agreed that the Group should keep an open mind and be ready to work at several levels and across sectors, engaging multi-stakeholders.

To achieve sustainable transport, society would need nothing less than a real paradigm shift, committed to changing unsustainable consumption patterns and consumer culture and behaviour.

Members recognized the value of the Group's diversity, with constituting members from the public and private sectors, governments and local authorities, civil society, as well as representatives from different modes of transportation. This unique combination brings together different expertise, knowledge and experience, which enables sharing of ideas, outreach and engagement with a wide network of actors at international, national and local levels.

To accomplish its aims, the Advisory Group will provide a global message and recommendations on sustainable transport, including on innovative policy and multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable transport; launch a "Global Transport Outlook Report" to provide analytical support for these recommendations; and help mobilize action and initiatives in support of sustainable transport among key actors. These actors include Member States, development finance institutions, bilateral development partners, transport providers, urban authorities and land-use planners.