

**Statement by Mr. Dhana Bahadur Tamang, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Physical
Infrastructure and Transport of the Government of Nepal
at the Plenary Session of the Global Sustainable Transport Conference
(Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, 27 November 2016)**

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for me to lead the Nepali delegation at this high-level conference on Global Sustainable Transport, being held in this historic and beautiful city of Ashgabat. I would like to express gratitude to the Government and people of Turkmenistan for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation and for the excellent arrangements made for the conference. I sincerely appreciate the United Nations for organizing this important event on sustainable transport, which my delegation believes will have significant impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Sustainable transport forms the bedrock of sustainable economic development and social progress, over and above its direct contribution immensely to poverty reduction and delivery of vital services. A number of Sustainable Development Goals are directly or indirectly linked to sustainable transport. The issues of road safety, importance of resilient infrastructure, access to transport have been well incorporated under respective SDGs. Also, numerous cross-cutting sectors of the SDGs have a direct bearing on the development of sustainable transport.

It is my pleasure to share that Nepal has commenced the integration of SDGs into the national development plan. In that backdrop and as a least developed, land-locked and a high-cost mountainous economy, due mainly to the transport challenges it has to overcome, Nepal attached particular importance to this Conference. We also appreciate the work of the United Nations towards making it a genuine success for countries like Nepal as well.

Mr. Chairman,

As landlocked and mountainous country, Nepal attaches great importance to sustainable means of transport. The difficult geographical terrain and landlockedness have rendered Nepal disadvantaged and less competitive in terms of physical infrastructure. Consequently, the cost of development as well as international trade has been much higher than the fellow countries with direct access to sea or favourable geographical landscapes.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the country is striving for development and prosperity by overcoming in the first place the most serious challenges of poverty, inaccessibility, hunger, disease and illiteracy that have afflicted 27 million Nepali population.

Sustainable development without peace and stability is beyond imagination. A country that underwent a decade-long conflict has now embarked upon the path to peace and development. Last year, a democratic and people-centric Constitution was promulgated through the democratic and participatory process,

concluding the nationally-owned peace process. The next step is to institutionalise the hard-earned peace, which is only possible through the rapid socioeconomic development.

Sustainable transport network is critical in Nepal's context. The interlinked nature of transport can make positive impacts on every sphere of development, such as trade and transit, investment, tourism, as well as on education, health, gender, and other social dimensions. The challenges facing Nepal at present relate to quality construction of infrastructure, regular and quality maintenance, roads safety, and expansion of multi-modal network of transport including in the remote areas.

The total length of the roads of strategic importance in Nepal has reached 15,000 kms, which provides more than 90 percent of total transport services. The number of vehicles has increased to 2.3 million, which is extremely high given the carrying capacity. At the same time, since the two-wheelers dominates the the means of road transport the number of road accidents has escalated.

Air transport accounts for about 8 percent of the transportation services, while railway development has not yet gained momentum. Despite some good potentials, water transport is still at the exploratory phase. Nepal has encouraged private investments, nationally as well as internationally, for transport related infrastructure building.

Mr. Chairman,

There exists a huge gap between development needs and resources available. The countries in special situation are in need of an enhanced level of support and facilitation from the international community. My delegation calls for the fulfillment of commitments made under global development agendas. Cross-border transit facility for the landlocked countries has to be made more efficient and effective under bilateral, regional and multilateral frameworks. There is equally important need for multilateral trading systems and international financial institutions to accord higher priorities to the vulnerable countries. Nepal, as LDC, LLDC, post-conflict and post-disaster country, deserves renewed focus in these contexts.

For the SDGs to be met within the timeline, we must draw on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite mixed results, many countries lagged behind in absence of timely execution, resources, and capacity building. As complementary sector and a target in itself, sustainable and quality transport must receive the priority consideration from all stakeholders, including development partners and the United Nations, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nepal is committed to work closely with the Member States for achieving the universal and comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals, and will lend its full support to the initiatives under the aegis of the United Nations.

I thank you.